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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 16 June 2008

Lundi 16 juin 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 June 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 juin 2008

The House met at 0900.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO
AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI
FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Ms. Best moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to protect children from second-hand tobacco smoke in motor vehicles by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée pour protéger les enfants contre le tabagisme passif dans les véhicules automobiles.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today I will be sharing my time with my PA and esteemed colleague the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

If we pass this legislation to protect children from second-hand tobacco smoke in motor vehicles, we will be taking an important stride forward in protecting the health of young people across Ontario. Bill 69 would amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. It builds on the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which, as always, has the primary objective of protecting people from second-hand tobacco smoke in enclosed public spaces and workplaces.

This amendment would extend province-wide protection to children under 16 in motor vehicles. Science shows that second-hand smoke in vehicles is particularly harmful, and even more so for children under 16. Yet a Health Canada study in 2005 estimated that 140,000 children in Ontario between the ages of 12 and 16 years were exposed to second-hand smoke in vehicles during a one-month period.

I have listened to my colleague opposite from Nickel Belt. I heard and appreciated her concerns for constituents who may not know about the new law or who may find it hard to stop smoking in their motor vehicles, with or without children present. But I also know that since this public debate began last December, with sincere thanks to my friend and colleague David Oraziotti from Sault Ste. Marie, many people have already got the message that they should not smoke in their car with children present. Rest assured that we will continue to work

proactively to get this message out to all corners of this province.

Our goal is voluntary compliance. Our public education campaign will be comprehensive, working with our partners in public health to reach out to drivers wherever they are in their vehicles and wherever they think about their vehicles and their children. Our message won't simply be that you will get a ticket if you are caught. Our message will be about protecting the health of our children. Our message will also be about getting help to quit smoking. Our message will be about the dangers of tobacco smoking. As part of the smoke-free Ontario strategy, one of the most comprehensive tobacco control strategies in North America, our government supports excellent cessation programs. We have helped more than 150,000 smokers in their efforts to quit, through programs like the Driven to Quit Challenge and Smokers' Helpline, which are managed by our partner the Ontario division of the Canadian Cancer Society. We have also committed to a permanent retail sales tax exemption for nicotine replacement therapies to help Ontario smokers to quit smoking.

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. It kills over 13,000 Ontarians every year, and children exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to suffer sudden infant death syndrome, acute respiratory infections, ear problems and more severe asthma. The public supports taking action to protect children under 16 from tobacco smoke in motor vehicles. In January of this year, a poll released by the Canadian Cancer Society showed that over 80% of Ontarians, including 66% of smokers in Ontario, support a ban on smoking in vehicles with children under the age of 16. We are confident that the public is ready for this proposed ban to protect the health of our children.

Support for this legislation also comes from leading non-governmental health organizations, including the Ontario division of the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Lung Association, Ontario Medical Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. In the words of the Ontario Lung Association, this is about giving a voice to the back seat.

The people of Ontario are ready for legislation to protect our children from being exposed to second-hand smoke in motor vehicles. Our experience with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, including the recent ban on display of tobacco products, is that we can expect a high voluntary compliance. We are confident in anticipating wide voluntary compliance for this amendment, especially given the level of public support. The reason is very obvious: This

is about the safety and well-being of our children. I appeal to all Ontarians to make the commitment to smoke-free cars, smoke-free vehicles, for our children's sake. It is about the health of our children. I also urge all members of this Legislature to join me in voting in favour of this legislation. This is about creating a healthier, smoke-free Ontario. It's about our future: our children and their health.

0910

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to begin by acknowledging our colleague the member from Sault Ste. Marie, David Oraziotti. Without his determination and drive, we would have, I think, taken a lot longer getting to this place.

We are now in third reading debate on Bill 69, An Act to protect children from second-hand tobacco smoke in motor vehicles by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. It has been more than 40 years that we've been waging this war against tobacco. It was in 1964 that the US Surgeon General, Everett Koop, produced his landmark study that linked smoking tobacco with lung cancer. He also was hoping that by the year 2000, we in fact would be a smoke-free society. We haven't achieved that goal, but with this particular bill, we are going to get that little bit closer.

Today, tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario, killing over 13,000 Ontarians every year. Tobacco-related diseases have been estimated to account for \$1.6 billion in direct health care costs and \$4.4 billion in productivity losses each year.

In my own experience in the war against tobacco, which started in the 1970s, I've seen many people suffering from tobacco-related illness. I was also very much impressed in those early years as to how addictive tobacco can be, so that, as a family physician, counselling those smokers in my practice did not result in very much success. Of course, those smokers were living in a society where tobacco smoke was really pervasive—in restaurants and public places—and so quitting was exceptionally hard.

When I started as medical officer of health in York region in 1988, smoking was commonplace in regional council. In fact, in our own health committee, it was the practice for the chair of our committee to smoke. After a few months, he did acknowledge that perhaps this was not the most exemplary behaviour, and ashtrays and cigarettes were banned from York regional council.

We've come a long way in the last 20 years. Gradually, municipal boards of health called for no-smoking bylaws in municipalities. In York region, this was a very hard thing to do; we had nine area municipalities. I well remember attending those council meetings and urging them to pass smoke-free bylaws—and they did, gradually. At the end of the day, in the year 2000, we finally passed a regional bylaw that covered the whole region of York. The problem, of course, was that as municipalities developed their own bylaws, they had differences in them. So when the McGuinty government passed the

Smoke-Free Ontario Act in 2006, we levelled the playing field across the province.

We have made significant progress: In 2003, the government was committed to reducing tobacco consumption by 20% before the end of its first mandate. We have surpassed that goal: We have had more than a 30% tobacco-consumption reduction, which translates to an incredible 4.6 billion fewer cigarettes. We accomplished this by introducing one of the most aggressive and comprehensive tobacco control strategies in North America, and we have wonderful compliance: It's something like 99% compliance for smoke-free bars, restaurants, hotels and workplaces. We have introduced some cessation programs that have been quite successful as well: More than 150,000 got help with quitting through programs like the Driven to Quit Challenge and the Smokers' Helpline. The STOP study—Smoking Treatment for Ontario Patients—through the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, is designed to find out the most effective methods of supporting Ontario's smokers who want to quit. In its first two years, this study has reached more than 38,000 smokers, and we announced this January that the Minister of Health Promotion has provided an additional \$2 million to add another 15,000 smokers to this study.

In the 2008 budget, our government also committed to a permanent retail sales tax exemption for nicotine replacement therapies to help Ontario smokers to quit. On May 31 of this year, the power walls came down, and we estimate that we have at this point at least 95% compliance with that regulation. Bill 69 is the next important step forward. The primary objective of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act has always been to help protect people from second-hand tobacco smoke in enclosed public spaces and workplaces. This amendment would extend province-wide protection to children in motor vehicles.

There has been widespread support for this action. First of all, on the private member's bill introduced by Mr. Oraziotti, Vance Blackmore, the president of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, said, "The passage of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act was a clear message that the government understood the significant dangers of second-hand smoke and is committed to minimizing involuntary exposure to it. We believe that this bill is a worthy amendment to the act, as it will protect children from involuntary exposure to it while in any vehicle."

A former colleague of mine, Dr. Charles Gardner, medical officer of health for Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and chair of the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health, has said, "More than 24 municipalities have supported a ban on smoking in cars with children present. I am pleased that this includes the regional municipality of York, as well as the town of Tecumseh, city of Kenora, township of Terrace Bay, Peterborough and Toronto, to name a few." There is support from across the province.

Last week in committee, we worked through Bill 69, and I really would like to say that I appreciate the care and consideration my colleagues opposite have given to

this bill. I especially appreciate the shared sense of importance and urgency we have on passing this bill. At committee, we heard from a number of major health organizations that came to comment, and we have their full support in moving this bill forward as it is presented to the Legislature.

We heard that second-hand tobacco smoke in vehicles is particularly harmful and even more so for our children. Recent studies suggest that the concentration of toxins in vehicles can be up to 27 times worse than in a smoker's home. The Ontario Medical Association found that children exposed to second-hand tobacco smoke are more likely to suffer sudden infant death syndrome, acute respiratory infections, ear problems and more severe asthma. The medical science is clear: Second-hand tobacco smoke is dangerous to our children's health. Yet, a Health Canada study in 2005 estimated that 140,000 children in Ontario between the ages of 12 and 16 were exposed to second-hand tobacco smoke in vehicles during a one-month period—a clear indication that this bill is necessary.

We are confident that the public is ready for this proposed ban to protect the health of our children. Given the support from Ontarians, we are expecting that the legislation will have significant voluntary compliance. This legislative debate is just one part of the process that will bring greater public awareness and education.

If this bill is passed, we plan to deliver a multi-layered public education campaign with our smoke-free Ontario partners across the province that will reach out to people wherever they think about their vehicles and their children.

We are leveraging all the components of the smoke-free Ontario strategy to ensure voluntary compliance. Public health units will continue to champion this call to arms, and our cessation programs will help smokers quit.

In conclusion, this is about the safety and well-being of our children. The Premier and our government are committed to this, and our partners are committed to this. I appeal to all Ontarians to commit to smoke-free cars for our children's sake. This is the next step towards a healthier smoke-free Ontario.

0920

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to join third reading debate on Bill 69, which is amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in motor vehicles with children under 16 in the vehicles. Unfortunately, I was double-booked last week on the committee days, but the member from Burlington filled in quite well.

I want to thank all of those associations that came in to appear before the committee: the Canadian Cancer Society, the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health, the Council for a Tobacco-Free Toronto, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, the Ontario Lung Association, and Toronto Public Health.

As we stated in second reading debate, we're certainly in favour of protecting more people from second-hand smoke; in this case, children 16 years of age and younger who are found in cars with adults who are smoking. It's certainly very important to give them a voice, as has been mentioned, from the back seat and that they have protection.

When we heard all the groups who were supportive of the bill before us, many times we heard the statistics on the effects on health of smoking in confined areas, and especially the increased effects on children because of their various lung capacities. I know that they had most of the reports in 2005—the California Air Resources Board report—and then followed up by the 2008 study conducted by the University of Waterloo, which confirmed those findings.

Health Canada, for example, reports that children who are regularly exposed to second-hand smoke are 50% more likely to suffer damage to their lungs or have breathing problems, sudden infant death syndrome, acute respiratory infections, ear problems and more severe asthma, just to mention a few, and we've discussed that thoroughly.

There was a discussion at second reading and in committee about the need for regulation. Again, a Health Canada study estimated that 140,000 children in Ontario between the ages of 12 and 16 were exposed to second-hand smoke in cars in a one-month period. Some of the statistics that you find when you start researching these bills are quite astounding. The Ontario Lung Association backed that up—and the Canadian Cancer Society has phrased it as “giving a voice to the back seat.”

Certainly, there's widespread support, even by smokers, about the banning in vehicles when children are present.

It's always a balance in our society about bringing in legislation and banning things. You have to try and do a balance. I think that when it involves children 16 years of age and younger, you have to assist them with legislation so that they are protected. That is certainly what this bill does.

There are other precedents that are set, especially in Canada. We have other jurisdictions—British Columbia, Nova Scotia and the Yukon Territory, to name just a few—that have brought in similar legislation.

We've asked some questions about the enforcement part and voluntary compliance. We hope to see a high degree of voluntary compliance, but as the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco commented, given the harm that can be done to children by repeatedly exposing them to second-hand smoke, we believe there should be an escalation-applicable fine for repeat offences, and I'm hoping that that may be discussed in regulations as the bill proceeds to that stage.

The education component was brought up by the minister again today. There is no question that there needs to be a strong education component. I know that there has been some education component, especially since the bill has been introduced.

My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo, Mrs. Witmer, introduced a resolution on December 13, 2007, “that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should protect the children and youth of this province from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke in automobiles by immediately implementing an effective province-wide campaign to educate parents about the dangers of smoking in vehicles when a person who is less than 16 years of age is present.”

I know the member from Nickel Belt spoke quite eloquently in committee about the northern Ontario region she represents and the fact that there has to be more education to reach the people in some remote areas, and I’m sure she will speak to that when she has the opportunity.

There are some suggestions that were brought forward to improve the bill. I know that the member from Burlington has had a private member’s bill—I will bring it up again—and moved an amendment in committee that unfortunately was defeated. But despite the fact that the title is the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, it’s not a pot-free Ontario act. Many of my colleagues in the Legislature will know that the member for Burlington, Joyce Savoline, tried on numerous occasions to get the McGuinty government to close that loophole in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and include marijuana and controlled substances. As I said, our first attempt was a private member’s bill, which received unanimous consent in the Legislature but was cut down quickly by the whipped Liberal members in committee. So, unfortunately, we didn’t even have the opportunity to hear from the public as to their thoughts and their positions on this issue, as the discussion—can we use the phrase?—was butted out before we could engage our citizens in that debate.

But the member from Burlington is quite tenacious. She valiantly tried again by putting forward an amendment to Bill 69 in committee which would include marijuana and controlled substances as illegal to smoke in cars with children. The argument that no one would smoke marijuana in a car with children is ridiculous. As a reasonable person, as a medical professional myself, I would also have assumed that no one would smoke cigarettes in a car with children, but then I’ve just read statistics—and other members have—that this is not true. Once again, the Liberals shot down her amendment, based on “the lack of scientific evidence.”

We find that choice of phrasing odd. I now recall where I last heard it used. It was in the 1960s and the 1970s when big tobacco companies were justifying their existence and reassuring the public that their products were safe.

I want to comment about the grade 11 student, Mr. Salvatore Anania, who appeared before the committee and said that one does not need scientific evidence to know that marijuana smoke is harmful and felt that it was the perfect time to include marijuana in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. So I compliment that grade 11 student who made the connection that this government cannot seem to make in respect to banning the smoking of pot, the use of

marijuana—in this case before the committee—in cars. The private member’s bill before was banning second-hand smoke from marijuana in public places. I think it was just tremendous for a grade 11 student to participate.

I want to thank a group of students that assisted the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit in my area. They brought petitions in, supported at the local high school in Lindsay. They went and engaged in the political process—which I find is enlightening; we’re getting our youth involved—and brought those petitions to me. We presented them in the Legislature.

The educational component could have been started months ago, but we’re happy to see that some third party groups are advocating and going forward with an educational component. You can never do enough in that regard and I hope that more is addressed in that matter.

We want to move forward with this legislation; I think all parties are in agreement for that today. It’s unfortunate that the amendment from the member for Burlington was not passed, but maybe we will have this in another day, as regulations proceed.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on Bill 69 today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise today for the third reading of Bill 69, which amends the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Basically, the NDP supports this bill. It is consistent with our party’s historic support for health promotion and children’s well-being. It certainly falls squarely within the framework of what we call the second stage of medicare, which is to keep people well. Protecting children from second-hand smoke does that: It keeps children well.

We also know there is widespread support for the bill by different partners, certainly the partners that came and presented, but also the Ontario Medical Association, the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario, the Ontario Public Health Association, the Lung Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, public health units, the Non-Smokers’ Rights Association—and the list goes on. We know that there is strong public support: Up to 80% of the people in Ontario support this new bill. But this is balanced with the fact that really only 37% of the smokers have made their vehicles smoke-free.

0930

At the base of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is an act that is there to protect every Ontarian from second-hand smoke. During second reading, I had an opportunity to bring forward two amendments that clearly go along with the mission of the act that we’re about to modify with Bill 69: to protect all Ontarians from second-hand smoke. The first amendment was to bring the cut-off age, which presently sits at 16—which means it protects kids 15 and under because it cuts off at 16; 16-year-olds are not included—to 19, 19 being the legal age at which people can smoke. This link is easy to do. The government told us, “Well, it has to do with the consent to treatment.” To me, that link is not there. We had an opportunity to be in line with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and to make the

cut-off at 19. When I asked if there was any body of evidence, any studies that would support that 16 is better than 19, such bodies of evidence did not exist. Nobody can point to a study that says, "If you do the cut-offs at 16 rather than 19, you will have more compliance." None of this exists.

There is a study that exists that used a cut-off of 16, but that was it. There's no valid medical reason or any other reason, for that matter, not to put the cut-off at 19 years old, which would protect children from 18 down to birth.

Many other jurisdictions have chosen to put the cut-off at 19 and to line it up with the age at which people are legally allowed to smoke. By putting that 16-year-old cut-off there, you're building onto this idea that we all know there are a lot of teenagers aged 16 to 19 who smoke; we all know this. Although it is illegal, it still happens. They go, they get cigarettes one way or another, and they smoke.

In putting in this bill an age 16 cut-off, we are almost endorsing that it's a fact of life that kids aged 16 to 19, although they're not allowed to buy tobacco, are going to be smoking in Ontario, and we'll give up on this and put the cut-off at 16, because it's too just hard to get those kids. We are leaders. It's upon us to lead. To put the cut-off at 19 would have shown leadership, but the amendment was voted down by the Liberals.

The second amendment that I brought would make a mandatory three-month period from the time that the bill receives royal assent to the time that the fines will start to be given. Everybody agreed that the strength of this bill is in the education that it sends out. It sends out this message that it is not okay to smoke in a car when there are kids present. But we know that 63% of the smokers are still smoking in their cars when there are kids present. To give public health units and other groups an opportunity when the law has been passed—it is not talked about anymore; it is a law that has received royal assent in Ontario. To give them a three-month education period is what we call a prime time for health promotion. It is a time when people listen, because the law is about to change. It is a great time to do education and to go get those hard-to-get ones.

The minister and some of the people who represent the government say, "Well, there has already been quite a bit of talk about this bill." Yes, I agree that the media have picked the bill and talked about it, but this is very different from targeted health promotion education to people who we know will have a hard time complying.

In my riding, there are communities with smoking rates three times the rates in the rest of Ontario. We know, and the public health units and the people working on smoking-reduction strategies know that this three months of education would have gone a long way to allow them to be successful in helping those people comply with the law. But this amendment was also turned down.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act is there to help protect people from second-hand smoke, but it looks like we're

only going to do this in tiny, weenie little steps when we could have had an opportunity, at no cost to anybody, to take a way bigger step. The NDP will still support this bill, but we wish they could have made it a whole lot stronger, faster.

I think I have to say this at the beginning, but I will share my time with my colleague.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to rise, as we all do in the New Democratic Party, in support of Bill 69. We are absolutely in support of smoke-free cars. We're in support of anything that promotes the health of children, and certainly this bill is a step forward in promoting the health of children. It's staggering to me that people still smoke in cars, but it was also educational to me to discover how toxic that practice is. I didn't know, for example—and I think many watching at home probably don't know—that even if you smoke in a car with a child not present and a child gets into that car, the very upholstery in the car gives off a toxic gas which is also very detrimental to the small lungs of small children. That's something I didn't know.

I was a child in an era when smoking was everywhere. I was a child of parents who smoked, and I think of my own health being compromised. The health of many in the generation that sits here in this chamber has been compromised by a practice that people genuinely didn't see as dangerous, particularly if they cranked down the windows a bit. Now we know better. Now we know that even if you crank down the windows, it's still dangerous. Even if you don't have the child in the car and then you smoke in the car and the child gets into the car afterward, it's still dangerous. It's dangerous no matter how you look at it. It's a dangerous practice and it should be stopped.

Of course, it will be difficult to enforce, but as our lead critic, the member for Nickel Belt, pointed out, it's not about the enforcement of this bill so much, it's about the educational aspect of this bill. The fact that this bill is out there, that it gets some media play, will, in turn, let people know just how detrimental this practice is, and that's the force of this bill.

I also feel very saddened that the amendments that were put forward by the opposition parties were not taken to heart by the McGuinty Liberals, but so be it. That's always the way. Unfortunately, sometimes partisan politics trump common sense. This is certainly the case here. Again, a bill that could have been made stronger and could have offered even more protection will offer a little less protection because it's more important to have partisan politics here, and Liberals to be Liberals, than it is to protect the health of small children.

In fact, if the McGuinty Liberals really were serious about protecting the health of small children, there are a lot of things they could do, and we know this. We know that our member from Hamilton Centre has been an advocate of daycare. If the McGuinty Liberals really wanted to protect the health of children, they would look at what our neighbours in Quebec have done and offer some government-sponsored daycare spaces to children. In fact, now in Ontario, only one in 10 children even have a

shot at a space, and they're not subsidized. The average cost for daycare is over \$1,000 a month in Ontario right now. It's \$7 a day in Quebec. Why can't we do what Quebec does here? Good question. That would protect the health of children.

