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Tuesday 23 September 2008

Mardi 23 septembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 September 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 22, 2008, on the motion for second reading of 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): Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure this morning to talk to this House about Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. Let me start by saying that the NDP has a proud history in Canada of leading efforts to improve access to public health care by all people. We welcome this new legislation as we would welcome any legislation that will improve the effectiveness of our public health care system, of medicare. As you know, medicare is now a defining value of the Canadian people, and of Ontarians as well.

The stated purpose of the bill is to ensure that Ontarians have access to adequate numbers of competent health professionals. It provides a framework for the government to work with regulatory colleges to increase access to health professionals. In the title of the bill it says, "to qualified health professionals," but if you look down into the bill, it actually seems to focus more on working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the CPSO, and its aim is to increase the supply of physicians to Ontario to serve the people of Ontario. Actually, actions are already under way at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and as early as last week they announced a plan to bring hundreds of more phy-

sicians to Ontario by allowing physicians licensed in other provinces in Canada and some from the US to practise here.

J'aimerais vous donner un exemple concret. Moi, l'année dernière, jusqu'à l'élection du mois d'octobre, j'étais la directrice générale du Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury. Bien entendu, nous avons plusieurs postes de médecin au centre de santé communautaire. Mais je me souviens de plusieurs défis que l'on a eus. Entre autres, je me souviens du D^r Frenette. D^r Frenette avait fait ses études au Québec. Son mari était professeur à l'Université Laurentienne, qui est également située à Sudbury. Le couple, D^r Frenette et son mari, voulaient s'établir à Sudbury. Elle était venue en entrevue et avait passé l'entrevue pour être embauchée comme médecin au Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury. Tout allait bien.

Mais tout n'était pas bien. Sans vous donner les détails, cela a pris deux ans entre le temps qu'on avait fait contact avec D^r Frenette et le temps qu'elle a pu commencer à pratiquer à Sudbury et avoir des patients et à recevoir sa licence du Collège des médecins et chirurgiens de l'Ontario, un processus qui était très ardu.

C'est un exemple à Sudbury. Mais je peux vous dire qu'à Cornwall, à Témiscamingue, à Toronto, à Welland, dans d'autres centres de santé communautaires de la province qui desservent les francophones, on recevait assez régulièrement des demandes d'emploi de médecins du Québec qui voulaient venir pratiquer chez nous. Les cinq centres que je vous ai nommés sont des centres qui ont comme mandat de desservir la population francophone. Donc ils étaient intéressés par des médecins qui pouvaient desservir leur population en français, et plusieurs de ceux-là venaient du Québec.

C'était tellement ardu pour eux, même si c'étaient des médecins qui pratiquaient en bonne et due forme, qui avaient leur licence, qui avaient leur droit de pratique. Certains pratiquaient à Hull et Gatineau. Ils avaient des collègues à Ottawa, mais parce qu'ils avaient fait leurs études au Québec, c'était un processus très ardu et difficile pour eux de venir pratiquer en Ontario. Puis pourtant le type de pratique entre Gatineau et Ottawa pour un médecin de famille est pas mal identique. Ils utilisent les mêmes spécialistes, les mêmes hôpitaux de soins tertiaires et quaternaires, etc., mais la licence du Québec n'était pas reconnue par le Collège des médecins et chirurgiens de l'Ontario.

I wanted to give an example as to how hard it was for a physician who was trained in another province to come—In Ontario we have five community health

centres that have as their target population the franco-phone population. In order to serve the Franco-Ontarians of this province, you need to have physicians who are competent in French and in English, because the rest of the health care system of course is in English, so you have to have physicians who are bilingual. We would often get physicians who had trained in Quebec who were interested in coming to practise in one of those five centres. The process for them to be recognized in Ontario was so difficult that at some point the five francophone community health centres actually worked together and hired a consultant to help do the transition, but even then, when you had people specializing in recruitment and trying to help them come into Ontario, it was still like a year-long process, a process of over 12 months, and often two years, to have ready-to-practise physicians who practise in Quebec come and be recognized in Ontario. It was really hard. So this has to change, and this is what this bill, Bill 97, will do.

0910

On the surface, who can argue that? Especially when we know that hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario do not have access to a family physician, it is a good bill. But while the number of physicians per Ontarian has not dropped significantly over the past few years, we know that many physicians are on the verge of retirement and that we need to plan ahead. We need a health human resources plan. I will talk about this a little bit longer in a few minutes.

The bill will quite likely increase the number of physicians who practise in Ontario, and that will be a good thing. The NDP will support the bill based on that simple fact. But we need to recognize that this bill will not, on its own, lead to improved access to quality care for those who need it the most. Here, again, I will explain what I mean by that.

I would like to quote from Dr. Michael Rachlis, an expert on health care in Canada. He recently said, "Even if the numbers of doctors doubled, unless we were to change the structure in which they work, Canadians would still have inadequate access." And this is if you double the number of physicians in Canada or, in this case, in Ontario. This bill will by no means double the number of practising physicians in this province. We have about 23,000 right now. It will increase it, and that will be good, but it won't double. Unless we change the structure in which physicians work, and provide primary care and tertiary care, Canadians and Ontarians will continue to have problems of access. We can support this bill, but it is only one small part of a comprehensive strategy to improve access.

I would like to talk about a range of other actions that are also needed. Some of them will be supported by this bill and some of them need to be worked on.

First, and I've mentioned this, it is important to develop a health human resource strategy that will first of all project the needs for professionals, and that will work to ensure that there is an adequate supply of physicians and other providers. Right now, if you go to different

parts of Ontario, a lot of them know that there is a shortage, but they wouldn't be able to tell you the mix and what quantity for a specific area. In underserved areas, you have a pretty good idea of how many more physicians you need. But how many midwives? How many nurse practitioners? How many physiotherapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, nurses and personal support workers? The list goes on. And how do they influence one another? This comprehensive health human resources plan has not been done.

As part of this, we need to enhance the supply of physicians and improve and speed up the integration of internationally trained physicians to Ontario. Certainly this bill, the spirit of this bill, this co-operation that will be put into place between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, will lead us toward that. But this has to be done in an ethical way. We have some internationally trained physicians here in Ontario. But we must not actively, what I call, poach physicians from developing countries which have an even greater need for their physicians than we do. I realize that everybody in Ontario should have access to primary care and should have access to a physician. But to go and poach those physicians from countries that are in greater need than us is something that our party would not support.

There are good reasons to immigrate to Ontario. Ontario is a great province to live in, to raise your family in. It is a great place to live; I think everybody in this House agrees. We should not try to prevent immigration—that's not what I'm saying—but there's a difference between being a welcoming province and poaching physicians out of countries, especially developing countries that need them even more than we do.

There has to be some kind of code of conduct associated with this new partnership between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. There are examples in other provinces, and I would invite the ministry to look at the dialogue going on in Saskatchewan for the recruitment of health professionals overseas. The Ontario Nurses' Association also has a code of conduct developed for their profession, for nurses working in developing countries, to prevent what we call poaching. Our aim in Ontario should be to become self-sufficient—self-sufficient in training the types and numbers of health professionals, as we have pledged to do with other provinces under the national framework on health human resources, which Ontario is a part of.

I am really proud to be from Sudbury. We have the honour of having the newest school of medicine, the Northern Ontario Medical School. The school will be giving us their first graduates at the end of this school year, which will be in 2009. Fifty-six new physicians will be graduating with the training they receive at the Northern Ontario Medical School. It was the first medical school to be built in more than two generations, and it was built in northern Ontario. The whole curriculum is done in a way that prepares those physicians to work in

rural and northern areas of this province, which have for many years been so underserved. It is a great asset for recruitment and a great asset for retention of physicians in northern Ontario, something that everybody in northern Ontario is very proud of.

À Sudbury, nous avons l'honneur d'être l'endroit où la nouvelle école de médecine du nord de l'Ontario s'est établie. La nouvelle école nous donnera nos premiers médecins, nos premiers gradués, pendant cette année; c'est-à-dire, au printemps 2009. Au printemps 2009, nous aurons 56 nouveaux médecins qui vont avoir reçu leur entraînement dans le nord de l'Ontario. Ces médecins-la seront prêts à relever les défis spécifiques à la pratique de la médecine en région rurale et dans le nord de l'Ontario. C'est quelque chose qui nous rend très fiers, et l'école de médecine va aider autant au recrutement qu'à la rétention des professionnels de la santé dans notre province et dans notre partie de la province. C'est quelque chose dont nous sommes très fiers, et c'est certainement un autre gros pas pour s'assurer que le nord de l'Ontario a le type et le nombre de professionnels dont ils ont besoin pour desservir la population du nord de l'Ontario et des autres régions rurales de la province.

The second action that also needs to be done is, we need to improve the distribution of physicians. This should not be done through coercion, but through recruiting students from rural areas and improving the working conditions of physicians who work in rural and northern areas. For example, fewer doctors are willing to work 70 hours a week. I had an e-mail yesterday in my inbox from a physician from Fergus that basically talked to this. He has a young family and he's presently working 70 hours a week. This is not the type of lifestyle he would want. More and more physicians have spouses who also work. They have children and they need to be active parents. To be an active parent means that you have to be available and at home for your family.

0920

We need to find models that respect this work-life balance. Physicians cannot spend seven hours of their day talking to their patients and telling them, "In order to be healthy, you have to maintain a healthy work-life balance," and then turn around and not do that for themselves. That would be hypocrisy. If you really believe that in order to be healthy you have to lead a healthy life, and that includes a healthy balance between your work and life, then you also have to live it.

We have to add to this that more than half of the graduating physicians are women. That is a huge change from a generation ago. When I went to school, it was still very skewed the other way. There were way more men going into medicine. Now we have a healthy balance. It looks pretty much like half and half—a few more women. These women will have maternity leaves and will need to be replaced while on maternity leave, and have to be respected for their choice to be active in their children's lives.