Something else the McGuinty Liberals could do if they were really serious about protecting the health of children is bring in a dental care program. My husband and I were in Sweden recently where there is free dental care up to the age of 18. If we had that here, that would truly protect the health of children. A community of 9 million in Sweden and we've got 13 million in Ontario—don't tell me we couldn't do it. We're one of the wealthiest jurisdictions in the world. That's what the McGuinty Liberals could do to protect the health of children.

0940

What else could they do? There have been a number of other moments in the news in this last little while: C. difficile. We in the New Democratic Party have called, through the expert leadership of our health critic from Nickel Belt, for the Ombudsman to give oversight to our hospitals. The Liberals aren't interested in that; they're not even interested in having reporting on C. difficile deaths happen until September. I'm speaking personally because my uncle was one of those victims, three times, of C. difficile. Making hospitals safe places would help the health of all of our citizens, including children.

What else would help if the McGuinty Liberals were really serious about protecting the health of children? Not only passing Bill 69, which is about smoking in cars with children, but also bringing in affordable housing because we know one in six of our children suffer from poverty. Poverty is a serious social determinant of health. Children who are poor do not get enough to eat, do not have adequate housing, do not have dental care etc. That's what the McGuinty Liberals could do: actually spend some of the federal dollars that they've got on housing. And of course—a subject near and dear—up the minimum wage, because 41% of our children who live in poverty come from working families. If you have a mother who's working two jobs at minimum wage, that child's health is being compromised.

But I digress. To get back to Bill 69, smoking in cars with children: bad thing. Yes, it's a bad thing, and New Democrats will support the government in trying to abolish this bad act by people who, I don't think, are so much bad as addicted. Which begs the other question of, what are we doing for those who have a hard time overcoming addictions? The answer, unfortunately, from the McGuinty Liberals is not much. They're not doing much to combat addiction in this province, tobacco and alcohol addiction being the two pre-eminent arbiters of death from addiction.

Again, insofar as this bill is a good educational tool, insofar as this bill will take an inch forward where we need a mile forward in terms of children's health—insofar as it does that, we certainly support it. We would also call on this government to look at the whole issue of

addictions. We don't have a drug strategy in Ontario. The city of Toronto has a drug strategy and it's an excellent one. Perhaps we could upload something from our municipalities, and that would be an Ontario drug strategy that the McGuinty Liberals could bring in to look at the whole issue of addiction rather than simply this one small piece of addiction that in this one small way affects children's health.

Certainly, before I sit down, I want to give acknowledgment where it's due, and that is to the wonderful leadership on this file by our wonderful health critic from Nickel Belt and to all of those who put time in on this committee. As I said, we in the New Democratic Party will do anything that will help to further the health of our children.

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

Seeing none, I will go to the minister for a reply.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would like to begin by acknowledging my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie, David Oraziotti; my PA, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham; and also the members opposite for their commitment, support and interest in the well-being of our children. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Ontario for their input.

As was said earlier by my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham, tobacco-related diseases have been estimated to account for \$1.6 billion in direct health care costs and \$4.4 billion in productivity losses each year. Our government has made remarkable progress in the fight against tobacco-related illnesses and death. We accomplished this by introducing one of the most aggressive and comprehensive tobacco control strategies in North America, as I said earlier, and we established a province-wide law for smoke-free environments when the Smoke-Free Ontario Act became law on May 31, 2006. Just recently, on May 31, we took down the power walls, and once again we have achieved widespread voluntary compliance. Our estimates show that over 96% of vendors were in compliance by the May 31 date.

Now, Bill 69 is the next important step in moving forward. The primary objective of this bill and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act has always been to protect people from second-hand smoke in enclosed public places and workplaces. This amendment would extend province-wide protection to children in motor vehicles.

The medical science is very clear that second-hand smoke is dangerous to our children's health. As a government, we are also very aware that even acting in the public's interest needs public support. In January of this year, a poll released by the Canadian Cancer Society showed that over 80% of Ontarians, including 66% of smokers in Ontario, support a ban on smoking in vehicles with children.

Our government is confident that the public is ready for this proposed ban to protect our children's health. Support comes from leading non-governmental health organizations, as I've said before, including the OMA, the Ontario Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke

Foundation of Ontario and the Canadian Cancer Society. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their input. I would like to quote the CEO of the Canadian Cancer Society, Peter Goodhand, who said: "Children don't have a choice when it comes to exposure to second-hand smoke while travelling in a vehicle. We congratulate the Ontario government for taking this step to protect ... children's health."

Our government believes that the people of Ontario are ready for legislation to protect our children from being exposed to second-hand smoke in motor vehicles. This is about protection of our most vulnerable citizens: children who do not have a voice, children age 16 and under. We are confident in anticipating wide voluntary compliance for this amendment, especially given the level of public support.

In response to the member opposite, as with any legislation, I agree with her that this ban will still require some level of enforcement. That is why this proposal includes a partnership with police services across the province to enforce the legislation. Enforcement is indeed important, but voluntary compliance is our goal. Our government knows that public awareness is key to making that happen.

This legislative process alone has brought greater public awareness and education. Again, in response to the member opposite, if this bill is passed, we also plan to deliver a multi-layered public education campaign across the province with our partners. We anticipate that we will reach people wherever they are, to get them to think about the importance of their children's health and our children's.

In addition to public education and enforcement, we will also be leveraging all the components of the smoke-free Ontario strategy to ensure voluntary compliance, including programs to help smokers quit and working with our partners in public health to continue to champion this very worthy cause.

This is about the safety and well-being of our children. The Premier and our government are committed to this, and our partners are committed to this. I appeal to all Ontarians to commit to smoke-free vehicles for our children's sake. Again, I thank everyone involved.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Ms. Best has moved third reading of Bill 69, An Act to protect children from second-hand tobacco smoke in motor vehicles by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Orders of the day.

Hon. David Caplan: I seek consent for the House to recess until 10:45 of the clock today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Is there unanimous consent of the House to recess until 10:45? Agreed. This House now stands recessed.

The House recessed from 0950 to 1045.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity to welcome a number of visitors to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member from Kitchener Centre, in the east members' gallery: Brian and Connie Voll.

On behalf of the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, in the east members' gallery: Clara Russell, Ferlena Burke and Ida Fogo, the member's sisters and a family friend. Welcome.

On behalf of the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, in the west members' gallery we'd like to welcome Victor and Gloria Morris and Larry and Rita Morris, who are celebrating their 50th anniversary—congratulations—and also John Morris.

On behalf of the member from Thornhill, in the west members' gallery: Mr. Fred Winegust, marketing manager at IBM.

On behalf of the member from Peterborough, in the east members' gallery: Mr. Ted Hunter from the Peterborough Rotary, and Ms. Patyna Litvinova, Rotary exchange student from Siberia.

On behalf of the member from St. Paul's, in the east members' gallery: Mr. Sam George, councillor, Kettle and Stony Point First Nation.

On behalf of page Doaa Hussein, in the west members' gallery: her father, Hatem Hussein; her mother, Layla Al-Asawi, and her sisters Samaa Hussein and Safa Hussein.

On behalf of page Taylor Martin, in the public galleries: a friend of hers, Deanna Martin.

In the Speaker's gallery, I'd like to welcome two guests of mine: Francine and Terry Melmer from St. Thomas. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

As well in the Speaker's gallery, we'd like to welcome a delegation from the Ghana Parliament: Ms. Gloria Insaïdo, librarian; Mr. Kwesi Eshun, director, research department; Martha Acquah Hayford, head of Hansard; Mr. Addow Quashie, head of their information communication technology department; and Mr. Adams Fusheini, information resource coordinator, Parliamentary Centre. Welcome to all of our guests today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. According to a recent Hamilton news article, the Ministry of Tourism projects a 9% drop in travellers from the US to Ontario this year, costing us about \$46 million in revenue. The minister knows that things are getting much worse. From the minister's own website, for the first quarter of 2008, the number of same-day trips from the US is down a staggering 25%. Grace Sammut from Resorts of Ontario tells us that the number of

employee hours worked to date is down 24% from last year. This means lost jobs.

My question is this: Does this government actually intend to do nothing to reverse these declining tourism numbers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for Wellington–Halton Hills for sharing some of that factual information. The first thing that I want to say is that this government is dedicated to a sustainable, viable tourism sector. That's why we're working with our partners on a plan—a plan that has put significant dollars into tourism; a plan that is working.

I would like to share some facts. When we look across Canada and Ontario, yes, we're experiencing some challenges when it comes to tourism. But Ontario, compared to some of the other provinces like BC or Quebec, which have seen a 7% and 5.8% decline in their numbers—we've actually seen a bit of an uptick in our numbers with overnight travellers from the US. So things are working. Yes, we do have challenges—

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

1050

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have no idea who the minister's talking to. We're hearing a very different story. This government brags about marketing, yet the My Ontario travel book put out by this minister makes no mention of Windsor and Essex county and only makes passing reference to London, ignoring the great tourism potential of these communities. In the past six years, the tourism industry in Windsor has declined 50%. Both Windsor and London have been amongst the hardest hit by manufacturing job losses. Apparently, London and Windsor don't figure high in this minister's priorities.

John Tory's plan to stimulate tourism and suspend the PST on hotels and attractions this summer will give Ontario's tourism industry a much-needed boost. Will the minister commit today to implementing John Tory's plan?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We've got a great plan that is working. Unfortunately, John Tory's poor band-aid for the province and for the tourism sector is something we will not move on. What we did in our budget bill was to put 92 million new dollars into our tourism industry. These are in tax incentives and initiatives that will help the tourism sector. What's great about Ontario is that we have a four-season destination here.

Let's look at the Windsor area. Next week, we're actually opening up the new Caesars-branded casino. I think this is going to be wonderful for that area. It will attract many more people. It's unfortunate that the opposition opposed that. The opposition also voted against our \$30-million stimulus package for the industry that we brought forward last fall. The opposition—

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: The thousands of small businesses and the villages, towns and cities that rely on tourist dollars can't wait a year or two for another study like this

minister's offering. They need action. They need action this week before the House rises. Where's the small business minister in all of this?

Here's a voice from the north. Stephen Holt of Charlton Lake Camp writes, "Northern Ontario is in need of immediate help for the upcoming season and the government has been quiet." Last week, the minister said that very few support our plan. This week, he's singing a different tune because he knows that the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario understands the urgency. North Bay city council supports our plan. Resorts of Ontario supports our plan. Attractions Ontario supports our plan. Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association supports our plan. Wings of Paradise in Cambridge, the Red Pine Wilderness Lodge, the Walper Terrace in Kitchener and the Millcroft Inn in Alton all support our plan. I could go on and on.

Why won't the minister respond to these pleas for immediate action and bring in our plan to support tourism into Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We've been committed to the tourism sector since forming government back in 2003. Right away in 2004, in our first budget, we made sure that the RST was exempted so that we can use those monies for promoting and marketing our many destinations across Ontario.

For the immediate, we came up with a great initiative through our OPS, which this idea came out of. We have a fun pass that's being distributed to 1.4 million kids across this province. They're going to be able to go to any of our attractions, agencies—the AGO, Fort William, etc.—for free. That will drive much traffic.

Also, where we've had huge success has been with our "There's no place like this" campaign. It really helped our most important market. Our most important market is our domestic market, Ontarians being tourists within—

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

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Tim Hudak: The question is to the minister responsible to consumers. Minister, this morning gas prices hit up to \$1.36 in Hamilton. Back when Dalton McGuinty was in opposition, he claimed he had "three solid ideas" to hold the line on gas prices. Which of those three ideas have you actually acted upon?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I know that the federal government has just been doing some investigation on this. I also know that the former minister, Minister Phillips, had taken a couple of initiatives which we've followed up on. So I think at the supplemental, in terms of the specific plans, I'll refer it to Minister Phillips.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess the answer is that they've acted on zero of the three promises that Dalton McGuinty made before the election.

Unlike Dalton McGuinty, real families that have to pump gas into their own automobiles are getting whacked

by gas prices up to \$1.36. Some forecast that gas prices may go as high as \$1.40 a litre this summer.

Minister, somebody driving a Honda Civic made in Alliston, Ontario, who fills up their tank, on average, once a week would see an increase in their costs of \$378. Families driving a Jeep Grand Cherokee would pay an additional \$603.

Minister, given that your government has acted on none of your promises, what exactly are your plans to give working families and seniors a break on their rising costs this summer?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: To Minister Phillips.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Probably the first question the public asks is, "Are the gas companies, oil companies, proceeding appropriately?" There's no question that the responsibility for that—and I think the member would agree—rests with the federal Competition Bureau, quite appropriately. There's no question of that, and we agree with that. I would note that, according to what we've seen on the weekend, the Competition Bureau has taken some steps. I think we should expect the federal Competition Bureau to play their role on behalf of the consumer.

What can we do here in Ontario? I would say: Ensure that people have options. We are working very closely with our car manufacturers on producing energy-efficient cars and investing a substantial amount of money in assisting them with that.

I will, in the—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is ironic that they switch from the minister who is here to protect consumers to the minister representing the oil companies in the province of Ontario.

Let me say this back to the minister: You heard that somebody driving a Honda Civic is looking at \$378 more this summer from higher gas prices. Since 2003, a typical middle-class family in Ontario is facing \$2,000 more annually in expenses with gas, rises in electricity, higher Dalton McGuinty taxes, new user fees and delisted OHIP services.

We have called for relief this summer for working families by eliminating the provincial sales tax, at the very least, on accommodations and on attractions to help families spend some quality time this summer. Dalton McGuinty has steadfastly refused, because he believes he can spend the money better.

Minister, what kind of relief will you give to Ontario families this summer?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I appreciate the yelling of the question, but it doesn't make it any better.

I'd just say: The public in Ontario want options. It was, dare I say, the Conservative government that cut out support for public transit. It was not a smart move. We are investing a substantial amount of the gas tax in public transit. That will help some people have options. That's a good idea. It will also take pressure off gasoline consumption; another good idea. It will help greenhouse gas

emissions; another good idea. We are taking substantial long-term steps.

You made some bad mistakes when you were in government, and that's frankly why you're there. We're now making the right decisions for the public in Ontario, and we'll keep doing that.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last Thursday, I was in Oshawa proudly marching with GM truck workers and their supporters at the plant. The marchers want GM to live up to its obligations, which were negotiated in good faith less than one month ago. What is the government doing to convince GM to keep the truck plant open and save the livelihoods of 2,600 workers?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance. Could we ask the honourable member to go back to his side for question period?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I apologize to the member; I couldn't hear the question.

Our government is proud of the investments it has made to keep automotive jobs right here in Ontario. Whether you're talking about the domestic, the Detroit Three—General Motors, Ford, Chrysler—or whether you're talking about Honda or Toyota, there is no question that the kinds of investments we're making not only help that sector transition to a newer economy; they help transition to a cleaner economy.

I was pleased last Wednesday evening to be at the tribute to Buzz Hargrove that was held here in Toronto and to see the Premier of Ontario. I was proud to sit with the CAW locals from my community: Ford, Chrysler, General Motors. I was pleased that they continue to recognize, as does the leadership of the—

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

1100

Mr. Paul Miller: This morning, workers complied with an injunction that ended the peaceful blockade of GM's corporate offices. While a judge ruled that the blockade should come down, I note some of the comments made in his ruling: GM was "almost deceitful" in its negotiations with the workers. Additionally, he wrote that the company "should not be rewarded for improper conduct." Well, the company already has its reward in the form of nearly a quarter of a billion dollars of taxpayers' money. Will this government force GM to live up to its obligations or will it allow GM to keep the money and run?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As both the Premier and my colleague the Minister of Economic Development indicated last week, there are penalty clauses associated with the General Motors contract which will be implemented.

What I will say is this: Were it not for those investments at Toyota, we wouldn't have a new plant opening this fall. Were it not for those investments, we wouldn't have flex manufacturing, which leaves the opportunity

for a new product line at Oshawa. Were it not for those investments, we would not have flex manufacturing in Oakville, which will allow for a new product mandate. This government's record is aimed at and designed to encourage the next generation of jobs. That member and his party voted against every one of these initiatives.

We stand with the working men and women in Canada's automotive sector. We'll continue to make the prudent investments that not only create jobs but ensure that we will have a better future ahead in the—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: If it means that existing jobs are protected and new jobs are created, New Democrats are not against strategic investment in the auto sector. In this case there were no job guarantees and no product guarantees. With so many good-paying jobs on the line, how could the McGuinty government have been so incompetent as to negotiate an agreement with a multinational corporation that leaves \$235 million in the company's back pocket while leaving 2,600 workers with nothing more than a pink slip? This time, will this minister just cut the verbal attacks against the NDP and actually answer the question?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Accountability truly is difficult, and you shouldn't have voted against those initiatives. Shame on you. You should have listened to Buzz Hargrove when he said that Premier Dalton McGuinty's government has been "active and supportive, recognizing the importance to the whole provincial economy of retaining these high-productivity jobs."

You should have been supportive when the workers at Chrysler, General Motors and Ford came to us and said, "Make these investments to help protect our jobs and to bring new jobs." You should have been supportive when we invested in Toyota, which will see a new plant opening just outside of Woodstock. You should have been supportive, sir, I say with respect, when Honda expanded. That party had an option. It chose to vote against auto workers. It chose—

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. By the end of March 31, 2009, how much does his ministry expect to invest in provincial funds through the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program?

Hon. Jim Watson: We're very proud of the affordable housing program for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, it was an agreement signed by the previous federal government and the McGuinty government.

Let me just give the honourable member a couple of examples of some of the dollars that have gone into affordable housing programs: in her home city of Toronto, \$178.5 million, which represents 5,246 units; in my home

town of Ottawa, \$44.7 million for 1,064 units; and in the great community of London, \$22.9 million for 647 units.

This is in addition to money that we just put in in our last budget—\$100 million—the largest single investment of repair and rehabilitation money in the history of Ontario. We're proud of that. We know more work has to be done.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I have two documents in my hand. One is a 2005 Canada-Ontario agreement where the McGuinty government promised to invest 300 million provincial dollars in affordable housing by March 31, 2009. The other document I have is an April 2008 letter from the minister's own office that says he expects to spend only \$100 million of the \$300 million by March 31, 2009. Why won't this minister admit in this House that he has absolutely failed to deliver on his \$300-million promise?

Hon. Jim Watson: The member is completely wrong, once again. She is mixing up two or three different programs. Let me just tell you the record of this government compared to the record of when the NDP were in power. The last year that the NDP were in power, what did they spend? Fifty-two million dollars. The McGuinty government has spent \$185 million.

I'm quite proud of the fact that this government entered into an affordable housing program agreement with the previous federal government, and I'm disappointed that the NDP are not putting pressure on their federal counterparts to raise this issue, day in and day out, to ensure that the federal government comes to the table with a realistic affordable housing program, because we know that the funding starts drying up with the RAP program and the homelessness initiative on March 31. So stand up for Ontario, NDP.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The minister knows that the federal funding dollars for affordable housing are here only because of the role the NDP played in Ottawa.

Here is what the Toronto Star says about his performance: "Idle Funds Go to Waste"; "Ontario Lagging on Social Housing"; "Many Shut Out of Rental Programs"; "Ontario Housing Gap Tops \$1 Billion"; "Buck-Passing on Housing." That's what the Toronto Star editorial board says about his performance. Meanwhile, \$285 million of promised Ontario money and federal real dollars are going wanting and 150,000 people are waiting for affordable housing in Ontario.

Will this minister stand up and apologize for wasting the funds, for not spending the money and for promising something that's not there?

Hon. Jim Watson: Again, if the honourable member wants to be the leader of her party, she's going to have to get better research and get her facts straight.

This government has done more on the affordable housing front than the last two governments combined, because we actually reached a deal with the previous federal government under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin.

Let me tell you what the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association executive director said: "While no one gov-

ernment can solve decades of issues affecting the current state and need for more affordable housing, this government is leading the way in finding solutions to improve affordable housing in Ontario. Today's announcement will make a real difference and demonstrates that the government has been listening to" the sector's "concerns."

I'm proud of the fact that we are back in the affordable housing business. Yes, we have to do more, but we need the federal government to be at the table as a willing partner to work with cities, towns and the province.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Education: Last Wednesday, the Premier told this House that he would direct the Minister of Education to investigate the failure of an elementary school principal to report an assault on a six-year-old in one of our public schools.

Unfortunately, the minister appears not to share the Premier's urgency. In fact, when I offered that the opposition would co-operate with the government to pass an amendment to the Child and Family Services Act that would make it mandatory for school officials to report to parents and to the police, the minister chose to ignore that proposal and instead rambled on about a future committee investigation.

We have the facts. There are protocols in place; they're not being followed. What we need is an amendment to legislation that will make that reporting mandatory. What is the minister waiting for and why will she not act on this issue?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I watched for eight years while the government opposite made precipitous decisions that did not take into account what was actually going on in our education system. That is not how this government operates. What we are doing is looking at the reporting mechanisms, and as the member opposite knows full well, there are reporting mechanisms in different pieces of legislation.

My answer is that I'm very concerned that we close any gaps that exist in reporting. My parliamentary assistant, Liz Sandals, is leading the safe schools action team. They are talking to people around the province who understand the issues of safe schools and understand the culture of schools. What I commit is that I will take the advice of the safe schools action team, because they will have considered the real situation in our schools rather than an ideological political position.

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister is saying that what I brought to the attention of this House and the Premier last week is not real. What she is saying is that when the Premier said to this House that he will instruct the minister to investigate, she doesn't share the Premier's concern.

There is nothing further to investigate. We know that protocols aren't being followed. We know that principals are not using good judgment. We need legislation to sup-

port what every parent expects, and that is that if a student is assaulted in our schools, they'll know about it and the police will know about it.

I'm calling now on the minister to assume her responsibility, bring legislation into this House and ensure that there are teeth in the law to ensure that those responsible for looking after our kids in our schools will follow the law, report to parents and report to the police. Why will she not do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's obviously a very serious situation when a protocol has not been followed. The Premier did speak to me. I understand absolutely that it is my responsibility. It is our responsibility to make sure that the correct protocols are in place and that they are followed. The fact is, the protocol was in place. The protocol was there. What we need to do is make sure that we have the right enforcement mechanisms and that we have the right procedures in place.

It is clear that the board has taken action in this situation, and that is as it should be. The board has taken action. It is my expectation that when a protocol is breached, a board will take action. But it is not the answer for any of the children in our system for a government to take action that has nothing to do with the realities of what's going on in our schools. I need the information. I need to know where the reporting gaps are, and when we know where the reporting gaps are, then we will fill them.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

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

Under the minister's watch, Ontario hospitals are cutting beds, cutting staff and increasing occupancy rates. The Rouge Valley Health Centre proposed cutting 220 health providers, 24 of them cleaning staff, and cutting 36 hospital beds, while at the same time pushing its bed occupancy level from 82% to over 95%. Studies show that when occupancy goes over 90%, as Rouge Valley is projecting, infection rates go up by 42%. Why is this government promoting public policies that put Ontarians at risk of contracting and dying from a hospital-acquired infection?

Hon. George Smitherman: As the honourable member will know from her participation this morning with her colleagues from one of the public sector unions, there have been governments in the province of Ontario historically that have cut funding for hospitals. She is in a party that was one of them. Our party hasn't done that. When she leads her question by suggesting that overall in health care we're closing hospital beds and reducing staff in hospitals, that's not accurate either. I would encourage the honourable member to bring forward information that actually confirms that point.

All across the platform of health care, our government has been associated with enhanced investment and substantially increased employment so that those people working in hospital environments can enhance their cap-

acity to care for the people of Ontario. That is our record; it is proven by statistics. If the honourable member has a question with a basis in fact, I'll be looking forward to it by way of supplementary.

Mme France G linas: Well, I do have a bit of facts. The British Medical Association concluded in their report that high occupancy rates and less cleaning staff lead directly to the spread of hospital-acquired infections. Ontario's own chief coroner stated that overcrowding may have played a role in the C. difficile outbreak in Sault Ste. Marie hospital. Especially in light of this C. difficile outbreak, why is this minister standing by while hospitals cut staff, close beds and force hospitals to operate at 95% capacity?

Hon. George Smitherman: Maybe it was the combined efforts of those two parties who closed more than 18,000 acute care beds that has contributed to these occupancy issues. Our work over the course of the last four years has been to invest in the construction of more hospitals than the last five governments in the province of Ontario combined, and when you look at the particular circumstances in Sault Ste. Marie, that has included moving toward many more semi-private rooms—a substantial advance over the circumstances that were in place.

I do say to the honourable member: We acknowledge that there are very genuine risks in our hospital environments associated with things like superbugs. That's why public reporting and measurement of those will be introduced very shortly. Even your allies on this situation agree that that's an important step. I do say to the honourable member: If she wishes to demonstrate that across the province of Ontario there are fewer beds now than when we came to office, she's got a lot of work to do, because it's simply not true.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. My constituents have told me that it can sometimes take a lot of time and resources when they're required to fill their tax obligations and that they find them to be cumbersome. Filling out numerous forms, waiting for information to be provided, and interpreting tax laws on remitting the correct amount of tax can sometimes be quite challenging. Considering the fact that small business makes up 99% of the business community in Ontario, what are you doing to alleviate the red tape and ease the amount of time associated with filing taxes correctly and helping Ontarians focus energy on running their business?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would like to thank the member for Essex for the question. It gives me a great opportunity to speak about the fact that this morning I was at the Toronto Board of Trade launching our Ministry of Revenue new initiative on improving and modernizing our tax system to allow all taxpayers across the province the opportunity to pay their taxes in a more streamlined way. Our new system is called Onttaxs. Part of that system was to introduce one new toll-free number,

1-866-ONT-TAXS, which will replace 39 phone numbers that the Ministry of Revenue formerly had in place. This will streamline it for all of our taxpayers across the province.

We're also introducing one business number for every business across the province. That will integrate the federal business number and allow our taxpayers to use one number when accessing information. They'll be able to access this information soon on a new Internet service that will allow businesses to file their returns, make payments and view their accounts 24/7, seven days a week. We're making great initiatives here to—

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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I am pleased that this government is moving forward on the modernization of Ontario's tax administration system, and I'll certainly advise my constituents of the changes that are taking place, which they will no doubt be pleased to hear. Many will feel that they are long overdue.

Minister, changes of this magnitude in a tax system as old as ours can be nothing short of monumental. Why were some of these changes not made years ago, as has been the case in other jurisdictions, and what benefits other than those you've mentioned can Ontario businesses expect to see as these changes come to fruition?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: One of the reasons that these changes were not implemented sooner was because the Conservatives, when they were in power, made no effort whatsoever to modernize our tax system in the province, despite the fact that the Auditor General requested it in not one, two, but three different reports. We are proud to be moving forward with our Onttaxs system and providing an easier system for all taxpayers across the province. Our online service will provide our business taxpayers their tax history for over four years, right at their fingertips, 24/7; we are spreading our walk-in service to over 70 Service Ontario locations; we have this new 1-800 number; and we have the new business number, but it's really the interactive service that we're providing through the Internet that's going to benefit all of our taxpayers. They'll be able to remit their PST and their Ontario health tax in a timely manner, online, starting this fall. We're rolling it out in a streamlined way to ensure that security's in place, but it will be a service that will be available this fall for all taxpayers.

1120

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Deputy Premier. In the wake of Liberal contracts gone awry and industrial unrest, the Premier and two of his ministers are in California, despite being snubbed by Governor Schwarzenegger. Their purported mission is to stir up interest in Ontario's biotech industry and to advertise the \$1-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund and a pharmaceutical investment program, yet a close inspection of these Liberal corporate handout schemes is very problematic.

Nowhere in the eligibility criteria is there a mention of job guarantees. The government is obviously not learning from its recent mistakes. Deputy Premier, why are job guarantees not part of the criteria for biotech funding?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think I need to remind the member of some facts about our province. I wonder if the member knows that Ontario is number two in pharmaceutical research in Canada. Those are the kinds of things we're investing in.

I wonder if the member knows that we're number three in the digital media industry in Canada and that we want to be number one. That's why we are taking some of the steps we're taking.

I wonder if he knows that we're number one in the ICT sector in Canada. Toronto's the third largest in the world in North America, and we are number one in financial services in Canada, number one in R&D, number two in aerospace, number one in the business services sector and number one in the chemical sectors.

We will continue to make the investments through the Next Generation of Jobs Fund and through the other sources that we have available. We will make the investments that will create jobs, that will ensure that we remain competitive in the—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That was a terrible answer. He just got hosed in Oshawa, and there are no guarantees in the Next Generation. The fact is that this government's attempt to interfere and control the market is stifling Ontario's competitiveness. As their weak contracts are exploited, industries that do not receive government favour are being pillaged by some of the highest business taxes in the western world.

Deputy Premier, when will your government learn that no-strings-attached, one-off handouts are not effective in the long term? When will you stop wasting Ontario taxpayers' dollars and pay attention to some of the experiences you've had just recently in Oshawa, where you got hosed because your guarantees were no good?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member for Oshawa and the member for Whitby called for that. In fact, the federal Minister of Finance is now calling for more assistance to companies like General Motors. In the member's riding of Oakville, the very day the General Motors' announcement happened, Ford was announcing a new flex line at their plant and increased employment.

There is no doubt that we do need a variety of policies. That's why we have a five-point plan. That's why we're investing in skills. That's why we have cut the capital tax and eliminated it for manufacturers. That's why we are investing in research and innovation. That's why—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the member from Halton: You just asked a question. You should be listening to the response. Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That's why we're investing in partnerships. This government's five-point plan is the right approach. It is the approach that will help get this economy through the challenges it faces, and we will be better and stronger as a result of it.

CASINO EMPLOYEES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Deputy Premier: In light of Ontario's job crisis, what is your government doing to ensure that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. stops its current drive to take away good-paying, full-time jobs and benefits from CAW casino workers that it employs in Brantford, Toronto and Sudbury?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan: Quite the contrary, I can assure the member that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. has spoken to the conciliator and let him and the union know that they are quite eager to get back to the bargaining table. I want to encourage both parties to do so.

The facts are these: The Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. is seeking, on behalf of its shareholders, the people of Ontario, and on behalf of its employees a fair deal that will honour both parties and make sure that we have a strong sector. This corporation has taken great pains to bring a new culture of continuous improvement. I think that's being reflected in the current dialogue that is going on. Speaker, I can assure you and I can assure the member that all work is being done toward achieving a fair settlement, and I would encourage both parties to get back to the table to achieve that.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The OLG is pressuring CAW to agree to demands that would replace their full-time casino staff with part-time temporary workers for less pay and fewer benefits. The government's own corporation is set to kill off full-time casino jobs and decent wages and benefits for workers. This cannot be allowed to stand.

Will this minister meet with CAW leadership immediately, as they have requested of him by letter, and work to ensure that the OGL doesn't erode the full-time employment status of CAW casino workers and the jobs that are supporting their families?

Hon. David Caplan: I can assure the member that it is not my intention to insert myself, as it would be inappropriate, into the current round of bargaining. We are working through the conciliation process, through the collective bargaining, which we do believe in. We don't believe there should be interference in that process. I'm encouraging both sides to come together to achieve a fair settlement.

Also, this member's charge, that somehow there is a change, is not quite in keeping with the facts in this province. In fact, this government and this corporation have invested considerably, and next week I'm looking forward to being in Windsor for the re-branding of Casino Windsor to the Caesars brand. That represents an investment today of some \$439 million back into this

sector, back into good jobs, back into supporting the communities of Windsor and the families right across this province that depend on these vital jobs. This government has taken great pains to invest in this sector—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question? The member for London–Fanshawe.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Labour. I was shocked and horrified last week when a young, 14-year-old worker received burns to more than 50% of his body while working at an auto parts company. I understand from my colleague MPP Ruprecht that a workplace accident involving a 20-year-old happened in his riding at the end of May. That young man also received burns to 50% of his body.

Minister, I am sure it must be difficult for you to see these accidents happen over and over again. I would like know what steps your ministry is taking to make sure these kinds of accidents do not happen again and that the people of Ontario, especially our young workers, are safe when they go to work.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for London–Fanshawe for the question. Having been to his riding not too long ago and meeting the stakeholders with the member, I know how concerned he is about injured workers, in particular the safety and health of young workers.

I share his concerns about these two injuries that have occurred over the last number of weeks, and my sympathies certainly go out to the parents and the injured workers themselves. We hope for a full and speedy recovery.

The reality is that a new worker is four times more likely to be injured in the first month on the job than at any time in their career after that. That tells me that we all have a lot of work to do when it comes to working with employers across this province to ensure that those young workers get the orientation and training they need to be healthy and safe when they get out on the job. I thank the member for raising this issue. It's a very important—

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My constituents of London–Fanshawe, as do the members of this Legislature, want to know that their sons and daughters will return home from work safe and sound. I noted that you said that all MPPs got a kit on young worker safety again this spring. Has your ministry undertaken any other activities to help ensure the safety of our young workers? It's important not just for my riding, as I mentioned, but to all the members of this House, because it's very important for us to make sure our young workers, when they go to work, come back home safe. Can you tell us, Minister?

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Hon. Brad Duguid: Yes, indeed, we have sent out tip sheets that have been distributed to one million students from grades 7 to 12 right across the province. It is about

awareness. It is important that young people, when they go to their jobs this summer, are aware of the fact that they do have rights to protect themselves if they feel that what they're being asked to do is unsafe. It's about awareness for employers as well. They have a responsibility to ensure that they provide orientation and that they provide training. The member is quite right. We just celebrated Father's Day this weekend. As a father myself, when my son is old enough to go off to the workforce—I think all of us want to make sure that when they do go to their job, they will come home safe and sound. It's a priority for our government. We are conducting a blitz of employers across the province as we get into the summer job season, and we're making a number of other efforts in partnership with a number of others across this—

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

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, who doesn't appear to be here, so I will redirect the question to the Deputy Premier. What kind of support does your government offer small business operators in understanding and complying with provincial regulations?

Hon. George Smitherman: As the honourable member would know, even through question period, from an earlier question addressed by the Minister of Revenue, the government has had an approach which is designed to enhance the ease with which people working in small businesses are able to deal with the various regulatory challenges and burdens that are there. In addition, we're working with the Minister of Labour in the driver's seat to enhance our ability to diminish regulation burdens where possible. BizPal is a one-stop shop for business licensing and permits, which is a big step forward in design to enhance the ease with which small business operators can meet those various tests.

Mr. Norm Miller: I recently met with a convenience store operator in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. He told me that times are tough. He has been in business for four years, and recently an inspector arrived at his business and wanted to see all the receipts for the past four years for cigars purchased. Without the receipts, the fine would have been \$10,000. Now, at no time since he bought the business has anyone from the government come around to tell him that he should be hanging on to these receipts. In fact, at no time has anyone from the government come in to give him any kind of advice or support on how to comply with your government regulations.

Minister, big business is packing up and leaving Ontario, and we're going to need to start treating small business a lot better in this province. It seems that your government is doing nothing to help small business. When will you start to work to help small business instead of putting the focus on laying charges and collecting fines?

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, the matter at hand that the honourable member raises is quite a serious public health concern. I think that it is important, as well, for the honourable member to acknowledge that there's a very strong likelihood that this regime—the one that he mentions—is identical to that which was in place when his party was in government.

But we have made huge strides forward on this issue. BizPal, as I mentioned in the earlier answer, is a partnership with the federal government and municipalities, an initiative that allows small businesses to create a customized list of permits and licences. This is a very, very important enabler. We've created a single corporate tax administration form, a one-stop regulatory registry, a master business licence, and compliance information systems. You can see that all across the landscape is an attempt to make easier the burdens associated with the regulation of business. These are initiatives which could have been—

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

ERAMOSA KARST

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Last week, your Ontario Realty Corp. held an agency public involvement centre drop-in session as part of the planning and class environmental assessment on the Eramosa karst feeder lands. The primary focus of the planning and class environmental assessment study is stated as the possible disposition of these ANSI feeder lands.

When will the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources do the right thing and transfer the ownership of the Eramosa karst to the Hamilton Conservation Authority?

Hon. David Caplan: Thank you for the question. It's quite bizarre, because I was on hand when I personally transferred the deed for the Eramosa karst to the Hamilton Conservation Authority. I don't know what further action he's looking for. I can tell the member, in fact, that the Ontario Realty Corp. has opened up dialogue with the local community. They have brought in international karst experts to provide the very best scientific data, research and advice as far as what further lands should be protected. It's a hallmark of this government to want to engage the public, to be able to open an honest dialogue with them and to listen to the advice that they receive before any future decisions are made.

The member is also aware that the city of Hamilton in an earlier official plan had designated these lands for development. They have subsequently decided to put a—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm glad the minister mentioned "honesty" and "experts." At the public consultation last week, the minister's true agenda for these lands was clearly visible. The mockery of the public consultation process was disgraceful. The unbiased premise for such

consultations was clearly breached and a major conflict of interest inflicted upon this process. Why has this minister hired Adi Irani of A.J. Clarke and Associates Ltd.—who just happens to be the president of the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association, the voice of the residential and construction industry in our area—as a consultant to this project? Where are the environmentalists? Where are the local interest representatives? Nowhere. This is really special, Mr. Minister.

Hon. David Caplan: It is very special that finally we have a government committed to protecting public lands. It didn't occur under the NDP and it certainly didn't occur under the Conservatives. In fact, this government takes a back seat to no one on the opposite side of the Legislature when it comes to protecting the public interest and permanently protecting vital lands, as we did when I presented the deed for the karst lands to the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area in Hamilton.

The member is all rhetoric and hot air, because the facts are quite a bit different. The government has undertaken a genuine consultation process and has brought in international experts when it comes to the karst. I know that the member is very late to this particular issue and is trying to gain some particular attention for himself locally, but the fact is—

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

CHINESE-CANADIAN HEAD TAX REDRESS DAY

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. June 22 is the second anniversary of the federal government's apology for a dark chapter in Canada's immigration history, the Chinese head tax and the subsequent Chinese Exclusion Act. These two separate pieces of legislation had a strong impact on Canada's immigration system, setting guidelines and a per person levy which discriminated against newcomers of Chinese origin.

Minister, as you well know, such federal restrictions at that time created serious social and economic consequences. Would the minister please tell us what the impact has been of this historic apology?

Hon. Michael Chan: My thanks to the honourable member for the question. The member is correct: June 22 marks the second anniversary of the federal government's apology for the Chinese head tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act. First passed by the House of Commons in 1885, the Chinese Immigration Act imposed a \$50 head tax on all people of Chinese origin upon entering Canada. This head tax was raised to \$500 in 1903, comparable to two years of wages at the time. While the tax decreased the number of Chinese newcomers, the amended Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 cut off all Chinese immigrants to Canada. This act stood from 1923 to 1947, banning Chinese immigration to Canada.

Canada is now a multicultural society, where it is widely acknowledged that diversity is one of our greatest

strengths. Currently, newcomers from 200 countries come to Canada—

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

Mr. Charles Sousa: I, like all members of the Legislature, acknowledge that the Chinese head tax was discriminatory and unfair. I am pleased to note that, despite the adversities of the head tax, the Chinese community here in Ontario, which is hundreds of thousands strong, continues to make significant contributions to our province.

To the minister: What has been the response to the federal apology for the Chinese head tax here in Ontario and what effect does this have on immigration to Canada?

Hon. Michael Chan: In the fall of 2006, the then-Minister of Citizenship and Immigration rose in the Legislature to seek the consent of all parties to recognize June 22 as Chinese-Canadian Head Tax Redress Day in Ontario. On this day, members from all parties rose and confirmed their support for the federal apology and condemned the past discriminatory practices of the federal legislation. The apology itself was very important. It allows all Canadians, regardless of ethnic background, an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the past and to continue building a strong Ontario for the future.

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Now, in my capacity as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I ask all members to pause for a moment on June 22 to reflect not only on the past injustices done or how far we have come but also about the work that still needs to be done to ensure that Ontario continues to be a place of opportunity for newcomers from all over the world.

GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a question for the Minister of Energy with respect to the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, and we welcome them to the Legislature today. Minister, I understand that the greenhouse industry has met with successive Ministers of Energy on several occasions to discuss the potential benefits of the Ontario Power Authority's energy programs as they relate to the province's supply requirements and the opportunities for the greenhouse industry to be part of the OPA solution, at the same time providing for the sustainability of the industry. Can the minister provide us with an update on the status of the clean energy standard offer program and its feasibility for the greenhouse industry?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: The member is right: I have met with them. My colleague from Essex is a relentless champion of the greenhouse industry. My wife is from Leamington, so I have a good appreciation of the greenhouse business.