La conciliation travail-famille, c'est pour tout le monde. Ce n'est pas seulement pour les travailleurs; c'est

pour les médecins également. Pour assurer une distribution équitable du nombre de médecins partout dans la province, ce n'est pas en les obligeant, c'est vraiment en leur donnant un espace de travail qui va respecter leurs besoins comme individus, comme membres d'un couple et comme parents d'une famille, et ça inclut la conciliation travail-famille. Tu ne peux pas passer sept heures de ta journée à parler à tes patients, en leur disant, « Bien, si vous voulez être en santé, vous devez vous assurer de concilier travail-famille », et se retourner de bord et travailler 70 ou 80 heures par semaine. Il faut que tu vives. Sinon, ça devient une hypocrisie, cette affaire-là.

Donc, pour les médecins, c'est important de leur offrir des opportunités de travail qui vont leur permettre d'avoir une vie satisfaisante à l'extérieur du travail—leur permettre d'avoir un travail satisfaisant, c'est certain, mais leur permettre d'avoir une vie, une vie de famille.

On doit également s'assurer que nos médecins « focus » sur la médecine. Cela veut dire s'assurer que chacun des professionnels de la santé travaille dans son champ de pratique; donc, les médecins pratiquent la médecine; les infirmières praticiennes ont leur champ de pratique; les infirmières, la même chose. Qu'on parle de la nutritionniste, de la travailleuse sociale, etc., que les médecins puissent travailler en équipe et être entourés d'une équipe qui permet à chacun de travailler même à son champ de pratique.

Je vous donne un exemple. Un médecin qui pratique en médecine solo—si un drame se passe dans la famille, quelqu'un perd un être cher, souvent il y a des problèmes de sommeil, il y a des problèmes de deuil. Qu'est-ce que tu fais ? Tu vas voir ton médecin de famille, parce que tu as besoin d'aide. Le médecin de famille, ou la femme-médecin, va t'écouter, va pouvoir t'aider, va peut-être prescrire quelque chose pour t'aider à mieux dormir. Mais vraiment, la personne qui est la mieux qualifiée pour t'aider à vivre ton deuil, c'est la travailleuse sociale; ce n'est pas nécessairement le médecin. Donc, quand on offre une pratique de groupe, une pratique interdisciplinaire, bien que tu aies peut-être fait un rendez-vous pour venir voir ton médecin parce que tu viens chercher de l'aide, l'équipe multidisciplinaire va te rediriger vers la travailleuse sociale, qui, elle, va être capable de t'aider à vivre ton deuil, ce qui est souvent quelque chose de très difficile.

La même chose : quelqu'un qui vient d'être diagnostiqué avec le diabète. C'est sûr qu'un médecin peut t'aider à gérer ton diabète et a un rôle très important à jouer à t'aider à gérer cette maladie que tu as. Mais l'infirmière praticienne a également un rôle, la nutritionniste-diététiste a également un rôle, parce qu'on connaît l'importance de la nutrition pour bien gérer le diabète. Encore là, ça pointe vers l'importance de s'assurer que nos médecins en Ontario travaillent dans des équipes interdisciplinaires pour que tu aies accès à la personne la mieux qualifiée pour t'aider, que tu y aies accès à une équipe interdisciplinaire.

The third point that will go along with improving access is that we need to ensure that physicians do what

they are best at doing, that is, practising medicine, and that other professionals also take on their roles on the interdisciplinary team. We need to make sure that physicians are doing what they do best and that other providers, such as nurse practitioners, take their rightful place on the health care team.

The flu season is about to come upon us. I would say that it's probably at our doorstep as we speak. Ontario has this beautiful program for flu shots, and more and more Ontarians are taking advantage of this free program and getting their flu shots. A flu shot is something that a nurse practitioner is perfectly capable of giving—and I would add that they are probably the best at giving the flu shots—but yet, for a physician who doesn't work in a team practice, it will be the physician who gives the flu shot. To me, it could be a better use of our health care resources to have physicians work as part of a team.

The same thing happens if—and I don't want to wish any harm on anybody—somebody in your family dies. You go through the grieving process. Most of the time you will reach out for help because you don't sleep well, you don't feel good and you're grieving. You go seek that help from your family physician. And your family physician will talk to you and maybe prescribe something to help you sleep better. Really, the health professional who is most qualified to help you through the grieving process is the social worker, but unless that social worker is part of that team, unless that physician works as part of a team, you won't have access to the best health care professional that is most suitable to help you through this grieving process. Same thing with diabetes: Physicians have an important role to play for people to help them manage their diabetes and help them through this chronic disease. They have a part to play. But other health providers are also very important. You should have access to a nutritionist-dietician, and you should have access to a nurse to help you manage.

The third part to really improve access and make a difference, so that everybody in Ontario has access to primary care, is that physicians have to be an integral part of an interdisciplinary team where they are co-workers with dieticians, nurse practitioners, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, health promoters etc. Then will we guarantee that everybody—every health professional—gets to work within their full scope of practice.

The fourth piece of the puzzle is that we need to recognize that physicians are not the only health professionals lacking.

Nous devons reconnaître que la pénurie de travailleurs dans la santé ne se limite pas aux médecins. Si une famille essaie de se trouver une sage-femme, bien, tu dois te mettre sur la liste d'attente de bonne heure. Mets-toi sur la liste d'attente le soir que cet enfant-là est créé, parce que les listes d'attente pour les sages-femmes sont extrêmement longues en Ontario.

I was giving the example that physicians are not the only health practitioners that are in short supply. Try, for example, to gain access to a midwife. This is something

that is very difficult. Some people would say you need to sign up pretty well the night you conceive; this is how long the waiting lists are. While we have increased the number of seats in medical schools, we have lagged behind in training nurses, nurse practitioners, midwives—and the list goes on. Ontario has the second-lowest number of nurses per capita in Canada, yet we are still seeing nurses being laid off in hospitals. As with physicians, we are not training the right amount of nurses to meet the needs of Ontarians.

0930

This bill, Bill 97, speaks, rightly, about access to health professionals. It seems to be very focused on physicians in its implementation. But the bill in itself has an opportunity to influence the relationship between the Ministry of Health and all of the colleges of the different health professions in Ontario.

Le projet de loi, Loi de 2008 visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés, parle de tous les professionnels, et pour nous c'est quelque chose d'important. C'est important non seulement d'augmenter le nombre de médecins, et certainement ce projet de loi parle en détail au sujet de la relation entre le Collège des médecins et chirurgiens de l'Ontario et le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, mais on espère qu'il aura une portée beaucoup plus large que ça et qu'on aura également ce type de dialogue avec les autres collèges, que ce soit avec le collège des infirmières, le collège des sages-femmes, les collèges des pharmaciens, des physiothérapeutes, etc, pour que l'Ontario ait le bon nombre de professionnels de la santé pour s'occuper de la santé des Ontariens et des Ontariennes.

Fifth, we need to better understand the needs of Ontarians who are currently without access, without a physician. We hear that there are now half a million—500,000—Ontarians without a physician. My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo yesterday used the number of a million people without access. I think that has to do with the number of people who are seeking access to a family physician but don't—and the other one speaks to the total number of Ontarians who do not have a family physician.

This number is very high, but what do we know about these people? We know that many of those Ontarians live in rural Ontario, where there are no services at all. I have a small community in my riding, Coniston, where the sole physician left his practice in May. He was Dr. Noel de Tilly. He was a very good physician who served that community very well. He had tried to retire for many, many years, tried to find somebody else to come and work in Coniston, but after a while just gave up and left that community without a physician at all. There are a number of communities like this throughout Ontario, in rural Ontario, where there are no other services around.

That's one group, but there are also other groups. There are the immigrants, people from different cultural backgrounds who can't get access to a physician they are comfortable with. Sometimes, depending on your cultural background, you would prefer to have a woman phy-

sician. Other groups that are a part of those people, those Ontarians without access to primary care, without access to a physician, are marginalized people, low-income people, homeless people and people who are transient or unable to establish and maintain a relationship with one physician. Within that group, there are a lot of people who are seriously sick. They may have a diagnosis of cancer; they may have a number of chronic diseases they are trying to manage. Lots of them may have a mental illness. They need access to primary care, they need access to a physician, but they don't have it. They make up the vast majority of those people without a physician in Ontario.

Others might be people who are healthy. Those are the people not seeking a family physician, and they don't usually visit a family physician. So if you're a young man listening out there, I guess I'm talking to you. There are lots of young men who don't go to see a family physician, don't seek one, but they make up those one million people who don't have access to a family physician.

We need to aggressively pursue models of delivery that will increase access to every Ontarian, including those groups I'm talking about—people living in rural areas, marginalized, low-income, recent immigrants, homeless people, transient people. Indeed, if we are truly concerned about access to care by all groups and quality of care for all people, we need to remember that community health centres, which involve genuine partnerships between physicians and a range of other health care professionals, are best at providing quality care to hard-to-reach populations—people in rural or remote areas, recent immigrants, low-income and homeless people.

Dans un centre de santé communautaire, les différentes parties du centre font qu'ils ont très bien l'habileté à desservir la population qui a le plus de difficulté à avoir accès aux soins primaires et avoir un médecin de famille. Un centre de santé communautaire offre toujours les soins primaires. Les soins primaires, c'est les soins qui sont offerts par les médecins, infirmiers praticiens, infirmiers nutritionnistes, travailleurs sociaux, etc. Ils offrent également la promotion de la santé. Donc, on va y retrouver des gens qui font la promotion de la santé, qui peuvent offrir des cours sur différentes maladies chroniques, que l'on parle de la gestion de l'asthme, du diabète, de l'hypertension, des cours préparatoires à l'accouchement, ce type de choses.