Yes, they have a proposal, to use the language that the member used—the clean energy standard offer program. What that really means is that the industry can produce electricity as part of their heating projects in their green-

houses and sell it into the grid, as we call it—sell electricity to the rest of the people in Ontario. It is a good idea. The OPA, on our behalf, is pursuing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: My understanding is—and I will give the total answer in a few minutes—that in the week of July 14, they'll release the draft rules, and I'll tell you the rest of the story in the supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, you acknowledge—and we've talked about it many times—that we've got a supply problem in this province, and much of it is as a result of your government's energy plan. Combined heat and power can be a huge part of that solution, and the greenhouse industry is a very appropriate sector for combined heat and power. Could I ask the minister if he would direct the OPA—because they've had meetings with three successive ministers over three years—to sit down for some meaningful discussions with the greenhouse industry so that they can move on with a standard offer program that is beneficial not only to their industry but to everybody in Ontario who is facing energy shortages as we go into the future?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I won't let one of the things he said go unchallenged. We'll have more new electricity generation coming online in the next 18 months than at any other period in the history of the province, so I'm happy with that.

Again, as a result of the work of my colleague from Essex and others, the Ontario Power Authority will sit down with the greenhouse industry. As I said, the plan right now is that in the week of July 14, as a result of those discussions, draft rules will be issued. In the week of August 11, the final rules will be issued, and we can get on with this process of signing contracts with our greenhouse partners to produce electricity for the people of Ontario.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, you'll know that Unilever, down on Lakeshore, about six years ago remorphed itself into a company called Korex. In order for that company to stay open, the new company, Korex, wanted concessions from the workers. The Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada sat down and negotiated a six-year agreement where they took an 85-cent cut in pay and they froze their salary and their collective agreement for six years in order to save that company.

Today the new owner-operator of Korex is saying that they want to take out of the collective agreement everything but wages and benefits; in other words, all of the seniority rights, all of the grievance procedures and all of the language that the workers have benefited from for many years in that company. My question on behalf of those workers is: What are you going to do to protect those workers' rights?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for raising the issue. It would be totally inappropriate for the Minis-

ter of Labour to comment specifically about a matter that's going on between an employer and an employee with regard to their collective bargaining agreement.

However, we do have mediators in the Ministry of Labour. I think everybody in this Legislature respects them as being among the best mediators in the country. We're always pleased to place those mediators at the disposal of parties when they're in these kinds of disputes to provide advice and help them reach agreements that they can go forward together with. It's in the interest of everybody if, indeed, the employers and the employees can reach those agreements. If that is not possible, the member would know that the workers and—assuming that they're unionized as well—their unions could—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Of course they're unionized; they're CEP. That was part of the question.

Listen: If the Minister of Labour is not going to protect workers, then who in this province will protect workers? The issue here is, the employer is saying, "I want to gut your collective agreement and take out things that have been given you by right through the Ontario Labour Relations Act." These workers, for years, have done what they've had to do to keep this company afloat. All they get back in exchange is a company that says that they want to gut those rights.

It's bad enough that we're losing jobs at GM and losing jobs across this province. What are you going to do to protect workers who are working today, to make sure we don't have bad bosses who come in and try to take away all of the collective rights that workers have fought for all these years?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think what the member is asking me to do is intervene in a matter that's before the Ontario Labour Relations Board. I think the member knows full well that it would be completely inappropriate for the Minister of Labour to do that.

What we can do, and what we do do, is assist parties in trying to come together and reach agreement. We certainly have mediators who are available to assist the parties in these matters. Workers have the opportunity to grieve matters when they feel an employer has in some way abrogated their collective bargaining agreement. That's what the Ontario Labour Relations Board is there for. Certainly, in a matter such as this, the Ontario Labour Relations Board would have an opportunity to take the issues that the member has brought up under advisement. Our goal as a government is to provide a climate where parties can, in a balanced way—

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

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. In a changing global economy, knowledge and skills are key to future success.

To compete in the changing global economy, we need to make sure that Ontarians are at their best.

Our primary, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions play a huge role in educating future leaders and innovators. That's why our Ontario government places such high emphasis on education. Post-secondary institutions allow students an opportunity to develop and refine their skills. They offer future leaders the support and guidance they need.

Our Reaching Higher plan was the largest single investment in post-secondary education in 40 years. Minister, what else are you doing to make our post-secondary schools—

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

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to applaud the honourable member's support for post-secondary education. As members know, in order to compete globally, not only do we need to invest in post-secondary education and training; we also need to invest in research around international issues.

I was very pleased last week to announce a \$25-million investment at the University of Toronto for the new School of International Studies. The new school raises Ontario's profile on the world stage, bringing together the Munk Centre for International Studies and the Canadian International Council, while forging strong ties with the School of Public Policy and Governance and the Rotman School of Management. It will create opportunities for 15 new Ph.D. students this year and 40 masters students over the next two years.

Institutions like this will attract some of the best scholars and ensure Ontario's place as a leading research—

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

1150

PETITIONS

STROKE SURVIVORS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by 2,649 good residents of Cambridge, presented to me by the Cambridge Stroke Recovery Association and Norma, Rudy and Doug Martin.

"Whereas there is a complete lack of government-funded outpatient therapy for stroke survivors upon discharge from hospital in the city of Cambridge ... ; and

"Whereas, on October 29, 2004, a state-of-the-art government-funded outpatient hospital program, which included therapy programs for stroke survivors discharged from the hospital, was cut by the Cambridge Memorial Hospital due to a lack of provincial funds;

"We, the undersigned stroke survivors, caregivers, family members and friends of stroke survivors in Cambridge ... , draw your attention to the following:

“That the absence of a government-funded outpatient therapy program leaves many stroke survivors who are unable to pay for private therapy with a gap in services. As a result of this lack of therapy, many survivors despair and regress; and

“That therapy is critical to restoring a survivor’s ability to function and become rehabilitated and reintegrated in the community, as opposed to being forced to enter a long-term-care facility, thus saving the system money while greatly improving the quality of life for stroke survivors and their families; and

“That resources devoted to fund one in-patient stroke rehabilitation bed could fund a full stroke rehabilitation outpatient team (full-time physiotherapist and occupational therapist and half-time speech-language pathologist and social worker) for one year (“Starting a Revolution in Stroke Rehabilitation”);

“Therefore, we request that the Ontario government give priority to restoring a government-funded outpatient therapy program in Cambridge, Ontario, to provide desperately needed rehabilitation for stroke survivors (and others with similar needs) after discharge from hospital.”

As I agree with the contents of the petition, I affix my name thereto.

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Naughton and Whitefish.

“Whereas the 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”—a resident of my riding—“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;

“Section R-60 ... states that, ‘A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded....’ 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 the Legislative Assembly to enact:

“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, will affix my name to it and send it with page Murray.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I have a petition signed by persons from Blenheim, Tilbury, Ridgetown, Chatham and many other points within my riding.

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

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

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

“Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight; and

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

“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.”

I have signed the petition.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day.”

I agree with this petition and am signing it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I thank many of the staff at Credit Valley Hospital for having affixed their signatures to it. It reads as follows:

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

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating

theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

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

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Christopher to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that Ajax-Pickering hospital should have full funding for mental health, including beds; and

“Whereas this would affect the mental health programs and mental health beds at the Ajax-Pickering hospital;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Fully fund the mental health beds and programs at Ajax-Pickering hospital.”

I’m pleased to sign in support.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: This is a new petition for the preservation of Ajax-Pickering hospital.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board reversed the 2006 announcement closing the maternity and pediatric services at the Ajax-Pickering hospital due to an overwhelming public outcry; and

“Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board of directors has recently approved closing the 20-bed mental health unit at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

“Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings, particularly with the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, which will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum ... birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms opening this fall in 2008, even with the Ontario Ministry of Health’s largest-ever expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

“Whereas there is a natural boundary, the Rouge Valley, that clearly separates the two distinct areas of Scarborough and Durham region;

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

“That the Central East Local Health Integration Network ... and the Rouge Valley Health System ... board of

directors review the Rouge Valley Health System make-up and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

“Further, that we position Ajax-Pickering hospital within Lakeridge Health, thus combining all of our hospitals in Durham region under one Durham region administration.”

I affix my signature to this and will pass it to Dina.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas many young people with developmental special needs have no meaningful social, recreational or vocational opportunities after high school; and

“Whereas many of these young people have no real options for living independently in the community; and

“Whereas current supports in place are insufficient to meet the needs of these young people;

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

“That the McGuinty government allocate an appropriate level of funding to advance a transformation agenda of individualized funding for adults with developmental special needs in the province of Ontario to allow them to live with dignity and to reach their full potential as members of our communities.”

I’m pleased to sign this and give it to page Murray to take to the table.

1200

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition here, and I’ll read it.

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

“Whereas over 75% of Ontario’s unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa’s unfair eligibility rules; and

“Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

“Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces, thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario’s unemployed workers.”

I’ve signed this, and I’ll have Christopher from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West deliver it to the table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that Ajax-Pickering hospital should have full funding for mental health, including beds; and

“Whereas this would affect the mental health programs and mental health beds at the Ajax-Pickering hospital;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Fully fund the mental health beds and programs at Ajax-Pickering hospital.”

I’m pleased to sign this in support.

GRAFFITI

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: “To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas graffiti creates a nuisance that can adversely affect property values, business opportunities and the enjoyment of community life; and

“Whereas graffiti promotes a sense of disrespect for private property and a perception that laws protecting public and private property can be disregarded with impunity; and

“Whereas it is important that everyone do their part in keeping both public and private properties free of graffiti in order to maintain community pride and confidence; and

“Whereas the quick removal of graffiti from walls, fences and other structures is critical to maintaining community cleanliness and beauty; it is always true that the prevention is the best policy;

“Accordingly, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature:

“To impose certain conditions on the sale of spray paint, broad-tipped marker pens, paint pens, glass-cutting tools and glass-etching tools or instruments of graffiti and to make it be unlawful for any person, other than a parent, legal guardian, school teacher or law enforcement officer in the performance of duty, to sell, exchange, give, deliver, loan, or otherwise furnish or permit to be sold, exchanged, given, delivered or loaned any prohibited graffiti material to any minor unless the minor is accompanied by their parent or legal guardian.”

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Christine Elliott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many young people with developmental special needs have no meaningful social, recreational or vocational opportunities after high school; and

“Whereas many of these young people have no real options for living independently in the community; and

“Whereas current supports in place are insufficient to meet the needs of these young people;

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

“That the McGuinty government allocate an appropriate level of funding to advance a transformation agenda of individualized funding for adults with developmental special needs in the province of Ontario to allow them to live with dignity and to reach their full potential as members of our communities.”

I’m pleased to sign this in support.

HIGHWAY 138

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from a number of constituents from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

I shall affix my signature and send this to the clerks’ table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Central East Local Health Integration Network ... board of directors has approved the Rouge Valley Health System’s deficit elimination plan ... ; and

“Whereas, despite the significant expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital, the largest in its 53-year history, a project that could reach \$100 million, of which 90% is funded by the Ontario government, this plan now calls for the ill-advised transfer of 20 mental health unit beds from Ajax-Pickering hospital to the Centenary Health Centre in Scarborough; and

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

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature to that and pass it to Brianne.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions has ended. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1205 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: For many farmers, on-farm sales are an important source of additional income. For many families, stopping at a farm to purchase newly picked Ontario corn, strawberries, tomatoes or other produce is a summer tradition. People watch for road signs to know when crops are ready and where they are available for sale. But in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, this simple tradition is being threatened.

Many farms aren't located on the well-travelled provincial highways; they're on country side roads. Customers and farmers rely on directional signs to help people find the farms where produce is being sold. But for farmers like Charles Emre, an asparagus farmer in Norfolk, having that sign has become a battle.

This spring, Charles posted his sign, with permission, on private property along Highway 24. Soon afterwards, the owner of the land received a threatening letter from MTO telling them to take it down. Charles estimated that his sales dropped by 50% without the sign. The story appeared in newspapers across Ontario. Since then, MTO agreed to ignore the sign for the rest of the harvest.

We want our Ontario farmers to succeed. We want people to Buy Ontario, but the ministry's action had the exact opposite effect. Farmers shouldn't have to go through this. That's why, later today, I will be introducing a bill that will allow farmers to post seasonal directional signage along provincial highways, so that farmers like Charles can stop dealing with red tape and get back to dealing with asparagus, potatoes and all the people who will once again follow the signs to Ontario's freshest produce.

STILT WALK CHALLENGE

Mr. Dave Levac: I would like to recognize six exceptional students of North Park Collegiate's leadership class in Brantford, organizers of the recent stilt walk challenge—Sam Brandow, Kristie Wilhelm, Brittany Baker, Kylee Wilson-Powell, Deanna Murray and Meaghen Rollins—and congratulate them for organizing the event and motivating the participants to come out and

beat the Guinness world record for the most people simultaneously walking on stilts.

In the summer of 2007, Doug Hunt—“Doug the Great,” as he's known—director of marketing, fundraising and volunteers of Participation House Brantford and world record holder himself for walking on the tallest stilts in the world, approached teacher Ted Thomas of the leadership class to join him in attempting his third time to break the stilt-walking record. Mr. Thomas agreed, and on May 15, 625 participants from North Park Collegiate in Brantford, Paris District High School of Paris and residents of Brant county taped themselves to stilts and walked 100 metres down the North Park track, more than the previous Guinness record held by Cirque du Soleil and unofficially beating the Japanese record.

Proceeds are still coming in on a daily basis from this successful fundraiser, which benefits Participation House Brantford, a not-for-profit organization that serves adults between the ages of 16 and 65 with physical disabilities in Brant county.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation for the great efforts of the organizers, especially the students, and the participants of the stilt walk challenge who made this possible, and thank them for bringing Brantford recognition on the world Guinness map.

TOURISM

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise this afternoon to recognize the resorts, lodges and tourism operators of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and their tremendous efforts to provide jobs and promote Ontario—no thanks to Dalton McGuinty, who is in California, possibly at an off-site movie studio with the Governor filming *True Lies*, part two.

Unfortunately, our dedicated tourism operators are being left to go it on their own, and they are doing a tremendous job, despite tough economic times and predictions for a soft season. Resorts Ontario tells us that the number of employee hours worked to date is down 24% from last year. That means lost jobs.

Tourism businesses and employees are looking for a show of faith from the Liberal government. What they are being given is a do-nothing strategy from the Minister of Tourism.

The PC caucus proposed a strategy to save Ontario families some of their hard-earned money by eliminating the retail sales tax for the summer on tourism operations and attractions.

The Ontario Tourism Industry Association understands the urgency. The Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association supports our plan, Attractions Ontario supports our plan, and many others do also. Despite the support from all across Ontario, Mr. Fonseca has told vacationing families that he has no intention to save them money, even as he sits high atop the huge piles of tax he collects from the tourism operators. The challenges of our economy are real and the signs are clear, yet the Premier and his do-nothing-strategy colleagues have their heads buried deep in the sand over there.

Once again, instead of leadership and a willingness to work hard, this Liberal government is doing nothing other than hoping all the bad stuff will go away. It's time to help tourism in the province of Ontario. The time is now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment she made regarding the movie.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'll withdraw at your request, but it's a title of a movie.

ERAMOSKA KARST

Mr. Paul Miller: This morning, I asked a question of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal about the Eramosa karst feeder lands, which he clearly tried to avoid and deflect by confusing these lands with the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area. The minister knows that the people of Hamilton are clear that this government is not meeting their wishes to keep the feeder lands in public hands.

On my tour of the feeder lands last Friday, I saw the results of development where a berm had been installed. The water flow had been completely dried up and the area had become a dump for all sorts of garbage. This is the fate facing the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area if any development is permitted on the feeder lands, and this government knows it.

This government not only refuses to answer the questions in the Legislature, but it seems focused only on trying to confuse issues, blame the opposition parties and ignore the real issue. The government's own greenbelt plan gives permanent protection to the natural heritage and water resource systems that sustain ecological and human health. The preservation of the feeder lands would do exactly that: It would preserve the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area.

The official opening of the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area is this Friday, which will be a short-lived celebration, as the development of the feeder lands would stop the water flow, causing a death sentence for the karst. Let me be very clear: The feeder lands need to be preserved in their natural state. That means no development of the Eramosa karst feeder lands.

TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I had the opportunity this past weekend to be part of a history-making day, attending the grand opening of the Wilmot Recreation Complex in the town of New Hamburg in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. The township of Wilmot, under the leadership of its mayor, Wayne Roth, welcomed the community to share in a day of live music, ice skating, in-line and roller skating and an all-day free barbecue.

Many other mayors, including Carl Zehr of Kitchener, Bill Strauss of Woolwich and Ross Kelterborn of Wellesley, joined us, as well as some Wilmot councillors: Les Armstrong, Elliot Fung, Terry Broda and Peter

Roe. Once again, a thank you to the Honourable Jim Watson, the former Minister of Health Promotion, who had the foresight to commit the \$4 million to this project.

As a complement to my "Eat Local: Live Fresh" resolution, Wilmot township, through Wilmot Healthy Communities, is celebrating Living Well Week from June 20 to June 27 at the Wilmot Recreation Complex. This is a partnership with local schools, businesses and churches, including Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School, Waterloo Regional Police Service and the Wilmot Family Resource Centre. We invite everyone to come and join us in growing a healthy community by eating and living local in Wilmot township.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I've come across a poem written by Ginty McDalton. It's Reflections on a Session.

The session is over and what have we done?
We've banned everything under the sun.
Now you don't need to think; simply obey.
We'll run your lives for you, the Liberal way.
Science and prayers and trans fats—banned.
Don't mind bigger issues at hand,
Like C. difficile or native affairs;
Those will take care of themselves, I swear.

All session long, there's been too much complaining
About the very few well-paying jobs we're retaining.
This too shall pass, auto sector aside,
So steel yourselves for the Liberal slide.
And wait till you hear of the new plans we've hatched:
More cash for our friends, no strings attached.
We'll never cut taxes; we need them too much
For gifts and for votes and for slush funds and such.

Democracy: It's much overrated,
So we've changed the hours, and boy, did they hate it.
How dare they ask their insolent questions?
How dare they bore us with their suggestions?
For we are the Liberals, Ontario's elite;
We like our sessions short and sweet.
We're in control and we like it that way;
We might crown McGuinty king one day.
Oh, what a session, it was so entertaining.
Despite all the bumbles that needed explaining,
Despite the closures and infectious disease,
Despite all that, it was really a breeze.
Many have lost, many lives in dismay.
To these whiners and losers and skeptics, I say:
Be happy; don't be a doubting Thomas;
Things will get better, somehow, I promise.

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STUDENT LITERACY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today, oddly enough, to highlight the Ontario secondary school literacy test scores that were recently released. Literacy

tests are especially important because strong literacy skills form a strong foundation for future learning and development.

Overall, the test scores showed an 84% success rate, which is up from 72% in 2002. That's a 12% increase. That means that almost 25,000 more students passed the test. One must bear in mind that 10,000 more students wrote the test than did in 2002.

I was especially pleased to hear that the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board both scored exceptionally well, with 90% and 92% success rates respectively.

While keeping in mind that test scores are only one measure of success, I congratulate the students, the teachers, the principals, the parents and the support workers who have all worked together to achieve these great results.

While this government proudly acknowledges this success, we know that this is not a time to rest on our laurels. We know that many students still face challenges, both inside and outside the classroom. With this in mind, we will continue to work with our partners in the education system to ensure that every student in every school is given the tools they need to achieve success.

TRILLIUM BOOK AWARD

Mr. David Zimmer: Last week, the Minister of Culture, along with Kevin Shea, chair of the Ontario Media Development Corp., announced the winners of the Trillium Book Award.

Established in 1987, the Trillium Book Award is Ontario's leading award for literature, recognizing literary excellence and celebrating creativity. The Trillium Book Award also promotes Ontario writers and their works.

Barbara Gowdy received the English-language book award for her book *Helpless*. The French-language book award went to *L'oeil de la lumière* by Pierre Raphaël Pelletier. The English-language poetry award went to *Human Resources* by Rachel Zolf, and Tina Charlebois was recognized for her French-language work entitled *Poils lisses*.

These award winners join the exceptional company of past Trillium Book Award winners, including Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje and Timothy Findley.

I wish to congratulate our winners and the finalists for inspiring all Ontario writers and for providing Ontarians with wonderful and compelling pieces of literature.

GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I would like to welcome members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance who are visiting us in the Legislature today, some of whom are in the members' gallery.