Mais on a également des gens qui se spécialisent en développement communautaire pour travailler spécifiquement avec la population desservie par le centre de santé. Ça permet d'être proactif. Ça permet d'identifier les personnes qui sont à risque pour avoir les problèmes de santé, et ce qu'on peut changer dans la communauté pour rendre nos communautés plus en santé. On peut avoir toutes sortes de choses : travailler sur la pauvreté, qui est le déterminant numéro un de la santé. En développement communautaire, ils peuvent également travailler pour s'assurer qu'on a des parcs, que la population a accès à des trottoirs, des choses comme ça, pour rendre nos rues plus sécuritaires.

I was mentioning that if we really care about access to all groups, especially the hard-to-serve, then we need to have a look at community health centres. Community health centres, by their makeup, are best suited to improve access. Community health centres always have primary health care teams. This is where you will find physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, dieticians and social workers all working together to provide access, to provide primary care.

But community health centres also have two more sides to them. They always have health promotion activities. So the health promotion activities could focus, depending on the population they serve, on the homeless, if they're in an area where there are a lot of homeless people without access. If there is lots of chronic disease—diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma—the health promoters can work to help manage those chronic diseases. So this is an idea of what goes on within health promotion.

A community health centre also has a third component, which is community development. Community development is where you will see the proactive activities that deal with the determinants of health. We all know that when you're sick, it is very important to have access to somebody to help you, to have access to primary care, but it is through working through the determinants of health that you will keep people healthy, and community health centres have teams of community development workers who work on those determinants of health. To give you an example, poverty is the number one determinant of health. The poorer you are, the sicker you are. You are sick more often, longer, and you access the health care system more. The more your income rises, the healthier you are. So in the community development part, you could see activities to fight poverty; you could see activities to keep people healthy, if it's through lack of exercise; or to bring in healthy nutrition in schools or different segments of the population.

0940

So we have to wonder, why isn't this government moving more quickly to increase community health centres? We also want to know—it is important: As I said, the bill will bring us more physicians, and this is something we support. But we also have to look at increasing the scope of practice—and the responsibilities of other health professionals within the team.

Certainly, nurse practitioners are a group of health care providers, health care professionals, who have put forward submissions to increase their scope of practice so they can better serve their clients' primary health care needs. But there are a lot of other professionals, whether we think about the optometrists, who also have put forward changes to their regulatory college so that they can increase their scope of practice, and that goes for most professions. Physiotherapists are another one, and occupational therapists. If you allow physicians to work in a model of an interdisciplinary team, and you expand the scope of practice of all of those professionals within the team, you will increase access to primary care to

everybody in Ontario, which, at the end of the day, I think, is what we're trying to do.

Ontario has about 10,000 family physicians, but we only have 600 primary care nurse practitioners. This ratio has to change. I can tell you that in smaller rural areas, where I practised for most of my life, a lot of physicians would tell you that one physician to five nurse practitioners would be the greatest ratio. Well, we're a long way from there, when we look at 10,000 primary care physicians and 600 primary health care nurse practitioners. Those ratios also have to be looked at.

If we are serious about improving quality of care, improving access to care and improving affordability of care, why aren't we radically increasing the supply of other health professionals as well: the supply of nurse practitioners, health promoters, community development workers, social workers, midwives, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, optometrists, and the list goes on?

Why are we making such slow progress in building new community health centres? Almost 50 new community health centres, or new satellite community health centres, were announced, but those are really, really slow at getting the support they need from this ministry to get up and running.

Why are we in Ontario so far behind Quebec, which has for a long time had a comprehensive network of community health centres? In the entire province of Quebec, every resident in Quebec has access to a community health centre in their community. Ontario is a long way from this. Yet we know that they have been recognized by the Ontario Health Quality Council as the best model, the best primary care model, to provide access and quality care, following best practice in primary care.

En sixième lieu, j'aimerais vous parler des dossiers électroniques. Encore là, on pourrait grandement améliorer l'accès et la gestion du système de santé et des soins primaires en mettant sur pied un dossier électronique. Cela s'en vient en Ontario, le dossier électronique, mais certains diraient que cela s'en vient à la vitesse d'une tortue endormie. Ce n'est pas très rapide.

Sixth, we need to better manage patient access to care. We are falling behind other provinces, like Saskatchewan, for example, in implementing the electronic patient management system, which can greatly improve efficiencies, provide better patient management and cut wait times for accessing physicians and other health care providers.

Finally, we need to put into place what the NDP calls the second stage of medicare. We need to focus our attention on preventing disease, promoting good health practices and creating communities with resources for good health—community centres, recreational centres, child care centres, education, community involvement and of course a clean environment—the basic determinants of health. We are trailing behind other provinces in implementing social and economic policies that improve and protect health in the first place.

Here again, I have to mention poverty. Poverty is the number one determinant of health. People that are poor are sicker more often and for longer periods of time. You can stack up all of your bad genes, bad luck, bad habits; no matter what they are, they don't hold a candle to poverty. Poverty is the biggest determinant of health. So if we want to have an impact and bring the health of the population of Ontario up a couple of notches, we have to be serious about addressing poverty, and we have to do this quickly. Addressing poverty will have a direct impact on the number of times and the length of time that people access our health care system, which plays to the demand side of the health care equation rather than the supply, although I realize that this bill has to do with supply. But I had to mention it, it is such an important point.

Why don't we have a high-level government committee assessing the health impact of our social and economic strategy like they do in Saskatchewan? Put the government strategy through a determinants-of-health lens to see how you can have an impact on the health of your population. Ontarians want opportunity and support to live healthy and productive lives. If they get sick, they want timely access to good-quality and effective health care. As politicians, we have a duty to strive for a health care system that, first of all, aims to keep people healthy, and second, provides good care when people are sick at an affordable and sustainable cost. But let's not forget that our primary duty is to keep people healthy, to put forward policies that will help keep Ontarians healthy.

Unfortunately, as Steven Lewis—not the one working in Africa, but the former head of the Romanow commission—has said, “We had focused more on ramping up volume, rather than improving quality of care and health outcomes.” So we hear this government talk about more; more, for some reason, is assumed by government to be better. Not all the time. The McGuinty government seems to have a little bit of a “more is better” mantra. More spending: a 55% increase in spending over the last seven years. More doctors: twice as many new doctor certificates in 2007 as there were in 1997. More procedures: a 20% increase in MRI exams in the last two years alone. Meanwhile, recent reports indicate that all of the “more of all this” has only made modest improvements in reducing wait times, modest improvements in improving quality of care and modest improvements in improving health outcomes. The most recent health quality council report indicates that some wait times have been reduced—cancer surgery, hip and knee replacements, CT scans—but others have not. Under this “more is better” strategy, wait times for cardiac bypasses, for MRIs, for emergency room care have not decreased, and quality of care has not improved very much. Add to this that patient satisfaction rates with acute care and emergency department care have not improved at all. The June 2008 report from the Change Foundation found that two in five Ontarians did not have access to the information they need, and they did not feel that their time was valued by the health care system. One in two Ontarians are unsure who is leading their care.

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The 2007 Conference Board report found that Ontario has the second-worst satisfaction rate for hospital care and the lowest satisfaction rate among women for community care of all provinces in Canada—not a very good record. In terms of medical outcomes, death rates from heart attacks, childhood asthma and diabetes have persisted. Our health care system is clearly not doing well in reducing risk factors for illnesses. I must say that smoking rates have fallen very slightly—but it's still good; it's still a good thing; it's a step in the right direction. But far too many adults and children, and often young children, are overweight and obese. Far too many Ontarians do not exercise. And far too many of us eat poor diets. I've just named the three basic determinants of health: stop smoking, exercise regularly, maintain a healthy weight and have a good diet. How come we're not working on those basics, those fundamentals of good health?

Dans mon dernier point, je voulais vous parler de ce qu'on appelle le deuxième stage, la deuxième étape du système de santé publique, l'étape qui nous permet de garder les gens en santé. On parle ici de la promotion de la santé, de la prévention de la maladie. On sait que la province de l'Ontario est un peu en arrière des autres provinces quand on regarde la mise en place de nos politiques sociales et économiques, qui pourraient avoir un gros impact sur la santé des gens.

Le numéro un de tous les déterminants de la santé est la pauvreté. Si on est capable d'avoir un impact sur la pauvreté, on aura un impact encore beaucoup plus grand sur notre système de santé. Les gens qui vivent dans la pauvreté sont malades plus souvent et plus longtemps, et ils ont besoin du système de santé plus souvent et plus longtemps.

On a une opportunité en ce moment de changer ça. Un de mes collègues parlait hier de quatre propositions qui ne coûteraient absolument rien au gouvernement et qui auraient un impact majeur et significatif pour aider à sortir les gens de la pauvreté. On commence par augmenter le salaire minimum à 10,25 \$. Ça ne coûterait rien au gouvernement. Mais tous les travailleurs qui travaillent en ce moment à temps plein, à l'année longue, au salaire minimum, vivent dans la pauvreté. Augmenter le salaire minimum à 10,25 \$ en ce moment leur permettrait de vivre au-dessus du seuil de la pauvreté, mais ça leur permettrait également d'augmenter leur niveau de santé.

Si tu regardes, la corrélation est directe : plus le niveau de revenu augmente, plus en santé sont les gens de l'Ontario; plus l'Ontario mettra des politiques financières et sociales pour aider les gens à se sortir de la pauvreté, plus les gens vont être en santé. La corrélation est directe et elle augmente tant et aussi longtemps que le revenu augmente. C'est une opportunité à ne pas manquer.

Il y a d'autres opportunités, des opportunités pour l'Ontario de faire une différence envers tous les gens, adultes ou enfants, qui ont des problèmes de poids ou qui sont carrément obèses; tous les gens, adultes ou enfants, qui ne font pas d'exercice, qui n'ont pas une bonne diète,

qui n'ont pas un poids santé. Travailler sur ces déterminants de base aurait également un gros impact sur le système de la santé, parce qu'en gardant ta population plus en santé, tu diminues la demande pour les services de santé et tu diminues également les coûts rattachés au système de santé.

Je sais que le projet de loi d'aujourd'hui parle de l'autre côté de l'équation. On vous parle d'avoir plus de professionnels de la santé, et comme je vous dis depuis le début, c'est quelque chose que l'on va appuyer. Mais c'est important de garder en tête qu'il y a l'autre côté de l'équation également : il y a la demande. Si on est capable de diminuer la demande pour des services de santé, pas en créant de grandes listes d'attentes pour que les gens se découragent, mais en gardant notre population en santé en travaillant sur les déterminants de la santé, eh bien, là on va diminuer la demande, et la balance dans le système de santé dans un tout sera là. Mais à la fin de la journée, les gens préfèrent de beaucoup demeurer en santé que d'être malades.

In fact, eight in 10 Canadians have at least one risk factor for stroke or heart disease. Diabetes and asthma are also on the rise. Eighty per cent of Canadians over the age of 65 have at least one chronic condition, one chronic disease that needs to be managed, and everybody knows that your primary care physicians have a very important role to play in managing chronic disease. This bill will certainly facilitate having more physicians in Ontario and it will make it easier for Ontarians, without access to primary care and physicians, to have access and help manage those chronic conditions. But remember, those chronic conditions will be way better managed following best practices if physicians work as part of an interdisciplinary team.

We also have to realize that disease is distributed unequally, with low-income and aboriginal people bearing the brunt of poor health, not to mention that they're also poor Ontarians.

The 2007 Conference Board of Canada report ranked Ontario's health care system fifth in 10 provinces. We are in the middle of the pack. I would certainly want, for all of the people of Ontario, for us to do better, for us to pass the middle of the pack. The middle of the pack is not good enough for me, especially when the same report ranks Canada's system as a whole as 11th out of 24 industrial countries. In sum, our health care system is not doing as good as it could; it's not doing as good as it should.

This bill is a step ahead. It will improve access to physicians, it will improve the number of physicians who work in Ontario, but it is a very small step. We can and should work on increasing the supply of physicians, but let's not pretend that this will solve the problem of lack of access to health care or radically improve the quality of care or ensure the financial stability and sustainability of our health care system. It won't. Much more needs to be done for this, and this is what I have tried to explain this morning.

Cela va nous faire plaisir du côté des néo-démocrates d'appuyer ce projet de loi. Ce projet de loi va nous

donner l'opportunité d'augmenter le nombre de médecins qui ont le droit de pratiquer en Ontario. Il va augmenter le nombre de médecins auxquels les Ontariens et Ontariennes ont accès. Mais il ne faut pas se leurrer; il ne faut pas se faire à croire que cela va régler tous les problèmes d'accès à notre système de santé.

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Il ne faut pas se faire à croire non plus que cela va augmenter la qualité des soins offerts en Ontario ou que cela, par elle-même, va assurer que notre système est financièrement assuré. Rien de ça. Il y a beaucoup d'autres choses qui doivent être mises en place pour que ça se passe, et c'est un peu ce dont j'ai essayé de vous parler aujourd'hui.

Steven Lewis, pas celui qui travaille en Afrique mais celui qui a travaillé pour le rapport Romanow, nous a dit que l'Ontario avait mis trop d'accent sur avoir plus de choses. Dépenser 55 % de plus pendant les sept dernières années au ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, avoir deux fois plus de nouveaux gradués en médecine en 2007 qu'on n'en avait en 1997, avoir 20 % de plus d'imageries par résonance magnétique en 2008 qu'on n'en avait il y a deux ans, cela ne fait que de petits changements. Cela a diminué un tout petit peu les listes d'attente, cela a augmenté un tout petit peu la qualité des soins, et cela a augmenté seulement un tout petit peu les résultats.

En fait, on a ajouté toutes ces choses-là et on s'est rendu compte qu'il y avait certaines listes d'attente qui avaient descendu. Qu'on parle de chirurgies pour le cancer, les genoux, les hanches, ou des scans, on a eu un petit impact. Mais si on regarde les chirurgies cardiaques, les « bypass », l'imagerie par résonance magnétique ou les temps d'attente dans les salles d'urgence, cela n'a rien changé du tout, et dans certains cas, cela a vraiment rendu ça pire.

I see that time is running out; my colleague was nice enough to remind me.

Certainly, Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, although it is a light little bill, just the one page, will have an impact, and I want to assure you that our party, the NDP, will be supporting this act.

Le projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés, va avoir l'appui des néo-démocrates.

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

I wish to acknowledge the presence in the House today of Dr. Bob Frankford, who served as a member of the Legislature from 1990 to 1995, representing Scarborough East in the 35th Parliament.

Questions and comments? The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to congratulate the member for Nickel Belt and thank her for her comments on Bill 97. I also want to thank our member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Laurel Broten, for the work that she did in the

leadup in setting a lot of the groundwork for Bill 97 that is before us today.

I do want to mention, though, the member for Nickel Belt made a couple of comments, talking about community health centres—I would expect that if the former Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, were here, he'd have something he'd love to say on community health centres; there has been quite a large expansion in the community health centre system since we've come into power in 2003, and the minister obviously had a lot to do with that—as well as the comments on the scope of practice.

As she may be aware, the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council is touring the province and has been for some time, and their core focus, at least part of their focus, is the extension and the expansion of the scope of practice, especially around nurse practitioners. As the member may also be aware, when it comes to nurse practitioners and all the work that they can do around primary care, we have made a commitment to 25 nurse-practitioner-led clinics in Ontario, one of which I think is already established in either Sudbury or—in fact, two, I think are already established, one in Sudbury, very close to where the member comes from, and another one in Sault Ste. Marie, and soon, I hope, at least one in Thunder Bay.

Where I come from in northern Ontario, my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the issue around health professionals and their recruitment has been a long-standing, chronic problem. During my time on municipal council, I sponsored two resolutions that led to the use of residential property tax-based money to create positions to aid in the recruitment and retention of health care professionals. I should say that those have been quite positive and had a good impact on the quantum of health care professionals that we have in the community.

There are other things that we have done, obviously, as a government, such as family health teams, which the member from Nickel Belt did not reference. Family health teams, as we all know—three in my riding—being multidisciplinary, do a great job of helping people access primary care. Of course, what was forgotten to be mentioned was the fact that the NDP cut medical school spaces—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: As a former Minister of Health, I just want to say to the House that this is one of the strangest one-page bills I have ever seen in the health care field. I guess because George Smitherman bullied the 23 professional colleges so badly during his time as Minister of Health, he's had to, as one of his last strokes in office, introduce this bill, Bill 97, to—I don't know exactly what it does; it's kind of strange—put the onus now on the 23 regulated health professional colleges to solve the doctor shortage and the qualified skilled and competent regulated health professionals shortages that we have in this province.

It's strange because it says it's compelling the colleges—with no penalties if they don't actually co-

operate with the ministry. I guess it's one of his bold, in-your-face statements saying, "Although the bill doesn't really do anything, now, through legislation and not just through talking to you, I'm going to compel you to work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to make sure there's an adequate number of qualified physicians, nurses, and what have you in the province."

Again, it is a totally unnecessary piece of legislation, a piece of fluff. It's an embarrassment that it would be brought to this Parliament and that we'd be asked to vote upon it. If it wasn't because he was so mean to them, we wouldn't need this legislation. Co-operation always existed over the years. I was here as an opposition critic when the NDP regulated the 23 health professions, and they did a very good job. Ruth Grier did a very, very good job of introducing that legislation. I was her critic at the time, and I didn't have a lot of critical things to say because she did a very good job of it. They were happy. They were self-regulated. They were handling their complaints fairly well, and they were co-operating in those days with the ministry, and they always were a product and a child of the government. So you don't need this legislation to throw in their faces.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I would just like to start off by thanking my colleague for a wonderful presentation. We in the NDP believe this is a good start. There is a lot more work to do in the medical area.

Speaking for myself, from the city of Hamilton, we are a leading community in health care and cutting-edge technology. A lot of money has been sunk into the Hamilton Health Sciences in the last two years, which I'm very pleased about. I would like to see more, of course. We're going to be a world leader in diabetes study. We also are now the centre for Canada for cancer research. We're very proud of our tradition in the medical area, and we hope that the government continues to pour money into the Hamilton area for the betterment of all Canadians and Ontarians in the medical area.

Just on a personal note, I would like to say that I'm doing my little bit to add to the medical situation. My daughter is now doing the RN, and she's going to be a practitioner, hopefully in two years if she continues in the pattern. That's my youngest. We're doing our little bit in Stoney Creek to add to the medical influx.

I would also like to say that there are many Ontarians who don't have doctors, and hopefully opening it up to foreign-trained doctors will increase the coverage for people who are lacking medical care. Obviously a lot of countries are in a desperate need of doctors, but if we can help ourselves at home first and move on to help other countries, that would be excellent. Hopefully, we can train enough doctors to send them overseas as well, to help other countries.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

M^{me} Laurel C. Broten: J'aimerais premièrement remercier le membre de Nickel Belt et le caucus néo-démocratique pour leur appui du projet de loi 97. C'est certain que c'est une partie de notre plan pour faire certain que les Ontariens et les Ontariennes vont avoir les services de santé dont ils ont besoin. Ça fait partie d'un plan où on a ouvert 150 équipes de santé familiales et 49 centres de santé communautaires. On a un nouveau contrat « tentatif » avec l'AMO pour faire certain que ceux qui veulent avoir un docteur peuvent avoir le soin d'un docteur.

J'aimerais demander et encourager ceux dans la législature de regarder les efforts qu'on a faits avec HealthForceOntario.