Formed in 2003, the alliance represents the largest cluster of greenhouse production in North America, and it's located right here in Ontario.

The greenhouse industry contributes \$4 billion per year to our province's economy. In Ontario, there are over 1,200 greenhouse operations, most of which are concentrated in and around the ridings of Essex, Chatham-Kent-Essex and the Niagara region.

Greenhouse operations in Ontario employ more than 19,000 people, with over \$2 billion in structures. At the current rate of expansion, the industry is targeting a further investment in rural Ontario of some \$20 million per annum, bringing substantial benefit to rural economies.

Again, I welcome the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to Queen's Park today. I encourage all members to stop by the legislative dining room this afternoon to meet some of their members and, of course, to pick up a sample of their beautiful plants and delicious vegetables, grown right here in Ontario, in our backyard.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that on June 13, 2008, the report of the Integrity Commissioner concerning her review of expense claims under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, for the period April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008, was tabled.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. David Zimmer: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mrs. Julia Munro: I beg leave to present a report on agencies, boards and commissions: Health Professionals Appeal and Review Board, from the Standing Committee

on Government Agencies, and move the adoption of its recommendations.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mrs. Julia Munro: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, it is my privilege to table the report of the committee. The report I am tabling today covers work undertaken and completed by the committee in the last Parliament prior to the calling of October's provincial election.

The committee undertakes reviews from time to time of the operation of selected boards, agencies and commissions of the province. This report of the committee reviews and commends the work of the Health Professionals Appeal and Review Board and makes recommendations on how they may improve some of their approaches and procedures.

We express our appreciation to all the witnesses who appeared before us during the public hearings on this agency. The committee was ably assisted by its staff in the last Parliament: Tonia Grannum, the clerk of the committee, and Carrie Hull and Larry Johnston, the research officers. I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALIFIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR ONTARIANS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE L'ACCÈS DES ONTARIENNES ET DES ONTARIENS AUX PROFESSIONNELS DE LA SANTÉ QUALIFIÉS

Mr. Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

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. George Smitherman: I'll save my time for ministerial statements.

SIGNAGE TO PROMOTE ONTARIO GROWN AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'AFFICHAGE VISANT À PROMOUVOIR LES PRODUITS AGROALIMENTAIRES CULTIVÉS EN ONTARIO

Mr. Hardeman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act to promote the sale of Ontario grown agricultural food products by amending the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act / Projet de loi 98, Loi visant à promouvoir la vente de produits agroalimentaires cultivés en Ontario en modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités et la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Many farmers who offer fresh Ontario-grown produce from their farm are located on country side roads. If passed, this act would allow farmers to post seasonal directional signage on private property adjacent to a provincial highway to bring people to the farm. The exemption would only apply to signs owned by farmers who are selling their own fresh produce and Ontario-grown food products.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FOREIGN-TRAINED DOCTORS

Hon. George Smitherman: It is with great pride that I rise in this House today to introduce the latest significant step our government is taking to improve access to health care for the people of this province: a new piece of legislation, the Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act, 2008.

Regulatory health colleges have been instrumental in protecting the public interest by ensuring the safe practice of health providers. If passed, today's legislation broadens their mandate to help ensure that the concept of all Ontarians having access to family health care is part of this public interest. Today, our government is challenging our partners, the regulatory colleges, to take on this new responsibility of helping qualified internationally trained health professionals enter our health care system.

This builds on a solid foundation of work that we have done in Ontario these past four and a half years. When our government came to office in 2003, one of the first

things we did was increase the number of residency positions so that more international medical graduates could get the training they needed so that their skills would be best put to use on behalf of Ontarians. As a result of our efforts, there are currently 630 additional international medical graduates now in residency training in the province of Ontario. These are in addition to 135 international medical graduates who recently finished and are moving to practise in communities across the province.

But barriers remain. When our government was hounded by the people of Ontario with a second mandate, we set about tackling this issue with renewed vigour. Today's legislation and complementary regulatory changes signal our next major steps in breaking down these barriers.

I asked Etobicoke–Lakeshore MPP Laurel Broten, my parliamentary assistant, to focus her energy, her heart and her soul on the steps that we can take to further reduce barriers for international medical graduates so Ontario patients can have timely access to the care they need. She produced a report that is courageous and ambitious and one I encourage all my colleagues to read. It's a report that champions the idea that we must be relentless in pushing aside barriers that separate Ontarians from the caregivers they need. Her recommendations break down into five initiatives we can undertake in partnership with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario over the coming months. These include regulatory changes that are complementary to today's legislation.

First, she wants us to enhance our ability to safely and appropriately allow qualified internationally trained doctors who come to Ontario to begin practising immediately. These are doctors who have trained and worked in a country where the medical education and health care system is similar to Ontario's. With this change, they will no longer be forced to be retrained; instead, they go direct to practice.

Second is the creation of new classes of licences, such as transitional licences, which recognize that many doctors can come here and begin practice with some limited supervision, or a restricted licence for doctors whose practice is limited to their highly specialized training, such as a neonatologist.

Third, we need to offer more timely and improved assessments to help internationally trained doctors determine where they fit best.

Fourth: expanded access to programs that help doctors training in other systems to bridge the cultural and language gaps through education, mentorship and hands-on training.

Fifth, in those cases where an international medical graduate is not likely to achieve success as a doctor, we have an obligation to be honest about it and to quickly work with that individual to transition him or her to alternate roles in our health care system, such as the new role of physician assistant.

Ms. Broten's report is an excellent one, and it has informed the legislation I am introducing today, as well as

being the foundation for the regulatory changes we will be developing with the College of Physicians and Surgeons over the summer.

Let me say that patient safety is at the heart of this legislation and at the heart of everything we do in health care. None of the changes we are proposing will result in shortcuts to practice of any kind. Rather, they will improve access for Ontarians to doctors who want to practise medicine and who are qualified to practise medicine. And that is the name of the game.

About 400,000 Ontarians are actively in search of family health care. We've made great progress since taking office, but ours is not a government that rests on past achievements. We know that there are many qualified, competent and safe international medical doctors who have chosen to come to Ontario and others who will follow. We know we need them. This legislation, if passed, will help us, it will help them and, more importantly, it will help Ontario's patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

FOREIGN-TRAINED DOCTORS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: What a disappointment. I think we can now acknowledge, as we did in question period this morning, that this government is devoid of taking any action whatsoever. What they have simply done here is tried to make it look like they're going to take steps to help foreign-trained doctors move forward into practice. This says nothing more than, "We are going to mandate that we're changing the responsibility of colleges in the province of Ontario, and if we don't get the right number of qualified health professionals, it's their fault"—a total abdication on the part of this government, just like they assumed no responsibility for the economic loss of jobs in this province or for C. difficile. It's unbelievable. So they say, "It is now up to you, colleges. We can't do what we said we would do."

There were a million people without a family doctor in 2003. There are still more than a million people without a family doctor today. In fact, I would also say to you that the number of communities that are designated as underserved has increased by 16%, from 122 to 142, and the number of people taking new patients has also decreased. We still continue to lose doctors in this province to other provinces—which never happened before; it shows you how bad things are under this Liberal government—and we're losing 30% of new medical school graduates within two years of their complete training.

Basically this government has said, "You know what? We have no plan for health care. We can't develop a human resources plan as we had said needs to happen." We need to take a look at our population, we need to take a look at what the needs will be, and we need to determine the appropriate number of health providers that are necessary. They've thrown up their hands and said, "We've had five years. We can't do it. I'm sorry; we can't do it. But do you know what? We're now going to

make the colleges responsible. It's their duty." In fact, I'll tell you that this legislation says nothing more than that: "It is the duty of the college now to make sure that people have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals." Talk about shirking your responsibility.

That goes back to Ms. Broten's report, and I would beg to differ with the minister. It is nothing but sheer rhetoric. There is very little in the way of any fact contained within her report. In fact, I would say to you that there are no factual recommendations to even support her recommendations. We don't know whom she consulted with. I wonder if she even talked to the colleges. It might be interesting to phone the colleges up and see if there's been any consultation with them regarding either Ms. Broten's report or this one sentence—I guess this is legislation—simply saying, "Folks, do you know what? We give up. We acknowledge that we can't provide for the people in this province the appropriate numbers of health professionals. In fact, we don't even know how many people are going to need a nurse or where they're going to need a nurse. We don't know how many people might need a chiropractor or a pharmacist. We give up."

It's like C. difficile last week and for the month before that: "It's not our problem. That's a problem of the hospitals." Other ministers in Quebec, Northern Ireland—and we're continuing to see examples around the world—have had health ministers who said: "This is a serious problem. I assume the responsibility. I'm going to put in place a co-ordinated plan in order that there are no further outbreaks of C. difficile in Ontario." Not this minister, not this government. They don't want to be accountable to people in the province of Ontario and they accept no responsibility for any problems.

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It is very disappointing that these individuals are in charge, because we're not going to see any improvements when it comes to the number of doctors or nurses. And if the improvements don't happen to work out, they will blame the colleges. First the hospitals, now the colleges: Who's next?

FOREIGN-TRAINED DOCTORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Access to effective primary care is a major issue for Ontario. There are roughly 850,000 Ontarians without a family physician; wait times in the average Ontario emergency room are over three hours and can be up to 7.5 hours; and we are short about 2,000 physicians and 9,000 nurses province-wide. This is simply unacceptable. Spending on health care is increasing every year, but somehow the lineups for care and the poor quality of care continue.

This bill is about making it easier for foreign-trained physicians to practise in Ontario. On the surface, it seems like something good, something we should support. I certainly have had the pleasure to work with many dedicated, competent, hard-working physicians, and I

know that Ontario needs more. The question, though, is this: Is this going to significantly improve access to quality primary care in Ontario, or is this simply chipping away at the edges? More importantly, is the supply of physicians the only problem?

As a headline in last weekend's Toronto Star stated, "Nursing Crisis Worse Than Ever: Huge Shortage Has Seen Overtime Hours Soar, Many Burning out or Fleeing the Profession."

Michael Rachlis, an expert in health care in Canada, was recently quoted as saying, "Even if the number of physicians doubled, unless we were to change the structure in which they work, Canadians would still have inadequate access." We're talking about doubling what we already have, something that this bill—

Mr. Ted Arnott: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Deputy Premier is making a number of objectionable comments. Would you ask him to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. I would just remind the Minister of Health and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo that if there's discussion that they want to have, there are chambers on either side. Please have the discussion there and not across the floor.

The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: As I was saying, even if the number of physicians in Ontario was to double, unless we change the structure in which they work, Ontarians would still have problems of access.

For example, the minister's much-lauded family health team, which he touted as being a model of interdisciplinary practice, in fact is overwhelmingly comprised of physicians as opposed to a balance with other health professionals. There are roughly eight physicians for every nurse practitioner; 18 physicians for every one dietitian. Basically, there are 72 dietitians in the whole system, which leaves at least 70-some family health teams with none. There are 366 physicians for every chiropodist, which means that we have all of four chiropodists working in family health teams right now. That's 146 family health teams with none at all—not much of a team there.

It is interesting to note that other provinces, such as Saskatchewan, have fewer doctors per capita, yet despite being less wealthy and more rural, people in Saskatchewan have better and more immediate access to care. The problem is how physicians and other health care professionals are deployed—or, should I say, not deployed.

Why isn't the government moving more quickly to increase the scope of practice and responsibility of other professionals such as nurses? Why isn't the government moving more quickly to replace fee-for-service payments with other forms of remuneration for physicians, such as salaries? The vast majority of physicians in Ontario are still paid by fee-for-service.

Let's discuss increases to the supply of physicians like this bill is trying to do, but let's not pretend that this alone will solve the problem of lack of access to health

care or radically improve the quality of care or ensure the financial sustainability of our health care system. It won't do this. If we are serious about improving quality of care and access to care and affordability of care, we need to radically increase the supply of other health care professionals: nurse practitioners, health promoters, community developers, social workers and midwives.

Why are we making such slow progress building new community health centres, an NDP innovation that provides the gold standard in primary health care? Why are we so far behind Quebec, which, for a long time, has had a comprehensive network of community health centres? There's no plan in Ontario to have a network of community health centres.

Why are we falling behind provinces such as Saskatchewan in implementing electronic health records, which can greatly improve efficiency of management, cutting wait times for access to physicians and other providers?

Why don't we have a high-level government committee assessing the health impacts of our social and economic strategies, like they do in Saskatchewan, so that you look at the determinants of health?

We look forward to discussing this bill, but we currently have doubts that it will do much to secure an accessible, high-quality, financially sustainable health care system in Ontario. Much more needs to be done.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Mr. Bradley moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Bradley.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise in the House today to urge passage of an important piece of legislation that, if enacted, will help protect our environment and improve road safety. I'll be sharing the time I have to speak to you with my parliamentary assistant, Mike Brown, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

At the beginning, I want to commend the members of the Legislature who participated in the debate at second reading, and in particular, those who participated during the committee process: first of all, the hearings that were held; and secondly, the deliberations that took place in clause-by-clause study. I thought that all members of the committee offered some very thoughtful comments, and

some excellent amendments were offered. I was so very tempted to receive, accept and implement amendments; I had information provided to me that, in fact, the bill itself incorporated what the members actually wanted to do. But I want to thank them very much for their thoughts and for putting forward amendments. What it really means is that the members—particularly the opposition, in this case—have given considerable thought to this bill.

By the way, this is an important bill of this House. Whatever passes in this House is a bill that is the work of all members of the Legislative Assembly, particularly those who are working in committees. I want to give no suggestion to the House that this is anything other than a bill that all members can take credit for at the appropriate time. In fact, there are members who have offered some very good suggestions and who have engendered some excellent debate about the bill, because no piece of legislation is completely perfect. We really appreciated the suggestions that were made by all members of the committee and of the House.

As members would know, the proposed legislation will cap the speed of large trucks built after 1995 at 105 kilometres per hour. Ontario is a leader in road safety, and we're always looking for ways to make our highways even safer. This legislation presents us with a key opportunity to improve road safety for our families, while at the same time helping to protect our environment, so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy a cleaner and greener future. Cutting emissions from large trucks can only help our environment.

The reality is that over one third of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector, and 84% of this comes from road transportation. This is why speed limiters are so important to all Ontarians, not only to those who share the road with large trucks.

1340

Speed-limiter technology will enable our government to make a significant contribution to the fight against climate change. We will work closely with the province of Quebec to harmonize our respective programs and our implementation. We need to move promptly if we are to reap the full environmental benefits of speed limiters. A Transport Canada study estimated that for every year that speed limiters are in place, we will be preventing about 280,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions from being released into our air. That is nearly 800 tonnes a day. Our government takes climate change very seriously. We cannot stand by. We must take action now.

We're not the only jurisdiction to see the benefit of speed limiters. Quebec, for one, has been very supportive of mandating speed limiters and announced it as part of their green plan in June 2006. Ontario is committed to working with the province of Quebec and the trucking industry to establish reasonable and effective implementation timelines for speed limiters.

If passed, this legislation would also include an educational enforcement period to help get drivers, owner-operators and trucking companies prepared for full implementation.

I want you all to know that we have listened to the concerns of Ontarians, including members of the trucking industry, about speed limiters. Some individuals have wondered why speed limiters are necessary, why we are bothering to implement speed limiters when, by law, trucks should never be exceeding 100 kilometres per hour. Our response to that question is straightforward: Not only do speed limiters help our environment, but they are also an enforcement tool that will keep trucks travelling safely so that police can focus on other traffic-related priorities.

Others have expressed the concern that speed limiters will be prohibitively expensive for truckers. The reality is that most trucks built in the last decade already come equipped with this technology. This legislation would require that these devices be activated on Ontario roads. Activating a speed limiter costs about \$100.

Operators can save money. In a recent Transport Canada report it says that the Ontario trucking industry will save about 100 million litres of diesel and \$144 million annually. Also, it has been estimated that speed limiters will reduce the wear and tear on trucks, reducing maintenance costs.

This legislation is fair because it treats all truck drivers and companies the same while driving in Ontario. At the same time, it is flexible. With today's technology, operators will also have the option of investing in devices that will allow drivers to switch speed limiters on and off when in jurisdictions with higher speed limits.

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

The Ontario Trucking Association has stated that more than 50% of Ontario's trucks are already voluntarily using speed limiters, and recent studies tell us that about 75% of all US trucks are already operating with activated speed limiters. This shows that the vast majority of truck operators realize that these devices help improve a truck's fuel economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower maintenance costs.

The time to act is clearly now. Not only would we enjoy cleaner air, but limiting truck speeds would also make our highways safer for everyone who shares the road, all of which contributes to a higher quality of life for all Ontarians.

I know that all members of this House support measures that would protect the lives of Ontarians. The proposed legislation is exactly that kind of measure. This legislation, if passed, would help save lives. We are serious about improving our environment and we are committed to improving road safety.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I rise in the House today to continue this discussion on important new legislation that, if passed, will help protect the environment and improve road safety for all Ontarians.

I'm sure that most of us have experienced a speeding truck on our highways. Not only can this be dangerous, but because of its excessive speed, the truck is also

burning excessive amounts of fuel. This government has heard public concerns about speeding trucks on our highways that pollute our environment and create unnecessary risk for others. The proposed legislation, if passed, would make the use of speed limiters on large trucks mandatory. This built-in electronic device would cap the speed of trucks at 105 kilometres per hour.

Today our government is building on five years of action with an ambitious plan to reduce the amount of emissions produced by our transportation industry. With speed limiters, we are proposing a new way for Ontario to achieve the goals set out in our Go Green action plan on climate change by cutting fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Under this plan, our government has set out a number of achievable targets to reduce Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions: 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, 15% by the year 2020, and 80% below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

Our government already has a number of important initiatives underway to help us reach these goals: the green commercial vehicle project, a four-year, \$15-million pilot project to help businesses switch to cleaner technologies such as hybrid power; the high-occupancy-vehicle-lanes project, our long-term plan to encourage more people to carpool and to use public transit; and Move Ontario 2020, a \$17.5-billion plan to build more than 900 kilometres of rapid transit in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton.

If passed, speed limiters would save the trucking industry an estimated 100 million litres of diesel fuel annually. As Minister Bradley pointed out earlier, these fuel savings could reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by about 280,000 tonnes annually. This is the equivalent of taking 2,700 trucks off the road each year. In terms of reaching our climate change goals, speed limiters alone could deliver between 1% and 3% of the total emission reductions needed to meet our 2014 target. We are definitely on the right track here.

Ontario's roads continue to rank among the safest in North America. In fact, according to our latest statistics, we have broken our own road safety record for three years running. Improving safety on our roads is a paramount concern of this government and it is a key objective of this legislation.

Studies show that speed has a direct relationship with the severity of injuries in a crash. Reducing the speed of a large truck will greatly reduce its impact in a collision. In fact, excessive speed is a factor in nearly 23% of all crashes involving large vehicles. We anticipate that speed limiters will help reduce collisions.

In putting forward this legislation, we have received support from a number of environmental protection and health advocates, such as the Lung Association and Pollution Probe; our many road safety partners, such as the Ontario Safety League and the Insurance Bureau of Canada; and finally from our industry stakeholders, such as the Ontario Trucking Association and the Canadian Trucking Association. I am also pleased to say that a number of small companies have stepped forward to

support speed limiters. In fact, some have told us that, as small companies, they are already seeing a reduction in operating costs.

1350

The American Trucking Association has also applauded speed limiters as an example of Ontario's leadership in road safety. As Minister Bradley noted earlier, about 75% of US trucks already use speed limiters. The majority of this industry realizes that the use of speed limiters would increase a truck's fuel economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower maintenance costs.

We are committed to continue working with our stakeholders and our colleagues in other jurisdictions as we move forward. The McGuinty government is serious about improving our environment, and we are committed to improving road safety. Let's tackle these issues together. Today the McGuinty government is asking for the support of our colleagues in this House to reap these environmental and safety benefits for Ontario families.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Third reading of this bill, and we have, indeed, spent considerable time—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Order. That's fine. The member can continue.

Mr. Frank Klees: If the member would like to do questions and comments, I'm happy to give him that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments time has passed. The member has the floor. Please continue.

Mr. Frank Klees: With regard to Bill 41, the minister referred to his willingness—in spirit, I suppose—to accept amendments. I had advised him that we would be proposing amendments, which we did during committee—a fair number of them. I felt that all of them were consistent with the reasoning of his government with regard to implementing speed limiters.