I want to take just a minute to encourage those in this Legislature to take a look at the work being done at HealthForceOntario—the access centre, the centre for evaluation of health professional credentials—and examine the context of that work being done there to recruit doctors into Ontario. And I want to highlight that we do have in HealthForceOntario an ethical recruitment strategy. It is one that really looks, first and foremost, to getting Ontarians and Canadians to come back home, and that's why the steps taken by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, through the work that we have done with them over the summer—to make sure that by December 1, Ontarians and those who practise in other Canadian jurisdictions and in the US can come to Ontario and practise without further testing and further accreditation. It's an important first step. It's part of our comprehensive plan, as is Bill 97, and I thank the NDP for their support of this endeavour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply, if she chooses.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to start by answering some of the comments from the honourable member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Yes, we are very proud in Sudbury to be the home of the first nurse-practitioner-led clinic. These women worked extremely hard to be recognized and to have this clinic established. It is a tremendous success. People love them. They have a thriving client group, and I must say that members in my family go to this clinic and are absolutely thrilled.

They have, from the beginning, set up a strategy for this clinic to be interdisciplinary, with not only physicians and nurse practitioners, but to also have other members of the team work with them, and I look forward to the day when those nurse practitioner clinics will be available to more people in Ontario. I understand that in northern Ontario we will be the lucky ones on this front, because they seem to be making steps forward in northern Ontario a little bit more easily. I was not aware that they had one open in Sault Ste. Marie, but I think it is on the verge of being opened, and there's another one in the works for Thunder Bay. They're wonderful.

I would like to thank the honourable member from Simcoe–Grey and recognize that, yes, it was the NDP who put in the different self-regulated colleges. It has

served the people of Ontario very well and continues to have an important role to play, and certainly this bill will give them the opportunity to be even more important to the people of Ontario. And I would like to thank my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and certainly the honourable member from Etobicoke–Lake-shore for her hard work on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

M. Phil McNeely: Merci pour l'opportunité de parler sur le 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.

Le changement n'est pas grand et la loi n'est pas grande. On parle d'une page ici. Le changement est surtout l'obligation de l'ordre : « Il incombe à l'ordre de travailler en consultation avec le ministre pour veiller à ce que, dans l'intérêt public »—et qu'est-ce qui peut être plus fort?—« la population de l'Ontario ait accès à un nombre suffisant de membres d'une profession de la santé réglementée qui soient qualifiés et compétents. » Ça, c'est la loi dont on parle aujourd'hui.

We heard conflicting information on the availability of health care workers to deliver services to the public in Ontario. We all have heard from people in the delivery-of-health-care business, like, in my own case, Gérald Savoie of the Montfort Hospital, the CEO of our community hospital in Ottawa–Orléans. The aging baby boomers are requiring a lot more maintenance. I know that personally. The needs are increasing; the capacities to do things are increasing. A lot of doctors are reaching retirement age. As the member for Nickel Belt mentioned, new graduates are more than half women, and those women want to have families. Both men and women doctors want to have a life. The 60-, 70- and 80-hour weeks that my generation of doctors put in are no longer the norm—and that makes sense. This presents a new challenge in providing the services we need in Ontario.

Nurse practitioners are doing a great job in providing family health care in many areas, including remote areas. I was very pleased to hear that one family health team of nurse practitioners is already up and running, and I understand another will be getting organized in Thunder Bay. This is extremely important. When I was with the finance and economic affairs committee in northern Ontario, we had single nurse practitioners who were delivering health care in remote communities and were handling 80% to 85% of the medical needs in their communities. They were always well liked. They were always doing a great job in their community. This is great, to see other health care communities taking on the challenges—and the challenges are great in Ontario, across Canada and across North America.

Communities are very supportive of these new groups. The family health team, which takes a team approach to family health care, is working. I've had many discussions with Steve Pelletier from the Clarence-Rockland Family

Health Team. One doctor can now look after many more patients with the help of nurses, nurse practitioners and other health professionals. Working as a team makes sense in this business. Steve Pelletier, one of the doctors at the Rockland Family Health Team, told me that the fee-for-service, if the doctor had to see all the patients, was similar to taking a well-trained racehorse to a county fair and giving pony rides. Under the FHT, the right level of service is given by the right health care professional, and the well-trained—we have to say “well-trained”; they're in school and in training so much longer than other professionals—experienced doctor sees the patients that he has to see.

One thing that he does is, if you have hypertension, then you have to do your own testing of your blood pressure; if you have high sugar, you have to do testing of your sugar at home, and monitor your own. He puts people in charge of their own health care, and if they don't want to follow his rules and send their results in by e-mail, by phone or just drop them off to the hospital so that staff can fill out the charts—if they don't want to do that, he doesn't really want them as patients, and that again makes sense.

In order to meet the doctor needs of our communities and to provide the family health care in our communities, in order to keep as many patients as we can away from hospital emergencies, we need to maximize the use of each doctor and health professional. But in addition, we need to graduate more family doctors; we have to try to bring back as many of our Ontario-trained doctors who have left Ontario, and we have to do a much better job of including our internationally trained medical doctors in our health system.

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MPP Laurel Broten prepared a fine report, *Removing Barriers for International Medical Doctors*. That report includes several steps that can be taken in order that we make better use of these professionals who are already in our country, who are well-trained and who haven't been able to become certified as doctors.

This bill is extremely important, although it is very short. It's that aspect, that the onus has been put on the colleges, not only to be the gate to make sure that only qualified people become certified, not only to be the gatekeeper, but it's in the public interest that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals. It becomes their duty as well to work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to make sure that as many qualified people as possible are recruited, who are in our communities now. I think that is a wonderful objective. It is in the public interest, making that part of their duties. This is going to change the way that the gatekeeper who protects us also will protect, by assisting in getting more health care professionals to work with us.

The Broten report had a five-point action plan. It was to fast-track, simplify and streamline the registration process for doctors practising in Canada and the US or any other country with a comparable health care system.

Number two was to help internationally trained doctors enter into medical practice in Ontario with the creation of a transitional licence and to practise under the supervision of a licensed practitioner. I believe that's the case with my own doctor on Bay Street here. He has a young medical graduate from Iran who is working with him. That's the process that has to be used and that's how we're going to bring more of these wonderful, well-trained doctors into our system. Number three was to undertake assessments more efficiently of each individual and allow the IMGs to move along the line of education and experience to certification more clearly. Fourth was to supply cultural bridging support, which would include cultural, language education, mentorship and training. And fifth was to develop coordinated individualized assistance for those seeking transfers to another sector of health care where it's more appropriate. I think that five-point action plan that was in the Broten report will give us the results we need, the results we want, the results that will help us provide more health professionals in Ontario.

I've spoken to Carl Nicholson of the Catholic Immigration Centre of Ottawa several times in the past about certification or accreditation of foreign-trained doctors. He has a program under Arber Zapluzha, his project manager. They're working on a bridge program with the University of Ottawa, the Centretown Community Health Centre and the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre to help foreign-trained doctors move through the training and certification process. According to Arber Zapluzha, there are 600 foreign-trained doctors on the list in Ottawa; that's just with their organization. He wasn't aware of this new bill but he felt that this certainly would be positive to what they're trying to do and he showed great interest in the bill; we sent him the information.

This shows that a program along the lines of the Broten report recommendations is essential to taking advantage of the human resources presently underutilized in our communities—underutilized, hurting our health care system, but underutilized, more importantly, for those individuals who have the training, who have the expertise, but who have to take other means of employment in this long wait they have to become members of the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

The first policy change by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, CPSO, will come into effect December 1, 2008, when doctors licensed to practise in other parts of Canada can practise in Ontario. Doctors who are licensed in the US can move to Ontario and practise medicine if they complete US postgraduate training and examinations. That's 5,000 to 6,000 doctors.

I have a friend in Wyoming, Dr. Cournoyer, and I was phoning him. He was chased out in the 1990s, when doctors didn't make sufficient dollars here, and he would like to come back to Ontario, so it's good to see that we're going to make that easier.

I think that my time is up. I really hope that this bill goes through. I'm glad to see the support from the New Democrats on it. It will facilitate bringing these wonderful doctors into our system.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on the speech on Bill 97, which, as has been pointed out, is a one-page bill. As I was reading it, I was also going through my mail and noted I have a resolution from the town of Bracebridge, where they're looking for some action to do with the physician shortage in Ontario, and particularly with international medical graduates. I ask the government to explain what this one-page bill is really going to do. It's just switching the onus and responsibility onto the colleges; it's not really taking any significant action.

I would also like at this time, when I have the opportunity, to highlight another situation where the government has effectively shut down community lab services in Muskoka and east Parry Sound, although technically the decision was made by the hospital board. The decision was indeed made with a gun to their heads and should be properly blamed on the McGuinty government. If I can refer to that situation, there was a public meeting last night up in Huntsville and there's another public meeting Wednesday night in Bracebridge to do with community lab services. The local hospital board was told—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka how this relates back to the speech that was given just now by the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, we are talking, Mr. Speaker, about health and health-related issues, and I think the two are very much connected. You're cutting into my time, though, Mr. Speaker, so I don't know whether I will fully be able to explain the complicated shutdown of community lab services in the short time I have available.

All I would like to say is the hospital board has made a decision to shut down community lab services. However, they've done it with a gun at their heads, pointed by the McGuinty Liberal government, because they've been told that, sure, they can run community lab services, "But we're not funding it anymore, so you can do it but you don't get the \$1.65 million to fund those services. And by the way, balance your budget as well." So I say don't blame the hospital board; blame it—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: In response to the honourable member from Ottawa–Orléans, I would say that I would agree with lots of what he's just said. Physicians in Ontario should be allowed to have a balanced work life. He talked about—not that he's old or anything, but that in his time, physicians were expected to work 70 to 80 hours a week. This is not a healthy lifestyle. Physicians spend a lot of time talking to their clients about how to keep themselves healthy, and one of those important conversations physicians have with their clients is to balance their work and life so that there's time for both. Working 70 to 80 hours a week is not going to allow you to lead a healthy lifestyle, and our physicians in Ontario

should have the opportunity to practise in a way that allows them to have healthy lifestyles.