Right off the top, I proposed that if his government is basing its rationale on the safety issue, that by putting speed limiters into trucks and by limiting their speed we would improve road safety, then those speed limiters should be installed in all vehicles on the road. Something does not quite figure in the government's rationale, and I'm going to try to bring the public along as we go through this reasoning.

As the minister and the parliamentary assistant indicated, what Bill 41 will do is make it mandatory for all trucks to have a speed limiter—essentially a governor, as we would know it—that would limit the speed on all of those heavy trucks to 105 kilometres per hour. What is very interesting about that is that that speed limit is already five kilometres over the 100 kilometre-per-hour speed limit that we have on most of our major highways—certainly the 400 series of highways. If we have a speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour, and if, as the government argues, speed is a major factor in collisions, then my question to the minister would be: Why would

we not limit the speed of these trucks to 100 kilometres per hour, which is the speed limit?

The next question I have for the minister is: What about those roads where the speed limit is 80 kilometres per hour? Are we not concerned about safety on those roads, or on some of the city streets that we have, where the speed limit is even less than 80 kilometres per hour? Are we not concerned about that? The minister will argue that we will presume, of course, on the responsible driving habits of the truckers to stay within those speed limits, but we can't trust them on the 400 series of highways. That's where we have to put the speed limiters in place, and that's where government takes over in terms of mandating and making it a requirement to put in those speed limiters. What is interesting is that the vast majority of collisions involving trucks don't happen on the 400 series of highways; they actually happen on roads where the speed limit is below 90 kilometres per hour. Interesting.

So when you look at the government's rationale for this legislation, it sounds good. There isn't anyone in this House or anyone observing this debate who will argue that government shouldn't do whatever it can to improve road safety. There wasn't a member in the committee who challenged that. The point that I was trying to make, and that many members of our caucus have been trying to make with the government, is that if we are concerned about road safety, then let's look at the big picture and let's start with enforcing the speed limiters that we already have in place in this province, called speed limits. Let's enforce that. Let's get the message out, not only to trucking companies and truck drivers but to everyone who gets behind a wheel, that the government of Ontario is serious about road safety, that we will enforce our speed limits and that there will be consequences for people who ignore those speed limits.

That is where the problem lies. What the government is not prepared to do is to step up and ensure that our front-line police officers have the resources to enforce the law. The government is not willing to step up and ensure that our justice system is properly resourced, so that when a speeding ticket is issued, that ticket won't just be bargained away or thrown out because a justice of the peace is not available to hear that particular charge, which happens every day in this province. I get regular reports from Chief Armand LaBarge in York region. He sends me these reports because he wants me to be aware and the Legislature to be aware that we have a serious problem in our justice system, that his front-line officers are frustrated every day of the week by having to appear in court as witnesses, having to appear in court to justify laying charges on our roads and on our highways for Highway Traffic Act infractions.

They are there, the accused is there, but how often is there not a justice of the peace, not only to hear that case but for the entire sitting? All of these tickets get thrown out. So my appeal to the Minister of Transportation is that we should be focusing on enforcing the laws we have in place already before overlaying additional levels

of further legislation and further requirements that obviously won't get enforced either. None of them will, if we don't have the enforcement resources in place in this province.

That reasoning was ignored by the government, because it's a lot easier for the government to simply have another piece of legislation passed and have another announcement, as I know that the minister will after third reading is passed—and have another media event claiming yet another victory on the part of the McGuinty government for addressing this important issue of road safety. The media will come; they will print. People will read the headlines. Minister Bradley will be a hero, Dalton McGuinty will be seen to be doing something, and yet what they have not done is address the fundamental problem in this province: that we have laws that are not enforced and that are not prosecuted because we don't have the resources in place to do that. That's why I have serious concern about endorsing this legislation.

1400

I will say that there are members of our caucus who are supporting this legislation. I will not. I will not because of the reasons that I've just given. Furthermore, during our standing committee process, I presented what I considered were practical and pragmatic amendments that I believe would have made some improvement at least, given some rationale to various aspects of the legislation. The government heard every amendment, and not one single amendment was accepted by the government members on that committee.

It's interesting that in the 13 years I've been in this House, I have yet to see a perfect piece of legislation. That's why we have the process. We have first reading and second reading. Legislation then goes to committee for the purpose of having all parties consider it. We have research done, we make amendments to improve the legislation, and then it comes back to the House for third reading and final approval. At every step along the way in this particular case, the government felt that they had it right and perfect from the very beginning—and, by the way, so did one or two of the stakeholders who consulted with the ministry. Obviously, they were the one or two stakeholders whom the ministry heard. All of the other stakeholders who came forward—and we had many during committee hearings. We had many who submitted e-mails and many who participated in teleconference. And there were reports: I have three very substantive reports here that were submitted and referenced. Unfortunately, these were presented to me on the morning of our committee hearings. I didn't have an opportunity, and neither did any other member of that committee, to review these reports, and yet these are the very reports that should have allowed us to have some substantive debate on the issue. This made a mockery of that entire public hearing process. So we had a piece of legislation that was presented to us as a *fait accompli*, obviously, from the very beginning.

I had an e-mail from one of the stakeholders, who obviously had direct input into the minister's office.

When we sent out a request to stakeholders, which we do as a matter of course, to provide us with recommendations and suggestions in terms of amendments for the legislation from a stakeholder's perspective, I received an e-mail that, quite frankly, concerned me as a member of this Legislature and as a former minister. I shared this e-mail, by the way, with the current minister, because I felt that he should know. To his credit, I think the minister's reaction to this e-mail was identical to mine.

I'm going to read one aspect of this e-mail into the record, because, while it won't make me any friends with these stakeholders—I understand that—I want it to be a strong signal to anyone else who would dare to take us, in this Legislature, for granted and to hold in contempt the parliamentary process and the legislative process. I know that I won't be receiving an e-mail like this again, and neither will anyone in our research department. But I'd like to you listen to this, Speaker, because you will be interested, as will any other member of this Legislature, to know the arrogance with which some stakeholders approach this place:

“As for the amendments, we have none, and in fact I would go further and say that we would be very strongly opposed to any amendment. This is our bill. Every period, every comma, every semicolon was put there by us, and we would be very, very unhappy were it to be amended in any way.”

Obviously, these stakeholders are very, very happy today, because their legislation has not, in fact, been amended in any way. “Every period, every comma, every semicolon” that was put there by them is still in place.

While it may be a victory for those stakeholders, I think it is frankly a condemnation of a system of law-making that most people in this province would think has legitimacy and where most members of this place would think they have a meaningful role to play. We've found out that that isn't necessarily the case.

Having said that, this legislation will obviously pass, and we will move into a time in this province when this requirement for heavy trucks to have speed limiters will be law. We'll see how that plays out.

You may say, “What is wrong with that? Why would anyone be opposed to that? If trucks are driving slower and are kept to even the 105 kilometres per hour that the minister says these settings will be at, doesn't it make sense that this will make for safer roads?”

I'm going to ask you just one question, and this is where the common-sense gap comes in when we have this debate: Has anyone observing this debate ever been in a situation on the road where they have actually had to accelerate to avoid a potential problem and a collision? If they have, I ask them: What would it have felt like to step on the accelerator to avoid that collision and there was nothing there? There was no additional power; you didn't have any additional speed to actually avoid that potential safety issue. Think about that.

When I asked that question in the course of the committee, there wasn't anyone who could give me an answer to it, and yet many made representations to the

committee, and through e-mails and phone calls, who are truck drivers and said to me: "This legislation will potentially create safety issues for that very reason." If there's no other reason to oppose this legislation, it would be for the safety factor that those who are on the roads every day are experiencing, and telling us from a practical standpoint that they need that flexibility.

1410

The government heard that as well and ignored it. So we move on. We heard all of the amendments that were put forward. They were voted down by the government without any qualms about whether or not there should be any changes to this legislation.

Finally I made one proposal, as an amendment as well, that if the government is intent on imposing this kind of restriction on truckers residing or doing business in the province of Ontario, they should at least exclude those truckers emanating from the United States of America. The reason was this: There are hundreds and thousands of trucks that come into Ontario every day out of the United States, doing business in Ontario or crossing through Ontario, who also made substantive submissions to the committee, saying that if this bill is adopted by the government of Ontario, they will stop doing business in Ontario because it will be impossible for them to be competitive in their several jurisdictions in the United States and then have this technology, which has to be hard-wired into their vehicles. There's no way that at the border they can trigger a release on that. If they did that, if there was that kind of mechanism built into the vehicle, it would mean, under this law, that they would be found guilty of breaking this law.

We already have notice that there will be a challenge, a NAFTA challenge, should this bill be or when it is implemented. We've had a number of occasions since the McGuinty government took office in Ontario where this chamber warned the government that the bill they are introducing and spending time manipulating through this legislative process would either have a charter challenge or would be challenged in one way or another by the courts. Of course, with the arrogance of the government, they ignore the pleadings of not only members of the Legislature but of officers of this assembly.

The most recent, you'll recall, was that of the adoption bill. We warned the government time and again that legislation implemented retroactively that would impact on the personal lives of citizens of this province on decisions they made 10, 20, 30 and 50 years ago was not going to stand up under constitutional and charter scrutiny. They ignored us. They ignored the privacy commissioner of this province. They've had to go back on that because the court ruled against them, and so they have had to revise that legislation to bring it into compliance with the charter. I'm predicting that that is precisely what will happen here as well, because there is a NAFTA challenge, and we'll see where that takes us. So the government ignored even that amendment. I was simply trying to save them some embarrassment.

At a time when the economy of our province is facing the challenges that it is, it may be one thing for the gov-

ernment to do nothing when it comes to tourism, to do nothing or make bad deals when it comes to our manufacturing sector, particularly the auto sector; it's yet another thing when the government takes a proactive position and introduces legislation that will hurt business in this province beyond where it is now. Incomprehensible. I just don't understand.

However, the minister will have his time before the cameras. I'm sure we will see him and his beaming face on the 6 o'clock news tonight, if it passes this afternoon, or tomorrow or the next day—whenever it passes. I'm sure that the stakeholders who wrote this e-mail will be applauding him and be at all of the minister's fundraisers. I can guarantee you: They won't show up to one of mine. Somehow we'll have to deal with that, I suppose.

So I rest my case. I will personally be voting against the legislation for the reasons that I have outlined, and many more that I tabled during second reading debate, particularly during our committee hearings. For anyone who's interested, all of those proceedings are recorded. We have the Hansard record of that discussion. There is a record there of the amendments that were put forward, all to no avail. But we did the best that we could. We attempted to help the government improve the legislation, and they said, "No, thank you."

I now say to the minister that when all is said and done, I'm hopeful that the intent that he has outlined in bringing this legislation forward will be realized. I'm hopeful that collisions will be reduced. I'm hopeful that the number of fatal collisions will be reduced significantly. I'm hopeful that it will do for the environment everything the minister has stated. But I have my serious doubts on the basis of information that was presented to us that was logical and that I believe made a great deal of common sense.

There are other things the government could have done. Enforcement is one of them. The other thing the government could have done is to rely on the private sector to manage its own business. At a time when gas prices are what they are, I can't imagine a single owner-operator or a single carrier that would not already have in place policies to restrict speed limits and to make sure that, if for no other reason but for economic benefit, speed limits are adhered to.

I will be interested over the next number of months and years to see where this legislation ends up, and I will be very interested to see how the minister responds to the practical implications that will emanate from this legislation.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add comments on Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems, and on the speech made by the member from Newmarket–Aurora, who is, of course, a former Minister of Transportation.

I think he brings up some excellent points to do with this bill that we're now discussing in third reading. The most disturbing is that he has these large and significant

reports on the issue which he states were not duly considered in the process of looking at the bill, and the fact that he, as the PC representative, put some significant amendments forward and none were passed. This government has talked about democratic reform, but when it comes right down to it, we don't seem to see much evidence of that on the ground. We seem to have a flawed process that has taken its course with this bill, and I think that's unfortunate. I think he brings up an excellent point: that we need to enforce the speed limits we already have.

1420

Just try driving at 80 kilometres an hour on a secondary highway, which I did on the weekend. I was out motorcycling on Sunday with three or four other folks. We were going exactly 80 kilometres an hour, and I have to say that I had a car about two feet behind me, almost running over me, because very few people actually drive at the speed limit. That says to me that either we have the wrong speed limits or we don't enforce them. So there seems to be a real problem there.

I've heard from a lot of independents on this bill. I asked them, "What's the real agenda, if you're giving me these arguments that it's not necessarily making highways safer"—particularly in the north, where there are two-lane highways and the trucks have to pass sometimes. They said that they thought the real agenda of this bill was about trying to control rogue drivers in large companies.

I think it's unfortunate that we haven't had a fulsome process here where the amendments could be duly considered. Those significant reports should be significantly considered for this bill.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I just wanted to help my friend who asked a question about why we don't permit trucks to go faster than 105 if they need to increase their speed to avoid a collision. That is a reasonable and good question, and I will help my friend. The reason is, trucks really can't do that. I am told that for a large truck like the ones we are talking about to increase its speed by five kilometres an hour, it takes 76 seconds. These are not Maseratis; these are large commercial vehicles. So the idea that a large commercial vehicle can increase its speed to avoid a collision is really not technically possible.

I want to also assure the member that we, on this side, oppose speeding, whether it's by Americans, Canadians or Ontarians. To advocate that American trucks should have the right to break Ontario laws because they're American trucks is a rather odd position, I think, for the official opposition to take.

I want to tell the member that we, on this side, are in favour of saving 280,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases. We are in favour of those truckers who tell us this is the right speed to deliver our goods safely, efficiently and at a reasonable cost. And that's what we're going to do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was going to wait until my speech—because I'm going to have an hour leadoff in a few minutes—but again, to the parliamentary assistant,

we had this debate in committee. The parliamentary assistant saying that the government is going to save 280,000 tonnes of emissions is completely inaccurate.

Let's look at what this bill really does. About 60% of trucks on the highway now are currently using speed limiters and are being limited to 105 kilometres. So 60% of the fleet is already meeting the numbers that the government is talking about, when it's 105 kilometres. Of the other 40%—and I'm just rounding out the numbers; I might be a little bit out—that are not on speed limiters, there's this thing called "the speed limiter," and my good friend the member from Welland will know well what I talk about; it's called fuel prices. Most of the trucks are already slowing down as it is, so the government can't get up in this House and say, "We're going to save 280,000 tonnes of emissions in the atmosphere," because it doesn't do that.

Part of the problem that I have with this bill is that if the government were saying, "We have a green plan and we have a comprehensive strategy by which to reduce emissions in the atmosphere, and we're going to do not only things when it comes to vehicles but when it comes to how vehicles are constructed, not just speed"—if we were to look at emissions from factories, if we were to look at what's happening with coal-fired plants in this province, and we were putting it into a green plan, then I would understand the logic to this. But that's not what this is. This is a one-off bill that the government is trying to wrap up as a green thing. I'm saying that this is not anywhere as green as the government makes it out to be. Let's be clear: This bill, in the end, when we say 280,000 tonnes, ain't going to come anywhere near that, because most of the industry is already compliant with 105 kilometres, either by way of governors on their trucks, speed limiters, or by way of the fuel prices, having to slow down the speed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Newmarket—Aurora for a response.

Mr. Frank Klees: The comments of the parliamentary assistant with regard to supporting speeding by American trucks is absolute nonsense, and he knows it. In fact, if he and his government were serious about enforcing speed limits, they would do so in the province today. No one supports speeding. I spent my entire remarks here to talk about the importance of ensuring that there is enforcement of our speed limits, be those American trucks or Ontario trucks.

What I am saying is that what we should be doing is passing legislation in this place that is actually based on common sense and that is not simply a political tool for the government to pound its own chest about what they're doing for the environment. I think that Joanne Ritchie said it best: "What puzzles me is why government would consider forcing a solution on this industry when it's clear the problem lies elsewhere." She is OBAC's executive director, and says this:

"Many carriers have speed management programs—including governed engines. And owner-operators can ill

afford to speed. Trucks are already slowing down for safety and economic reasons, and unless government starts enforcing existing laws to get reckless drivers off the road, they're shirking their responsibility and actually increasing the risk of crashes on our highways."

To the government's attention I bring stakeholders whom, they obviously didn't listen to. As will be proven, this is a foil that is being used by the government to say one thing that will be believed by the vast public because they are communicating it effectively. It doesn't make it right; it doesn't legitimize this legislation. That is the point that I was trying to make with you.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying earlier in questions and comments, I'm going to be sharing my lead with a few members of our caucus. I would ask for unanimous consent to share my lead with the member from Welland and the member from Trinity-Spadina. Done.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): It's not needed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know. I'm just putting it on the record, Madam Speaker, but I thank you for that direction because you're right: It wasn't a UC. I should have known better after having been here for so many years.

There are about three parts to the debate that I want to get into when it comes to this legislation. First of all, there's the environmental side of this bill, the effects it will have on the environment. I also want to talk about the practicality of this legislation and what it means to many people in the trucking industry vis-à-vis their livelihood and what happens in the real world—not in the world that we live in here where we draw up laws and we think that, oh God, we understand everything because we're smart legislators—the people at the end who are going to have to live with this legislation and what it means to them.

Let me first say that I've heard the minister and the parliamentary assistant. They stand and talk about this bill, and they say, "Oh, this bill is a great green bill; this bill is going to do wonders; it's going to bring greenness to the province of Ontario." You can hear them. It's almost as if they're preaching the Bible and they're just bringing the message on. If this really was a bill that would bring us to a point of being able to really reduce emissions when it comes to greenhouse gas and it was in that way, I probably would have an easier time trying to support it.

But part of the reality is—let's not kid ourselves—that this bill is not going to have the effect that the government says it's going to have when it comes to the reduction of greenhouse gases. Let me make the argument: The government says that if we bring all the trucks on the highway from the current speeds they're driving down to 105 kilometres an hour—because by speed limiters they will be forced to do 105 kilometres—we're going to save 280,000 tonnes of emissions into the atmosphere. That's the claim. Nothing could be further from the truth. For

that to happen, you would have to accept the argument that all the trucks now, on average, are doing over 105 kilometres, and you know that's not the case. You drive the QEW from Hamilton to Toronto on a regular basis, I drive the Highway 11/17 area in northern Ontario, and we interact with trucks on a regular basis, and let me tell you what it is: Since gas prices have gone up, or fuel prices for trucks, I can tell you that there's a noticeable difference in speeds on the highways across this province.

1430

I used to get on Highway 11, as would everybody else, and drive from one community to the other, and it was common for trucks to be doing 115, 120 kilometres. I understand that; you would see that. But you hardly see a truck doing that these days, for a couple of reasons. One is that fuel prices have slowed the truck traffic down as well as it has slowed down the average car on the road. Don't believe me. Go talk to Cam Woolley. We all know Cam Woolley, from the Ontario Provincial Police. He's on radio and TV probably more than most of us around this place. Cam Woolley was very clear that the OPP are noticing, by way of the charges they're laying, that there are fewer speeders on our highways today because people are saying, "Never mind the risk of being caught"—and I'm going to talk about that later—"it is too expensive to run my vehicle at a higher speed." If you're driving a Mack truck, an 18-wheeler, down the road at a speed of, let's say, 115 rather than 105, it's going to cost you more fuel. Truckers are smart businesspeople. Do you think that running a truck doesn't take a whole bunch of skill sets? It's not just a question of being able to drive the truck; it's also a question of being able to make money. To do that, you have to understand the nature of the business. Therefore, most of the trucks now have slowed down just because of gas and fuel prices. Again, don't believe me.

Non, ne croyez pas Gilles Bisson, le député de Timmins-Baie James. Allez parler à la police provinciale et vous allez voir que la police provinciale elle-même est en train de nous dire clairement que la réduction de la vitesse sur les chemins de la province de l'Ontario est quelque chose qu'on peut voir aujourd'hui.

The second reason that I think this claim the government makes in regard to greenhouse gases is a bogus one is that most trucks are using speed limiters now. The industry didn't need to have a law brought into the province of Ontario to put speed limiters in trucks. Most of the large companies out there have decided to do it themselves, and they did it for their own reasons: First, they wanted their drivers to drive within the speed limits because of what it meant for the CVORs. If you have a good, clean CVOR as a company, you're allowed to continue operating, but if you get a bad CVOR and speeding comes into play in that—if your trucks are constantly being charged for speeding violations—your CVOR becomes that much worse. So industry, the larger companies and even some of the small independents, have already put speed limiters in their trucks, by and large,

and a large part of the fleet that drives the highways of Ontario is already using speed limiters by way of voluntarily introducing them into their trucks.