He then pointed to some of the very good community health centres in his riding, and I would agree with him. Community health centres have practice opportunities for physicians that allow them to do that—to work and focus on practising medicine, working within a team where the nurses provide nursing care, the social worker provides social work, the dieticians provide nutritional advice and the physicians practise medicine. But they also do this in a way that leaves them time to be with their families, to have a family and to have a life. Certainly it is a model that is available to physicians practising in Ontario and a model that has seen some growth under this government. Although I would say that putting into place the new satellites and community health centres is very slow, I still agree with what the honourable member from Ottawa–Orléans has said.

1030

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 97. This is an important piece of legislation that will remove many barriers that internationally trained doctors face before they can begin practising. By removing these barriers, we will increase the number of doctors practising in Ontario. This will help to reduce wait times, and Ontarians will receive care closer to home. This bill is proof of this government's commitment to recognizing the important role that internationally trained professionals play in Ontario.

In my inaugural speech, I spoke about this issue because I have personally experienced the many barriers that foreign-trained professionals face in this country. When I first arrived in Canada, despite having several university degrees and over 10 years of experience as a teacher, my qualifications were not recognized. By removing barriers for foreign-trained doctors, this government is showing that it recognizes the many contributions that internationally trained professionals make in helping Ontario become a stronger and more equitable province for all of us. At the same time, this bill is going to make key improvements in health care throughout the province. That is why I support this bill.

I would like to commend my colleague the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the hard work she put into producing her report on this matter. I would also like to encourage all members of this House—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Five years ago, Dalton McGuinty, in his election when he became Premier, promised to recruit and train more doctors. Five years ago, the Premier also said that no person would go without the medical attention they needed. However, five years later we have almost a million people—the estimate is between 850,000 and 1.01 million Ontarians—still without a family doctor.

There seems to be an impression in this House that this bill somehow helps to bring in more international

medical graduates. IMGs aren't even mentioned in the bill. If I was the chair and registrar, for example, of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, I would simply say, "Here, government, I need \$50 million for a new program for this. Here's our plan. It may include IMGs; it may not. It may include pensions for doctors. It may include retention incentives for physicians," a number of things that John Tory and the PC caucus have urged, such as opening up more medical school spaces again. The last time that was done was under the Mike Harris–Ernie Eves government, when we opened up the first medical school in over 40 years in the province in northern Ontario, or started to build—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You took credit for it. I saw it in all your brochures, but you didn't have anything to do with the darned thing other than to cut the bloody ribbon.

This is a bill that is leaving a false impression with a number of people that it somehow has something to do with bringing in international medical graduates. I remind the people listening at home that it may or may not have anything to do with that. That depends on whether the colleges bring forward a plan. This bill contains no new funding; no talk about new funding in any of the speeches that I've heard.

Again, if I was registrar of one of the professional health-regulating colleges, I would do exactly what you say. You've gotten rid of your obligation to do anything about the problem of the shortage of doctors in the province and you're going to put it on the professional colleges. Fine, I'll do up a plan. It may cost you \$100 million for one college alone. You have no idea, or at least there's no proper discussion here in the House, about the cost. You're going to have to pay for this and you aren't going to get away with putting it off on the colleges.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The member for Ottawa–Orléans has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to thank the member for Parry Sound, and the member from Nickel Belt, who spoke very supportively of the bill and of the comments. I have to agree with her that doctors need lives as well, and health care professionals need lives as well, and we have to make sure that we acknowledge that.

I would like to thank the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, who has personal knowledge of the difficulties that foreign-trained doctors and foreign-trained professionals, health care professionals, have in becoming accredited in this province, and we need their services so badly.

Lastly, I would like to just disagree with the member from Simcoe–Grey for his comments. I think that if he would read Laurel Broten's report or talk to a lot of the groups like the Catholic immigration service in Ottawa, then he would find out a lot of different things. There are presently about 5,000 internationally trained doctors practising in Ontario, and about 630 internationally trained doctors are currently in residency training. We've

more than doubled the number of assessment and training spaces for internationally trained doctors, from 90 in 2003 to 235 in 2007 and 2008. Of course, because of what happened in the 1990s, and with the spaces for doctors and the tearing apart of the health system, it's taking time, but those doctors are coming on stream. Those spaces in the universities have been increased, and I am sure that if we put in place these five steps that come out of the Broten report, we will see a lot more foreign-trained doctors helping us in Ontario to live healthier lives. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm very pleased to join the debate for Bill 97. I wanted to first of all congratulate the new Minister of Health, Minister Caplan. I know that there's a little bit of excitement in his family because his mother once held the portfolio as well. So I hope he lives up to his own expectations of sort of replacing his mother down the line, but I think that's fabulous. It shows a nice tradition in his family.

I also wanted to congratulate the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I think that she worked very hard on a backgrounder to address some of the critical challenges that we face with respect to doctor shortages and international medical graduates.

Unfortunately, as our health critic, a former health minister—Elizabeth Witmer from Kitchener–Waterloo—pointed out yesterday, and I believe rightfully so, there is confusion in Bill 97. It's confusion. There is only one sentence in the bill. It simply says, "It is the duty of the college to work in consultation with the minister to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals."

I ask, where does the bill say anything about foreign-trained doctors or international medical graduates? The unfortunate thing, obviously, is that this bill became a product of spin, not substance.

Obviously, the piece of work provided by Ms. Broten of Etobicoke–Lakeshore—I have no idea why she's not in cabinet—was a very substantive piece. It was a very substantive policy piece, a backgrounder to address a critical issue that ridings across Ontario are facing. I'm going to tell you, in the fast-growing area of south Nepean, in my riding of Nepean–Carleton, we're dealing with not only a doctor shortage, but we're also dealing with the challenges faced by those who are trained as doctors across the various places around this world, yet who are not able to enter the medical field here in Canada. This bill is smoke and mirrors. It is not at all about improving access to, or for, foreign-trained doctors. My colleague from Simcoe–Grey adequately and appropriately points out that some people believe this will improve the chances for international medical graduates to work in Ontario. It does not. I think the Liberals were very successful early on, when the bill was introduced, in actually floating out Ms. Broten's backgrounder as a potential bill, yet we do only get this one line. It is

important to remember, as we continue to discuss Bill 97, that the bill does not mention international medical graduates once. As a result, I do not feel, nor does my caucus feel, that one international medical graduate will gain access to our health care system when this bill is passed.

1040

As my constituent Dr. Ali Zaidi told me yesterday, Bill 97 does not make a priority for IMGs residing in Canada. Of course, as my colleague Elizabeth Witmer pointed out yesterday, "This bill only says that it's going to force the 23 colleges in this province to take over the responsibility of addressing the shortage of health care professionals." So it's doing what this government does best. It is playing the blame game and it's going to continue to do it on the backs of health care professionals and patients in this province.

I know why they're shifting the blame. You know, Stéphane Dion's got his green shift and Dalton McGuinty's got his blame shift. But my colleagues and I know that five years ago it was this government that promised Ontarians no one would be without a family physician, yet five years later almost one million Ontarians are without a family physician. I hear from those people almost daily in my constituency. They stop me on the streets, they e-mail me, they contact my office. And I hear it time and again from new Canadians in South Nepean who are continually wondering when they're going to gain access to the medical field here and when the barriers are going to be reduced.

I often tell the story here in the chamber about visiting a local mosque in my riding of Barr Haven with the South Nepean Muslim community. I asked the question, just out of curiosity, "How many of you folks here, if you were able to work in Canada as a doctor and transfer your skills and your training from your home country, would be working?" There were about 50 people in the room, and six people put up their hands. Since that day, it's been a passion of mine to work with my community to try to address this issue. We were trying to arrange for a round table early on, but one of the key medical professionals we wanted to bring in through the Ottawa Hospital wasn't available at the time, so we postponed it. I don't know if it's a bad thing, because I think now, as we go into committee, I would like my folks in Nepean–Carleton to be part of this process.

I urge the government to make sure that when this goes to committee they actually travel to the national capital of this country, to the city of Ottawa, to make sure that the folks in Ottawa, Ottawa–Orléans and Ottawa West–Nepean, and the good people I represent in Nepean–Carleton, have an opportunity to address this piece of legislation.

We've got patients without doctors and we've also got doctors in this province without jobs. As someone who at one time did not have a family physician—in fact, that was one of the major reasons I decided to get into politics and run for nomination, because I didn't have a family physician—I really think that we need to address this

doctor shortage. My colleague pointed out yesterday that many people were excited. They were excited when this piece of legislation came out because they thought it was going to be based on Ms. Broten's piece of work, where there was actually going to be some real, meaningful teeth in the legislation. But instead we receive one line—one line that instead blames the colleges for the doctor shortages in this province.

As Dr. Lisa Yip writes to Elizabeth Witmer, "I was excited to hear the announcement in June that the province would be introducing changes to reduce barriers for foreign-trained physicians to practise in Ontario.... Thus, it was to my great disappointment that ... I was informed that there were no actual changes in place."

I share Dr. Yip's disappointment. Despite all the good intentions of the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, her hard work is not reflected in this piece of legislation. It is not reflected in this bill. It does not pass the standard. My residents will not see a family physician as a result of this, and certainly my constituents in Nepean–Carleton who are international medical graduates will not see the barriers that they face every day reduced. Simply put, all Bill 97 will do is shift the blame from a government that promised to end the doctor shortage five years ago but has not yet met its commitment.

I would like to read into the record an e-mail from my constituent Mukarram Ali Zaidi. He said: "We need an immediate strategy for international medical graduates by increasing residency positions for IMGs, giving preference to IMGs living in Canada over IMGs residing in other countries. Give fair and transparent residency matching process..."—he continues, and he's been a real strong and effective advocate, yet Mr. McGuinty has done nothing to address the doctor shortage in this province. The Conservative Party will continue to stand for those who are foreign-trained doctors. We will continue to stand for the people without doctors in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I see that you would like me to wrap up.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is the first time I've had applause by the Liberals this session.

But, Mr. Speaker, just for clarity, I do have 11 minutes on the clock, so how do we deal with this?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member, and the time that has been allocated to her, the next time this is to be debated, the floor will be hers.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 39th Parliament. I would ask the pages to please assemble for the introductions.

Tamika Bernhard-Lumley, Don Valley West; Maylee Bossy, Chatham–Kent–Essex; Connor Chan, Pickering–

Scarborough East; Lauren Chan, St. Paul's; Asha Collins, Toronto–Danforth; Jasmine Douglas, Oshawa; Timothy Fuke, Etobicoke–Lakeshore; Justin Gracie, Haldimand–Norfolk; Kritika Gunachelvan, Mississauga East–Cooksville; Sarah Holman, Eglinton–Lawrence; Michael Hyer, Thunder Bay–Superior North; Imaan Javeed, Scarborough–Guildwood; Scarlett Michael, Burlington; Karlie Potts, Niagara West–Glanbrook; Michael Ralphs, Simcoe–Grey; Marissa Scott, Huron–Bruce; Supriya Sethi, Brampton West; Matthew Smith–Main, Oakville; Paige Weller, Timiskaming–Cochrane; and Elizabeth Williams, Scarborough Southwest.

Welcome, pages. I hope you enjoy your session. Please resume your positions.

Applause.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday, in accordance with the standing order that gives me the discretion to do so, I recognized the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Mr. Murdoch, an independent member, to place a question during oral questions. I want to clarify how I was guided in recognizing the member for an oral question, the placement of the question and the subsequent rotation of question period.

Standing order 37(i) states: "The Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to place an oral question and one supplementary question during oral question period. In exercising his or her discretion, the Speaker shall have regard to the opportunities that members of recognized parties, other than the leaders of opposition parties or members who place questions instead of the leaders, have to place such questions. An independent member shall notify the Speaker of his or her intention to place a question."

1050

I did receive notice from the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound of his desire to place a question and decided to allow his question yesterday. I will now be mindful of the relative opportunities other members have to place questions in question period before allowing the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to place another question, should he advise me of his desire to do so.

I believe the cited standing order charges the Speaker with finding the right balance so that no private member, whether affiliated with a recognized party or not, is disadvantaged in his or her ability to represent constituents or hold the government to account in question period.

With respect to my recognition of a government member to place the next question following the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I was guided by a very few previous examples we have of an independent member placing a question during oral questions, since the adoption in 1997 of the standing order I quoted above. On those occasions, the Speaker recognized an independent member for a question late in question period, inserting the question in the next existing rotation, following which he resumed the question period rotation that would

otherwise have occurred. Using these precedents, I permitted a question by the independent member yesterday very close to the end of question period, following a question by the third party. I then moved from the independent member back to the regular rotation, that being a question from a government member. Thus, questions by independent members in addition to the existing rotation are to be inserted at a time and frequency considered appropriate at the discretion of the Speaker.

This method of proceeding will be consistent with previous occasions when the House has had a single independent member, and this is different than when, in the recent past, the members of the third party were all independent members. During that period, the House resolved the issue of their participation in question period initially through a unanimous consent and subsequently through the adoption of a recommendation to the Speaker that guided the Speaker on an ongoing basis.

I want to thank the leader of the official opposition, whose prompting at the end of yesterday's question period gave rise to this opportunity to address the House in this manner.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yesterday, I asked the Premier a question; I have a question for him again today. Yesterday, not surprisingly, he declined to answer. It dealt with his government's failure to recognize the urgency for a provincial response to our deteriorating economy.

Unlike the government, the official opposition sought the advice of independent non-partisan experts, and the result of that consultation was a six-point action plan that you can implement with the full co-operation of the official opposition.

Premier, once again, will you commit to immediately bring in an economic update that will provide relief to struggling families and businesses and jump-start our economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As the honourable member well knows, there will be an opportunity for the Minister of Finance to bring forward an economic update as such. But to be clear today, as I was yesterday, no, we cannot and will not adopt the Conservative approach to dealing with our economic challenge, which is to reduce our revenues by \$5 billion. We are not prepared to do that. That will mean cuts to our schools, it will mean cuts to our health care, cuts to our ability to protect public safety. We are not prepared to do that.

You'll notice as well that the NDP are offering that the best way for us to deal with this economic challenge is to look to find a way to spend our way out of this. We're going to continue to take our cue from Ontario families. They think that we've got to be very careful; they think

we've got to be prudent. We've got to act responsibly; we've got to stay focused on our priorities. We will continue to do that. Health care, education, protection of the environment, public safety: Those are the kinds of things we remain focused on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the fewer and fewer Ontarians who get to watch question period, that response has to be disappointing, if not disheartening. The Progressive Conservative caucus is offering its full support and co-operation. This is not a Conservative approach; these are recommendations provided by independent, non-partisan economic experts, one of them a key adviser to the government, and the Premier chooses to continue playing political games.

Families in Ontario are hurting. They're worried about their futures; they're concerned about what the future holds for their kids and grandkids. Premier, why won't you work with us in a non-partisan way, with the advice of independent experts, to turn this province's economy around?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the sentiment that informs that offer. I'd like to reciprocate, Speaker. There's something that we can all do as Ontarians. Number one, we need to understand that we're generating lots of wealth today in the province of Ontario—lots of it. A big problem has to do with the fact that we send \$20 billion annually to Ottawa for distribution to the rest of the country. If we could keep a bit more of that tremendous wealth that we continue to generate annually, then we could invest, possibly, in the kinds of proposals being put the forward by my honourable colleague opposite. If we need to come together on one thing, we need to say to Ottawa, "Let us keep a bit more of our own money."

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a tired refrain or, should I say, whine. Our economic growth has stalled so badly, we're on the brink of recession. Our job losses are so high that unemployment is above the national average. How much more evidence does the Premier need that his plan is not working? Do we have to wait for headlines and people saying, "Brother, can you spare me a dime?"

They keep making one-off announcements like the cabinet shuffle, but where's the plan for today? What are the steps to stop jobs from disappearing? The roof is leaking and all this government does is put out more buckets. They have to get up there, fix the roof, and that means tackling the real fundamental problems. It means coming up with a new plan, and it means acting now because people are losing confidence and hope. We're ready to work with you. Why won't you take us up on that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted to work with my colleague opposite, but I want him to understand something that Ontarians are coming to understand. We are generating lots of wealth in the province of Ontario, so much so that we're sending \$20 billion annually to

Ottawa for distribution in the rest of the country. What I'm saying to my colleague opposite is, he needs to find a way to come to grips with that. He needs to find a way to come to understand that we need to stand together on this kind of an issue. He needs to join not just our government but the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and so many other organizations who are saying to Ottawa, "All right, we've had enough. We want to keep a bit more of our own wealth. We're generating lots of it. Let's keep it. Let's invest it in the kinds of things—further tax cuts, further investments in innovation, infrastructure and the like."

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the new Minister of Labour. Welcome, Minister, to your new duties. A survey of the members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reveals that small business owners are sick and tired of being harassed by heavy-handed labour inspectors. These inspectors are more interested in loading up the government coffers with fines and penalties than in trying to work with small business to assist them in workplace safety. Minister, when are you going to stop strong-arming small businesses who are already struggling to stay afloat?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I look forward to working with that member on this issue and many matters that concern all Ontario workers. The main thing we're focused on is the health and safety of our workers. We are going to continue to reduce workplace injuries. Yes, we invested in more inspectors. Those inspectors are doing a marvelous job. It's making us more productive here in Ontario. It's making sure that our businesses are healthy places, safe places, productive places to work. I hope the member comes on board and works on behalf of all Ontario workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert Bailey: An example: First, Cash Rolls of Canada of Guelph, Ontario, was the sole manufacturer in Canada of money-handling products. Last June, without notice, labour inspectors from your department unplugged the company's machinery. Stephanie Watt, the company's owner, was told by those inspectors that she couldn't operate her business until she made upgrades to this machinery. She had a good record with the WSIB, yet Ms. Watt was given no time to comply, nor had she even been made aware that there were new regulations she had to comply with.

Minister, can you explain to this House why your inspectors took such a high-handed approach with this small business owner?

1100

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for bringing this to my attention, and I will bring it to my ministry staff to get more information. As I said earlier, our main focus here is the health and safety of our workers. We have had a wonderful track record. Over the last four

years, we have seen a reduction in workplace injuries of 20%. This is great, of course, for our workforce, but it also is great for our companies. It is a saving for our companies by reducing workplace injury. It makes us that much more competitive. We're going to continue that good work, but I do take the member's question under advisement and I will consult with ministry staff on this particular case.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Well, Minister, I'm sure they're going to be safe because when people are sitting at home on the couch and not working, they can't get hurt.

Minister, just to point out to you and your government that Ms. Watt is with us today; she is in the gallery. She certainly came here today looking for answers, and she clearly got none. Ms. Watt shut down her manufacturing business, not because of a high dollar or global competition. She shut down her manufacturing business solely because of your ministry's callous attitude towards small business. As a result, she has moved that business and those jobs to the United States. Now 11 people in Guelph are without a job and the Ontario economy is without the \$1 million a year that her business injected into it. Your ministry did not try to work with her and other small business owners. What is your ministry going to do instead of showing these people the door? When are you finally going to work with business owners, our job creators, instead of against them?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Labour?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: As I said to the member opposite, I will bring it to the attention of the ministry. I'm willing to work with the member. We are focused on the health and safety of our workers. We will make sure that those workers, when they go to work in the morning, come back home safe and healthy.