My point is that if the government says that 280,000 tonnes of emissions into the atmosphere will be achieved as a result of the legislation, I say to the government, “Hogwash; not anywhere near there,” as most trucks are already at the speed limit because the majority of trucks, especially in large companies, are using speed limiters now. They’re down to 105, and those others are slowing down because of the price of fuel. Don’t come in here and say, “Oh, Lord, I’ve got a green plan and I’m going to save the atmosphere of the province of Ontario, and we Liberals will wrap ourselves up in a green flag,” because that’s not what this bill is doing. This bill is an attempt by the government to say, “Look at how green we are.” At the end of the day, am I going to say that there will be no savings of emissions? Of course there will be some. I’m not going to pretend there won’t be any. But it is not anywhere near the numbers the government is quoting. I would have liked to see it.

Our critic, Peter Tabuns, and my leader, Howard Hampton, have been very clear on this point. They are saying that the government should bring forward a green plan that encourages a plan across ministries that says how we’re going to reduce emissions in the atmosphere, and you do that in a number of ways. If the government were to come in and put together a plan that says, “We are going to look at emissions, not only by way of speed on trucks, but we’re going to look at the construction of vehicles when it comes to what emissions are allowed in the first place by way of technology that we can install on cars, trucks and other vehicles that are on the road,” that would be one thing. If we were looking at emissions from factories across Ontario that are spewing emissions into the atmosphere and saying, “We will do something to encourage them to make the necessary investments in order to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas that’s going into the atmosphere,” that would be something. And if we were to say, “Rather than having a bunch of cars on our freeways driving to and from Hamilton and everywhere else, why don’t we look at mass transit as a way of moving people out of their cars and putting them on intercity rail, so that people were able to move by mass transit and save emissions that are going into the atmosphere?”—if the government was doing that and a whole bunch of other things, the coal plants and others, then I would say, “Ah, the government’s got a plan. A little bit here, a little bit there, pull it all together, and it comes to a big number.”

But the government has no such plan. It comes in here and says, “We’ve got speed limiters. We’re going to make the atmosphere green.” Come on. Give me a break. They’re not going to make the atmosphere green by way of the speed-limiters legislation. The reality is, most trucks are already doing a speed of 105, either because they’re into speed limiters already or they’re into saving money because of the price of fuel.

The other issue I want to talk about is what this is going to do from the perspective of safety. We heard a lot

of people who came to committee to talk to us about what this bill can and will do for the safety of our highways. One of the things we heard a lot about is that people said, “Listen, if you put speed limiters on trucks, what you’re going to have, you’re already seeing it.” We got a lot of e-mails on, from people who live along the 401 from Windsor all the way out to Cornwall. I got probably about 40 e-mails, letters or phone calls that came in on this issue alone from people who live on that corridor. They said, “Listen: Many sections of the 401 are two lanes: two lanes in one direction, two lanes in the other.” They’re already seeing it, because a lot of trucks already have speed limiters on them now. What happens is, one truck tries to pass a second truck on the two-lane freeway, and because they can only do 105 kilometres an hour, they’re doing what is termed “elephant racing”—two big trucks trying to pass each other and neither one of them has sufficient speed to overtake the other. So they end up blocking the lane for a longer period of time on those two-lane freeways. We see that on Highway 11 from Orillia all the way up to the spots where we still have four-lane highways—as Monique Smith would know, my good friend from Nipissing—up to North Bay. We see that already. It’s more of an occurrence now than it was in the past, where trucks on the freeways are trying to get by a person doing 103 kilometres, and a guy who can do 105 kilometres is trying to overtake—or the woman; it could be a woman or a man driving the truck, obviously—and they’re not able to pass each other in sufficient time.

What does that cause? It causes road rage. You have people who are behind these vehicles who are getting fed up, and they’re cutting and taking chances in order to bypass these trucks because they’re in a hurry to get from point A to point B. It could cause fatal accidents.

Let me give you a good example. You’re driving from North Bay, let’s say, and you want to go visit my friend Charlie Angus in Cobalt. You say, “Charlie and Brit are making supper tonight, and Charlie’s going to be taking out the guitar. I’d love to get down there and sing some songs with him and have a great home-cooked meal with Brit and the kids.” You get in the car, you get on the highway in North Bay and you start to drive up—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My good friend Monique Smith probably had supper with me the night before, I would imagine, right?

Anyway, here’s the story—and the member from Nipissing will know this. You get inside the car at North Bay and you start to drive up the highway. How many passing lanes are there between North Bay and Cobalt? You can count them on your hand: There are probably around five passing lanes between those particular areas, right? So what you end up with is that there are very few places where people are able to pass trucks on Highway 11 as you’re driving north or south between those two municipalities.

So here I am: I’m in a hurry, I’m driving my car, I’m doing 103 or 100—just chugging along, playing the

tunes. I've got the satellite radio on the 1960s tunes, and I'm just moving along and singing to Bob Dylan, doing what you do best when you drive. All of a sudden, you come upon a truck. This truck is going slow, and you say, "Well, I can't pass over here because there's a curve. I can't pass over there because there's a car coming. I can't pass over here because there's a hill and I'm not sure of the road. Oh, it says, 'Passing lane in two kilometres.'" So now you've got the tunes cranked up even higher, and on comes Paul Simon, and he's singing a song and you're just moving along. You're chugging along to the traffic.

Interjection.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: If you're lucky, yeah, it would be my other friend with the—anyway, I'm not going to go there.

Anyway, you get to the passing lane and you want to overtake the truck. And what do you see but a truck in front of you trying to pull in front of the truck in front of him. So you end up in a situation where those two trucks are trying to pass each other and by the time the passing lane comes to an end, what do you think happens? You're still in the car listening to Sirius radio, and now you're back to Bob Dylan again, listening to tunes as you're going up Highway 11. So now I say, "To heck with the radio," and I'm turning off the radio; I've got to listen to the wind to see if I can get by this truck.

People are taking chances. I see it on Highway 11 in the area that I service, from Timmins up to Constance Lake. People are now passing in some pretty dangerous spots. They think they know the highway because they've driven it 100 times before and they're passing where they think they have enough room to do so. The passing lanes are being filled by trucks trying to pass each other. Why? Because they are using speed limiters. We heard this from a professor in Manitoba who said that this can actually lead to more unsafe roads.

On the safety aspect, I just say to the government across the way: Don't come into this debate and tell me that this is a green plan, and don't tell me that, at the end of the day, this is all about road safety. We've heard from tons of expert witnesses who came before the committee and said to us: "This is not what the government makes it out to be." So I'll just say to the government to be careful on that point.

I want to talk about what I thought was one of the major problems with this bill that we somewhat fixed at committee, and not even by way of an amendment. This is the interesting part—and I know that my colleagues here who are speaking after me want to talk to this. One of the things that we heard the most is people from the trucking industry saying: "Okay, fine. We'll put speed limiters in our truck, but I don't just do business in Ontario. I may have my truck and drive from Barrie to Toronto and pick up another load and go off to Windsor. Then, from Windsor I may truck something down to Pennsylvania or Michigan," or wherever they might be driving.

The problem is, once you cross the border there are different speed limits. So the speed limiter is installed,

and the way the legislation is written—pay attention. It says that you shall not have a device onboard the truck that allows you to fail the speed limiting system. In other words, you can't bypass the speed limiter. You can't have a switch, a device or a gizmo of some type in your truck—do you like that word, "gizmo"?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Gizmo?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "Gizmo" is a good word. I take it that it's parliamentary, so I'm going to use it.

You can't have a gizmo in your truck in order to bypass and to fail the speed limiting device—very clear. The legislation says that if one is found in your truck, the enforcement officer—either the police officer or the person from MTO—will seize that device out of your truck and you shall be fined.

So we went to committee and said, "Listen: If you're going to have speed limiters in Ontario, you have to have a mechanism by which you can turn the speed limiter off when you leave the Ontario jurisdiction and go into a jurisdiction where the speeds are higher."

For example, you will know that the reason speeds are posted on highways has to do with the condition of the road. If you are driving, for example, up in the riding of my good friend the member from Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, you don't want to drive very fast on the Sultan Road. If you're driving from Chapleau down to Thessalon, again, you don't want to drive very fast on that road; it's very wavy. So the MTO posts fairly slow speeds on that road; the top speed is about 80 kilometres. In some areas, it's down to 60. But when you drive from Toronto to Hamilton, it's a straighter freeway. The speed limit is what, 100? It's 100 kilometres an hour. In other areas, we have speed limits that are even higher, because we found that higher speeds on properly constructed highways aren't necessarily unsafe.

You have areas in the United States where the speed limits are 120 kilometres an hour. So what do you do if you're a trucker and you have a truck that has a speed limiting device on it and you do business in the United States? You're now at a competitive disadvantage with your competitors, travelling into the United States with your load.

A lot of independent truckers came to us and told us about that. They said, "This is really unfair. This is about giving the big companies yet another hand up." I hated when Brian Mulroney used to say that. He used to talk about giving people—no, it was Mike Harris who said "Hand up." Mulroney was another quote. "I'm going to give them a hand up." Here's this government saying to the big companies, "We're going to give you a hand up. We're going to put speed limiters in everybody's trucks and we're going to help the big guys, and the little guys are going to get it in the ear."

The law says that you can't have anything to fail a device that is a speed limiter. So we go off to committee. My opposition colleague, the member from whatever riding, Mr. Klees, the Conservative critic for transportation, said that he had an amendment in order to deal with the issue of speed limiters exiting Ontario. The

government said, “No, we can’t support that legislation. That would be a bad amendment.” So I called on the expert witnesses who were there at committee and who worked for the Ministry of Transportation. Do you know what they said? “Oh no, no. You can have a computer in your truck. You can buy a laptop that you plug into a device, into a hard-wire harness that’s underneath in the seat, and you can have that in your truck as a way of turning off the speed limiter when you leave the province of Ontario.” Or you can buy the QC5100, I think they called it, which is another device that you install in your truck, and it allows you to turn off the speed limiter when you leave the province of Ontario. Or even better still, you can have this GPS technology, where the fleet of trucks, once it leaves the geographic boundaries of Ontario, automatically has the speed limiters turned off.

I thought that was rather interesting because the legislation says, “You shall not have and you shall be charged if a speed-limiting device in your truck is found that can limit the speed on that truck.” I was in a bit of a quandary, so I asked a number of questions. I said, “The OPP pulls over Ralph the trucker, and Ralph’s got one of these \$3,000 laptops on board, and the laptop is closed and turned off. Are you going to charge him?” “No, we’re not going to charge him.” That’s good news, I thought to myself. But the officer could still charge him, because the legislation says that he or she can. So we’re in this sort of grey area, where the government, by way of answers in the committee, tried to accommodate some of the concerns we were raising in the opposition and the public were raising when they came before us and introduced this concern before the committee. But we’re in a grey area because the law says that the person will be charged, but the ministry says, “Don’t worry. We’re just not going to enforce that.”

I just said to myself, this is—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: That’s not what they said.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That’s exactly what they said. They said that if they found a QC5100 or a GPS device or a laptop in the truck that was turned off, passive and had not deactivated the truck, they would not charge that person for possessing a device under the act, even though the act says that the person has to be charged. We tried to get an amendment to clarify that, that said, “If driving your truck in Ontario”—at the very least, just make it for Ontario. The government wouldn’t accept that. So we’re in this sort of a grey area that says that you can’t have it, but if you have it, the ministry says, “We won’t charge you.” Time will tell. But in committee, I got it on the record, and I want people to utilize this in their defence when they go to court because you can, as my friend Mr. Kormos would know far better than me. The issue of what was said in committee and what was said in legislation and what was intended—I want to make it clear: The government has said that they will not charge people who have speed limiting-devices in their trucks so long as they’re turned off. Clear enough. I saw that and I guess it’s a little bit of a victory, but I still think it’s a bit of a strange situation.

The last point I want to make, because I know my other two colleagues are biting at the bit to get into this debate: Ce sont des députés qui sont dévoués et qui veulent participer dans ce débat et veulent être capables d’ajouter au débat sur les points qui sont importants pour le monde qu’ils représentent. Je sais que tous les autres députés de l’Assemblée veulent faire de même. Ils sont ici aujourd’hui et ils sont engagés. Regardez-les. Ils sont engagés dans le débat. Ils sont ici et ils écoutent chaque mot. Regardez la foule; on n’a—personne. Mon Dieu, il n’y a personne ici l’après-midi. Qu’est-ce qui se passe? C’est le nouveau Règlement de la chambre. J’ai oublié.

I was saying, if you didn’t get the translation fast enough, that I’m in here and I’m engaging members of the assembly in this debate, and I know that they all want to participate. I was commenting on all the masses of people in the galleries, and thank God we have television because there’s nobody up there. These new rules have really, I think, been an absurd thing when it comes to the public’s ability to participate here.

The point that I want to make is this: I said at the beginning of this debate that I would vote for this legislation at second reading because I thought that in principle, it’s not a bad idea; it’s something that’s worth exploring. I believe that as a legislator, you shouldn’t shoot an idea down just because you have a bit of a problem with it. So I said, “Let’s allow this thing to go to second reading. We’ll give this bill conditional support and send it to committee and hear what people have to say, and see if the government is prepared to respond to the concerns that were raised by those affected who came to committee.”

This bill had short-shrift time in committee, and I take responsibility for that as a member of the subcommittee. I’m not going to throw stones at the Conservatives or the Liberals. I should have insisted that this bill be in committee for a longer period of time—not that it would help, because the government decided what they wanted to do, and I’m but one member. They have the majority here, and a government, at the end of the day, decides what’s going to happen.

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What is clear to me is that those people who came before us—I’ve got to say that the one issue this spring that I got the most mail, e-mail and phone calls on, as critic, was this speed-limiting legislation. I’ve had other bills in the House. It is very clear that there is a very strong constituency opposed to this bill. I believe, as a member of the assembly and as a critic for the New Democratic Party, that if this bill was really doing something to green the environment, I would vote for it, because that’s clearly something that would be worth supporting. But from what I’ve seen from the witnesses who came before us and from the e-mails and phone calls I’ve had from people on this particular issue, this is not going to green the province of Ontario. It’s not going to reduce the greenhouse gases that people say it’s going to do. So there’s a very minimal effect when it comes to the green part of what this bill does.

On the other side, the bill is clearly opposed by a number of people within the industry, and in all conscience, I can't support the bill on the basis of that. I find that sad, though. I think we should have taken more time at committee to at least try to fix this bill to make it do what it needed to do, and I probably would have been okay to support it at that point. But clearly, the bill is not supported by many people in the industry. It does not do what it intends to do in regard to road safety or when it comes to greenhouse gases.

For that reason, I—jeez, I've got 14 hours and 51 minutes to go. This is pretty good.

Interjection: More time, more time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow, more time. I can filibuster.

There we go. It came back. All of a sudden, I thought, "Do I have to go 14 hours and 51 minutes?" I can't do that; that would be unfair.

Comme je dis, j'ai d'autres collègues qui veulent parler, donc à ce point-ci on va donner la chance à l'un des deux qui veulent parler sur ce projet de loi. Merci.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to welcome the citizens of Ontario to this political forum. We're on live; it's 10 to 3. I know how excited you are, with the popcorn in one hand and the wine in the other, to tune in on these political debates.

I wanted to take this opportunity and present a different view from my colleague's. I want to do that because I think there are different views among like-minded people as well. While my friend from Timmins–James Bay raises important points, which I'll speak to—and they're valid in terms of why he would oppose it—I'm going to take a different tack on the bill.

The Liberals, generally speaking, do very little with respect to any particular bill. They take little, picayune kinds of efforts and make them sound huge and revolutionary. This is one of those bills that is hardly historic, hardly revolutionary and hardly at the top of the list in terms of how it greens our environment. It's a small, little measure. It's as small as, not the tax rebate, but the little environmental initiative by the Liberal government of which they're very proud; that is, you pay no PST on a bicycle if it's under \$1,000. That's as good as it gets with this government.

These are the little initiatives that become big with the Liberals, and the point is, they're not big. It's so hard to attack them, because they don't do much one way or the other. That is why, on the whole, it's usually good to make fun of what Liberals do, as I am with this bill. While I'm going to support this bill, it's usually a lot of good fun to attack the Liberals, because they don't do much of anything, and this is another example of a bill that doesn't do much. As my friend from Timmins–James Bay says, "If you want to look at initiatives in terms of how we green the environment, this isn't it."

My friend and colleague makes the point that the government makes the claim that 280,000 tonnes of emissions are taken out of the air because of this initiative. That would be true if all cars were driving at 120 kilometres an hour or beyond. But, as he pointed out, they're

not; 60% of trucks already have controls that keep them at a certain speed limit. Therefore, the saving that the government speaks about is already diminished by 60%.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. So some greenhouse gases are diminished as a result of this initiative, but it's not as big, Mr. Brown, as you claim or your government claims. It's not a bad initiative, however tiny it is, but it's not as big as you claim.

For me, it's an issue that, yes, it helps, but one could wish that they would be bolder then or as bold as some of the provinces like Quebec or other countries, and take initiatives that one could be proud of.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: They're doing this.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Who's doing this?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Quebec.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Of course: Quebec is doing it, has done it. But Quebec leads by integrating speed-limiter legislation into a comprehensive climate change plan, which Liberals are not capable of. They're not capable of bringing in a plan. The only thing Mr. Brown is capable of, along with his colleagues, is bringing in little initiatives and then saying, "But we're doing what Quebec does," making the claim that it's the same. Mr. Brown, it isn't the same. When you have the comprehensive plan that's presented in Quebec versus your little, tiny initiative, it's not the same. That is the difference. You can say all you want, and you will and you do, but it's not quite the same, and you know it.

I am a driver myself, and this is where I take a different view from some of my colleagues. I find that a lot of truck drivers speed on a regular basis. I have to admit that I'm intimidated by the big truck drivers driving at 120 K or more. Mr. Kormos is a powerful man. He's not intimidated at all. He kind of likes it. He drives there on the highway, and he just enjoys it. These trucks whiz by, and he's not unhappy with that. He's a big guy; he can take it. Me, I'm just a little guy. When I see these truckers coming by at that speed, quite frankly, I'm that afraid. I wish I were as semi-divine as Mr. Kormos, but he's a little more semi-divine than I am, and he's not as frightened as me. Me, I'm frightened. They're very big, and when they speed, they're bigger than me and my little car.

I know we're going to have the benefit of Mr. Kormos's views on this matter, and he's going to tell us how differently he feels about this, and then you get the benefit, good people of Ontario, of different points of view on the matter. But for me, limiting the speed of truckers is not a bad thing. Most of them drive too fast for my liking. I believe that a lot of drivers feel the same way as I do, and finding a way to make sure that they drive at lower speeds versus 120 or 130 is, in my view, a very positive initiative.

So even though I'm not excited about this bill, it really is hard for me to oppose it. When you have the Canada Safety Council saying that it's not a bad idea and the Ontario Trucking Association saying that this is not a bad idea—and, as far as I could tell, the Teamsters didn't

organize a whole lot of deputations in committee, and maybe they did and I didn't see it, but as far as I know, the Teamsters didn't bring in a whole lot of people to oppose it. Yes, there are independent truck drivers who oppose this.

Here's where I think we need to do some work. Why is it that a lot of truck drivers speed? They speed because they're paid by the hour in some cases, and in order to get to their destination, they've got to get there on time, and in order to make the money you want to make, you have to get there fast. I don't think this is good. From a safety point of view, I don't think it's good. I don't believe speeding is that good, especially when you are 10 times bigger than I am, and by "me," I'm talking about my car. I believe that whatever we can do to slow them down is a good thing. If they have to speed because they're on the clock and because they're trying to make a few extra dollars, then I think we need to address that. We're not addressing that; none of us are talking about how we can.

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A lot of independents leave a lot of these truck companies. Why? Because they're not paid well and the benefits are poor. But you don't hear the government talking about how we might help by way of arguments. I don't think legislation, obviously, is the way to deal with that, but we should and could be talking about how we should be making arguments to assist many of the truckers who work for companies and who are not well paid and don't have good benefits, and why they're paid by the trip and not the hour, and why, if you're paid by the hour, you have to get there fast. Why aren't we dealing with the fact that many of these people are not enjoying the benefits that they should have and not being paid adequately to be able to drive safely and slower? Yes, it saves money for the trucking industry. It's good for the environment and it's good for the driver. We could all be doing that. They would be driving not so fast if they could be guaranteed a decent wage and decent benefits. That, in my view, is what we should be talking about, and we're not.

If we solved that particular issue, then a lot of the independent truckers would probably still be employed by the trucking companies and not be on their own. They often can't afford not to speed to get to the next destination. Driving a truck is expensive. Every repair you have to do for your truck is an expensive repair. They need the money, and that's why I put to you, as lawyers say, that they have to drive fast. That's why they drive fast. I believe driving fast is a dangerous thing, both for car drivers and truck drivers. It is a very dangerous thing.

By the way, when the government says, "We want to keep it to a limit of 105," even 105 is above the current speed limits everywhere in Ontario. That's still fast. But no, it's not good enough for some; for some, it's just not good enough. For me, 105, which is beyond the law on the speed limits, is fast. I know that those who are more muscular than I am, both in mind and body, don't think it's a bad thing. But I think reducing the speed of truck drivers is a good thing.

There are people here who haven't used the example of Australia, but Australia has had this law for 20 years. I don't know why Liberals don't use that argument, but you should, because in the example of Australia, which is the first country that considered it, the speed limiters have been the law for both trucks and buses since 1990. They set it at 100 kilometres. What's their experience?

"Have the Aussies, after almost 20 years of speed limiters, found that to be" a problem? "Here's what Chris Brooks, senior adviser, road safety, Australian Transport Safety Bureau," said:

"There is no good evidence that a 10-kilometre differential between light vehicle and truck speed limits creates a safety problem. If there is any such problem at all, it is small compared to the safety benefits of running trucks at 100 km/h rather than 110 km/h."

"Speed limiters place everyone on a level playing field and shippers and carriers can't push drivers to drive too fast to meet a schedule."

I'm also conscious of the fact that when people say, "What happens when you're stuck behind lumbering behemoths, particularly on country and regional roads?" Well, the Australian experience tells us a different thing. He says that "overtaking-related crashes on rural roads are surprisingly uncommon.... It may be that on two-lane roads with a general speed limit of 110 kilometres per hour, the presence of speed-limited trucks tends to constrain light vehicle speeds. If so, there may well be a substantial net safety benefit that would be lost if trucks were permitted to travel faster."

In other words, rather than causing more accidents, speed-limited trucks are causing other traffic to slow down and thus reducing the likelihood of accidents.

So I'm ready to support this bill. I'm ready to support it today. I argue again that it's hardly a revolutionary bill. It's a picayune little initiative, like the no-PST tax savings you get for getting your bike. But to the extent that it's an initiative that might help rather than not help vis-à-vis emissions and vis-à-vis safety, I'm going to argue on the whole safety issue and be on the side of that one.

That's the extent of my argument on this.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'll be using the balance of this lead time of some 20 minutes.

I do not support this legislation and I want to tell you why.

I suppose that the most basic query would be, if speed limiters do all of these things, then why isn't the government proposing speed limiters for all vehicles on our highways: trucks, buses, cars, motorcycles? It seems to me that if this really was a safety and environmental issue, that would be the goal of this government.

I was fortunate enough to be able to sit in on the afternoon of the hearings when Ms. DiNovo was subbing for our critic, and I tell you, having heard the submissions made then, having read the material that was obtained—and I'm grateful to Andrew McNaught, the research officer for the committee—having read the submissions made by others, including those who support the bill, I

don't think the government has made its case. I simply don't. And that's not to say that speed isn't a problem.

I want to tell the minister—and I don't want to be unfair, so I'll not name names—that there have been more than a few times when I was driving in my Chevy S-10 pickup truck on the QEW back to Welland in the middle lane, with my cruise control set at 150—

Interjections.

Interjection: One fifteen.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —and there was this great big maroon Buick Roadmaster rushing past me on the left-hand side in the passing lane. As he was passing by me in this big Buick Roadmaster—and the newer version is a LeSabre; the owner of that Buick Roadmaster downsized to a LeSabre—with a swoosh, leaving my Chevy S-10 pickup truck just rocking in the wake, I might have, from time to time, recognized somebody who looks awfully like the Minister of Transportation. So maybe the minister warrants a speed limiter.

Look, I am impressed by the fact that owner-operators—and we all know that; everybody has spoken sympathetically about owner-operators. These aren't the big trucking firms. These are the men and women who invest huge amounts of money in their tractors, their rigs, who live in them, and who are a critical part of our economy in North America, especially with the not just growing but established phenomenon of just-in-time—and Lord knows, I wish us all well. My fear, with the job losses in the auto sector and in the auto parts sector, is that there may well be fewer and fewer transport trucks on our highways because of this government's abandonment of manufacturing and its workers here in the province of Ontario.

But if I've got to choose between the Ontario Trucking Association, the big trucking interests, and owner-operators, I'm with the owner-operators. If I've got to choose between the big trucking organizations and the Teamsters Union—which, as you know, is the union that a whole lot of professional truck drivers belong to, if they're fortunate enough to be unionized workers—I'm siding with the Teamsters.

1510

I read the material that was provided as a supplement to the contribution by Professor Prentice from the University of Manitoba. It was sad; it was regrettable; it was truly tragic, because I was embarrassed to go into that committee and see that submitters were only allowed a 10-minute slot. Some people went to great lengths to prepare their submissions, and then to be told they had a 10-minute slot was an absolute embarrassment. But Professor Barry Prentice from the University of Manitoba made submissions, and then Andrew McNaught obtained the scholarly materials, the research papers, that he made reference to. At the end of the day, the rebuttal to the government proposition is far stronger than anyone at first anticipated.

I am also impressed because—I've got to tell you, I can't not mention Dorothy Sanderson from Cannington, Ontario. She's just a tremendous woman, a long-time

trucker. She has driven many a mile, many a kilometre, delivering food, clothing and all that sort of stuff from one city to another, across North America, I suspect. She brought the perspective of the real world—none of this theoretical stuff; real-world stuff, real-life stuff. She talked about a number of things, as much as she could in a mere 10 minutes.

She talked about the phenomenon that we already heard the NDP transportation critic refer to as elephant racing, where one truck is trying to pass another on, let's say, a slight incline, with that truck occupying the left-hand lane for an incredibly long period of time, so that there's a huge lineup of cars behind him, which then generates driver behaviour that is inherently unsafe because people become reckless. They're in a panic to pass those trucks. I'm worried about the trucker who can't accelerate quickly enough to a sufficiently high speed to safely pass somebody or to avoid an accident. I'm worried about the trucker who can't accelerate at a sufficient speed to pass a dangerous situation.

By now, I'll bet you that I've driven millions of kilometres in the course of my lifetime so far—that QEW back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. I've got to tell you: To this day I've had the daylights scared out of me by any number of drivers, but never by a professional truck driver. Are trucks big? Of course they're big. Do trucks travel one after the other, as we increasingly rely upon trucking to get goods from one place to another? Yes, of course they do. I tell you: Where the data referring to speed speaks of speed being a factor in 23% of accidents involving trucks, there's similarly material that suggests that of those 23%, the vast majority are cars that are speeding that cause the hazard and cause the danger. If speeding trucks are a problem, then get enforcement out there on the highway. It's as simple as that.

My colleague from Trinity–Spadina spent a whole lot of his 20 minutes expounding on the fact that size matters, and I'm not about to rebut him.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Brown laughs. I don't know what side of the calculation he finds himself on. But my colleague from Trinity–Spadina emphasizes that size matters. Down where I come from, people have known that a long time already. Yeah, trucks are big; that means you respect them.

It's just like pedestrians and cars. I watch, for instance, pedestrian behaviour. It's far different down where we come from in Hamilton or Welland, where, for instance, a taxi driver isn't forced to wait at an intersection while pedestrian after pedestrian after pedestrian blocks his or her right turn. Down where we come from, pedestrians understand that that cab driver is trying to eke out a living at what usually amounts to less than minimum wage, and you cut the guy some slack, for Pete's sake. Stop so he can turn right, rather than the arrogant, "I'm a pedestrian and I'll show you, you car operator." You understand what I'm talking about, don't you? You've been there, you've seen it, and you've done it.

As I say, on the highway, trucks are bigger than your car. I'm lucky. I don't drive a big pickup truck; I have a

small pickup truck, a Chevy S-10. It's got well over 300,000 clicks on it. I've had it for many a year. The other car is an old 1991 Buick Park Avenue. I don't drive that anywhere near enough. You know that David Chev-Olds, down on Niagara Street, the people I buy these vehicles from, keep them tuned up and running.

Why, for the life of me, the committee couldn't entertain these submissions for longer than 10-minute slots boggles the mind. Why, for the life of me, the committee couldn't have extended its hearings to listen to more detailed analysis of, for instance, the scholarly material boggles the mind. It seems to me the government is in a rush to get this bill passed; I suspect very much it's going to pass today. I believe that the majority of people in this chamber, the majority of them being Liberals, are going to ensure that the bill passes. I accept that as a reality, as the nature of majority governments, but I find it truly regrettable, because there wasn't a fair discussion about what's really happening on the highways.

One of the other observations that so many traffic safety people will tell you about is that it's safer to travel with the flow of traffic. As a matter of fact, you had one innovative scoff-law who, a couple of years ago, tried testing the police and the courts by driving at 100 kilometres an hour along the 401 eastward, as I recall it. You'll remember that he was charged, because he was effectively holding back traffic. Ms. Elliott recalls that. His defence was, "I was travelling the speed limit, 100 clicks." Sorry, pal; you were obstructing the flow of other traffic.

It seems to me that there's an issue around speed. Gary Furlong has written a book about this, about boundaries shifting, as an analytical tool, but it's obviously applicable here. The speed limit is 100, but we accept that 115 clicks is tolerable, because the police tend not to charge people under 115—somehow, and I don't know how valid that is; maybe I've just been lucky—so that effectively, the speed limit becomes 115, and people push that to 120 and then 125 and 130. I've got to tell you, driving out towards where Ms. Elliott is from on the 401, in my Chevy S-10 pickup truck—1994, by the way—on speed control at 115 clicks, I'm in the right-hand lane, and I'm still slowing other people down. It ain't the trucks that are zooming past me at 125, 130, 140 kilometres an hour; it's people in cars.

My anecdotal experience is contrary to what other people's is, obviously. Professional truck drivers have never, ever caused me to fear them. I'm respectful of a truck: the fact that it's bigger, the fact that it isn't as manoeuvrable as, let's say, a high-priced sports car like a Corvette or a Porsche. That means that you've got to respect them, cut them some slack, give them some leeway so that they can manoeuvre safely. I, for one, think you should take pride in doing that, because you've got a working woman or man driving that truck who's working hard to make a living. Just as pedestrians should respect taxi drivers and cut them a little bit of slack and let them get their fare to where it's going, people on the highway should respect trucks a little more and cut them a little slack and not create hazardous situations.

How many times—because I know you drive on that QEW, too—do you see somebody pass a truck, dart right in front of it in the middle lane and then slow down? You got some poor truck driver just about swallowing his bubble gum—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, because you've got your little Chevy Cobalt out in front of him, you pass him and then you slow down no more than spitting distance in front of the guy. You know exactly what I'm talking about. There's a truck driver—the perspiration breaks out in short order.

People don't understand that we have to share the highways with trucks; it's as simple as that. I say that if there's a problem with speeding, then you readjust the boundary. Then you have a campaign—and it will not take very long. People are incredibly responsive; it's this Pavlovian response. People, in short order, will start learning that you can't go 125 anymore. Having said that, we build highways in this country that are designed for vehicles to travel at 120 or 125 kilometres an hour. Most of the 400-series highways are designed specifically for that rate of speed.

1520

I was impressed by Dorothy Sanderson, the truck driver. I was impressed by Professor Barry Prentice. I was incredibly impressed by spokespeople, not only at the committee, where they made their submissions, but they held a soirée here downstairs—the people supporting this legislation had no qualms about drinking their wine or eating their hors d'oeuvres, their little crudités. We had the owner-operators association of Canada, along with the US-based Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association downstairs at one of those soirées we have here from time to time, which seem to have no trouble attracting politicians and even their staff, because a free meal is a free meal and a free glass of wine is a free glass of wine.

I suspect they were a little dismayed at the rapidity of the process, and that people, especially the American owner-operators, were reflecting on US-style hearings, which tend to be somewhat more protracted and inquisitorial than the hearings we have here at Queen's Park, especially of late. I think they're suffering some whiplash with the speed at which this bill is being pushed through the Legislature. In a majority government, we have to live with the government's utilization of that majority in whichever way they see fit, for whatever motive or reason they see fit.

I don't think this bill does what it says it does, I don't think it will have the profound environmental impact that it purports to have, and I certainly don't think it's going to create safer roads. In fact, I believe it could create more dangerous highways. I'll echo what some of the other people have said: What we really need is far more effective training for drivers of all vehicles.

It's amazing how you can witness, from drivers whom you know have been driving for a considerable period of time, incredibly dangerous driving habits that they've

either acquired or simply never shed over the course of training. It's why I'm pleased that the NDP and our transportation critic have raised the issue of truck driver training schools and criticized those instant diplomas with minimal amounts of training.

One of the ways to create safer highways across the board is to insist on higher standards for the training of all drivers. One of the ways of ensuring safer roadways is to insist on safe vehicles, because while speed is ranked at 23%, unfit vehicles—bad brakes, among other things—are right up there with speed. Speed, I repeat, was most likely the problem of the car driver.

In terms of unsafe vehicles, when you've got a rig that costs \$300,000, \$400,000—are those the kinds of prices that people invest in these rigs?—that's a whole lot of mortgage. Trust me: They take care of them. You'll see them. Go to a truck stop. Go to Stop 50, the truck stop on the way down to Welland from where you live, on the south side of the QEW. Pull in there and see those rigs. They are spic and span. They are immaculate. You could eat off the fenders and bumpers. These owner-operator truck drivers take immaculate care of their vehicles and keep them at the most sophisticated level of mechanical condition.

I do not want to put truck drivers' lives or other vehicle occupants' lives at risk by putting an unfair and inappropriate mechanical limit on the speed of a truck when that speed is necessary to drive safely, either in terms of keeping up with the flow of traffic or of avoiding an unsafe situation. If this bill goes to a vote today, I will be voting against it.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I had the privilege of sitting in on some of the submissions by independent truckers in reference to this bill. It amazes me that this bill is going forward without the co-operation of the majority of truckers in this province. What you have is the big companies that are pushing it. We all want safety in this province. Safety is of the utmost importance. However, the majority of truck drivers in this province don't feel that this bill provides a safe atmosphere to do their jobs in and work in a safe environment.

I'm a little confused with the bill. If it was uniform throughout North America, that would be one thing. But when you go over into New York state or into Michigan, the speed limits are different. Are the slow-moving Canadian truckers who are on their highways in the States—and the other truckers have the ability to get to destinations quicker. Are they going to be bumper-riding these trucks? Are they going to be cutting them off? Are they going to be moving at a faster speed to create more income for themselves, or are they going to also join in at a slow speed in co-operation with their Canadian truckers? Also, when these truckers enter into Ontario, are they all of a sudden going to slow down and not speed because of our laws? They're not going to try and create more money, especially the independent drivers?

I would think that if you were going to pass a bill in this House, you would want the co-operation of the entire

trucking industry and the majority of the trucking industry. That's not the case here.

Everyone likes safe highways. I too have run across situations where there are anxious drivers behind me, going up a hill, and you've got two big rigs blocking both lanes. People are in a hurry to get by, and finally when the truck does get out of the way, these cars are bumper to bumper, flying up on the passing lane. The next thing you know, what we've got is an accident.

A lot of times when you're going downhill or uphill, you can't see what's in front of you. When the rig gets out of the way, the next thing you know you're on top of a school bus or something, trying to pass at a high speed. I think the majority of these truckers are good drivers and I think they actually do control the flow of traffic on our highways.

In the presentations, the independent truck drivers had 10 minutes each. They came with large dossiers. They wanted to make a professional, educated submission, and they weren't allowed to. They had 10 minutes.

Then, unfortunately, the government decided to bring in a couple of people who had lost a spouse on the highways. How did this spouse, the one they brought, lose her husband? He wasn't avoiding another truck; he lost his life avoiding speeding cars. He ended up sideways in the ditch. So it wasn't trucks causing truck problems, it was the cars, as my colleague from Welland pointed out.

There are so many things in this bill that are missing. There are so many things that haven't been addressed. If you want to have a bill that's effective, a bill that's going to cover all aspects of the business of trucking, then you should listen to all the submissions, you should listen to all the people who are involved in industry and take seriously what they say—and take longer.

As my colleague pointed out, this bill is being rushed through too quickly. There are many people out there who weren't heard. There are only so many people who are allowed in the time allotted to come in front of the committee, and it seemed to be stacked by certain bigger outfits, more than the little guys.

Once again, a bill is going through this House without deep thought. Get it through quick before the session is over. Don't deal with all the aspects that can be looked at from both sides in the aspect of safety.

I want to just touch on pollution. We're talking about pollution, which I've talked to the environmental minister about. Here we are in a province where you have huge stacks pouring out tonnes and tonnes of emissions into the air we breathe. These trucks come with pollution control systems on them. So this big—I don't know—250 tonnes of pollution they're going to save is nonsense. It may save a little bit.

Why don't you start dealing with industries and the stacks that pour out millions and millions of tonnes of pollution? Put secondary control systems in. Truckers might have a good argument. The truckers are saying, "You're punishing me, as a small operator. You're taking away my livelihood, yet you let the big polluters pollute." It just doesn't make sense.

1530

I think it's gotten to a point where common sense does not prevail, to a point where we don't look at a bill long enough or hard enough to dissect it. I'm not a professional driver, but it seemed to me that all the professional drivers who came in front of them, except the big companies, were dead set against this bill. They do feel that it's going to impact on their livelihood.

So what's going to happen? Down the road, if this bill passes, I want to really see the results of the studies of the "saviour" from pollution in comparison to other things in the province that pollute. I want to see the impact, what percentage out of 100% of this bill placed on the truckers is going to save from pollution.

Frankly, coming from where I am, I've even had people who wanted to put in new plants say to me, "Mr. Miller, the airshed in Hamilton is full now. What's another incinerator? What's another 1,000 trucks in Hamilton?" We have the highest rates of asthma, breathing problems and lung problems in Hamilton. What's another incinerator? What's another factory? What's another 1,000 trucks? It just doesn't make sense.

If you're going to enforce the laws of this province, then do it with some thought. Do it with some depth. I'm sick, in my short tenure here, of seeing surface bills just to please people, just to keep them quiet or happy—not bills with substance, just the fluff bills, I guess they call them. I've seen so many in the short time I've been here. I have seen no bills with any substance come to this floor for honest, hard debate, where the opposition parties can grill and do what we're supposed to do. What do we do? We get cut off by the majority in committees. We don't even get to talk about them.

In fact, my bill never even got read. Nobody even looked at it. They didn't even know what I was talking about when I made my presentation. That's pretty scary. So if you want to be serious about this province, whether it be safety, the environment, trucking, schools, whatever it is, then you'll have to start having longer and better discussions, more in-depth investigations, and have the professionals in each field here to speak and have their time in court to be able to make these bills the way they should be.

I think there are many things missing in this bill, many things they didn't deal with. They touched on it but didn't really open it up. I really feel that this bill is totally unfair and hasn't been looked at properly. Personally, I cannot support this bill in its present state. It needs a lot more work before you impact the lives of thousands and

thousands of truckers and other people in this province who rely on that.

If you want to look at the safety aspect of it, let's look at buses. You don't think that a bus can do as much damage as a rig? How many buses have you seen turned over? How many buses have killed people? How many people on buses—our school buses don't even have the proper safety features. The kids are on those buses without seatbelts. It's scary. They're bouncing around like popcorn. If a big rig hits them—what if a Greyhound bus hits a school bus? He hasn't got a speed limiter. Don't you think he's going to do as much damage as a big rig would? He certainly would.

I support safety, I support a good environment, but this bill does not address those problems to the level it should. Until we start putting bills through this House that have thought, foresight and depth, I have a real problem with it. I, personally, cannot support this bill in this state.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments? Further debate? Are there any honourable members who wish to participate in the debate? If not—I was actually going to go to the minister or the parliamentary assistant for a reply.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I'm sorry. I guess it has to be the minister himself because he moved the motion.

Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House now stands adjourned until Tuesday, June 17, at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1536.

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Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	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	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	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
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	

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