Now, when it comes to creating jobs, we have a five-point plan here. And I can tell you that at the heart of that five-point plan is our investments in our people, in our workforce. We are going to continue with that plan. When it comes to working with our employers and employees, we also have a plan, and that one is, first, around education; second, yes, around enforcement; and third, to incent good behaviour. We are going to continue to do that here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Leader of the third party.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. I think the Premier would admit that this has been a very devastating summer, especially for Ontario workers: jobs to the tune of 40,000 manufacturing jobs disappearing in one month; announcements that, for example, Oshawa is going to shut down the General Motors truck plant; announcements from other auto parts producers that they in turn are laying off not hundreds, but several hundreds and thousands of workers.

I think most Ontarians wanted to believe that the McGuinty government would come forward with some strategy to help sustain good jobs in this province. Can you tell people, Premier, why the McGuinty government doesn't have a jobs strategy and doesn't have any plan to sustain manufacturing jobs in this province at a time when people are very worried about losing their livelihoods?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would be delighted to share with my honourable colleague some of our plans. We have a five-point plan to strengthen this economy. One of the things that we are doing in that regard is we are cutting business taxes; in fact, we are cutting them to the tune of \$3 billion over the course of four years. It's expensive, but it's affordable because we are doing it in that particular way. We have eliminated capital taxes for our manufacturers. In fact, one of the things that I did during the course of the summer was I visited a business—Honeywell—and provided them with a \$764,000 cheque by way of a capital tax refund. We are also investing heavily, as my friend knows, in infrastructure. At the beginning of the summer I met with the AMO folks and announced a \$1.1-billion investment in municipal infrastructure. Those are some of the things that we are doing to create jobs in the immediate term.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Maybe the Premier doesn't realize it, but this is all old news. This is what the McGuinty government has been talking about for over a year now and, as it happens, thousands of workers are being shown the door. Obviously this is not working. You referred to reducing the capital tax. Yes, banks will love it when you reduce the capital tax, insurance companies will love it when you reduce the capital tax, but manufacturers are bleeding jobs by 10,000 at a time.

I ask again, where is the McGuinty government's plan to take on a loss of jobs in this province, a loss of jobs that is growing worse by the week? Don't recite old news. What's your plan to deal with the massive loss of jobs in this province today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I don't understand how \$1.1 billion for our municipal partners just a month ago is particularly old news. As my friend understands, it takes a while for municipalities to get that money out the door, to get those projects under way, to get those shovels in the ground and to get people employed.

He will also know that we are investing heavily in the skills and education of our workers. We have the biggest job retraining program of its kind in Canada. We're inviting 20,000 Ontarians who have lost their jobs to participate in this program. We'll provide them with up to two years of training, with up to \$28,000 by way of expenses that we will cover to help them get back on their feet and develop the kinds of skills that are in demand at present. Those things can't be done overnight. My friend may dismiss them, but we believe they are absolutely essential, they are thoughtful, they are prudent, they're responsible and they will be effective.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier talks about a so-called job training strategy which will not even cover 10% of the people who have lost their jobs in the last three years. Imagine if you went somewhere and a community had been laid low by devastation and you said, "Well, we're prepared to help maybe one in 10." That is the problem here. As literally tens of thousands of hard-working families are losing their jobs, losing their livelihoods, losing their homes and watching their communities crumble, the McGuinty government's response is, "Well, maybe we might be able to help one in 10, perhaps." People want a job strategy. They see that other manufacturing provinces like Manitoba are actually gaining manufacturing jobs as Ontario loses. Where is the McGuinty government's jobs strategy? What you've done so far—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I know that my colleague has been eager to put forward information coming from Manitoba. One thing I know for certain is that Manitoba has lost almost 10% of its manufacturing jobs since January. I know it's in my colleague's interest to portray a fiction which somehow means that the only jurisdiction in North America that's being challenged at present is here in Ontario, but Ontarians don't believe that to be true. What they do want to know is that we're working as hard as we can with them. So we're continuing to cut our taxes, we are continuing to invest heavily in innovation, skills opportunities, partnerships with businesses and in infrastructure. Those are the kinds of things that we will continue to do because we know—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question, leader of the third party.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Premier: The Premier may want to quibble around the edges, but the fact of the matter is that other manufacturing provinces in this country are doing far better than Ontario. Their economies continue to grow. They continue to do well in things like transportation manufacturing, they continue to do well in things like forest products manufacturing, while Ontario loses and the McGuinty government doesn't seem to have a plan.

I ask the question again. Most of what you talk about here today are things that you announced two and three years ago. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of hard-working Ontarians continue to lose their jobs. What is the McGuinty government's strategy? Sending a minister of international junkets on more international junkets obviously isn't the answer. What is the McGuinty government's plan to sustain—

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

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the leader of the NDP knows what our strategy is; he just doesn't like it. I accept that. His strategy would be for us to spend billions

and billions of dollars. The Conservative strategy is for us to cut billions and billions of dollars away from our revenue stream to hurt our hospitals and our schools. We find ourselves in a prudent and different position. It's prudent, it's responsible, it's thoughtful, and it's in keeping with Ontario's values. We are both cutting taxes and investing in infrastructure. We are both investing in the skills and educational opportunities for Ontarians and investing in innovation. Furthermore, we're prepared to enter into partnerships with businesses to help them grow, those in particular that are prepared to reach even further and to make themselves stronger. We do have a strategy. The truth is they don't like the strategy, and I'm not prepared to spend billions and billions of dollars, as they are suggesting.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: No one is talking about spending billions of dollars. Implementing a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit has cost very little in Quebec and Manitoba, and has helped all kinds of companies sustain themselves through what we admit is going to be a tough recession. Similarly, implementing a meaningful "Buy in Ontario" strategy would cost next to nothing but would make a huge difference in terms of sustaining and creating new manufacturing jobs in the transportation sector. The Premier talks about spending hundreds of millions of dollars. You know, Premier, I saw you write a close to \$300-million cheque to General Motors and I saw thousands of workers go out the door.

Your strategy obviously isn't working. When are we going to see a practical strategy that's going to sustain jobs, rather than result in the loss of more jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I guess the leader of the NDP is saying that we should not be looking for ways to partner with the auto sector. We happen to be the single largest producer of vehicles in North America. He's saying that we should just cede that position, cede that advantage, forget the auto sector. I guess it's all over. But what about the tens of thousands of people who are working in that, directly and indirectly? We bring a different perspective on this. We're prepared to work with the CAW, we're prepared to work with auto manufacturers—not only the original Detroit three, but all the new ones. We're proud of the fact that we've landed a new greenfield assembly plant here in Ontario from Toyota. We're looking forward to having the thousands of people taken up in jobs through that particular industry. And we're going to continue to find ways to work with the private sector and with labour to build a stronger economy here in the province of Ontario. But we're not prepared, as my friend obviously is, to dismiss the end of the auto sector here in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: No one is talking about the end of the auto sector. What we're talking about is the government that writes cheques for hundreds of millions of dollars and doesn't get any job guarantees. That

clearly is not a very good strategy for sustaining jobs. So I ask again, as the jobs crisis worsens, as more and more working people are losing their jobs, as more and more communities are pushed closer to the edge, where is the McGuinty government's response? Reciting old speeches, reannouncing old announcements, obviously isn't doing a thing. Where is the strategy to sustain and create new jobs in Ontario before the loss of manufacturing jobs becomes worse, as it evidently is every day?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: From time to time, a few facts, I find, are always helpful. There are almost 450,000 more jobs today than there were in 2003. One third of all new jobs created in Canada were created here in one province, the province of Ontario. Our unemployment rate today is 6.3%. When we first formed the government, inheriting an economy from the Conservatives, the unemployment rate then was 7%. According to Stats Canada, there are 51,900 more new Ontario jobs than in December 2007. And 60% of all new jobs created in Canada since January of this year were created here in Ontario—one province out of 10. So while it's true that we have some real challenges, I think it's important to keep some perspective on this. The fact of the matter is that Ontario continues to grow, we continue to generate 40% of all the national wealth, and we continue to send \$20 billion to Ottawa for distribution to other provinces.

YOUTH CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Attorney General. There have been an unprecedented number of shootings in Toronto in the last two weeks, many of them apparently gang-related and involving young offenders. Attorney General, people in Toronto are afraid, but even more than that, they're outraged that this kind of lawlessness is happening in our streets. The Prime Minister has proposed new legislation to replace the existing young offenders law that, among other things, will include stiffer penalties for those 14 years of age and older who are convicted of violent and serious crime. It will allow for the release of their names in order to protect the public. Attorney General, why have you rejected these deterrence proposals out of hand, and why won't you support this legislation to protect our communities?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Of course, it would have been nice if we had the support of the party opposite for the ban on handguns to reduce the risk to people. It would have been nice if we had the support of the party opposite so the Harper government would fulfill its promise to put 2,500 more police officers across Canada, but they only delivered 40% for five years. We've moved for mandatory minimums on handgun crimes, reverse-onus bail and a guns-and-gangs task force that's a leader in North America.

I have told the Harper government that the youth offender changes they introduced were not tough enough on the youth that pose the greatest risk. They didn't follow the recommendations of the Nunn commission in Nova Scotia. They had it backwards.

Come forward with a meaningful plan that will protect all the people in our community, and then we will be on side; that's what I say.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would say to the Attorney General that we virtually have a handgun ban in Canada as it is, and the public isn't buying this story. You've got to come up with something better. This is very serious. We've got youth dying in our streets. We need to have a balanced answer. Clearly, we're missing the deterrence factor, which you're rejecting, which is causing youth to die in our streets. The deterrence factor is clearly missing, Attorney General, when you have older gang members getting young ones to do their dirty work and to pull the trigger because they know there won't be any consequences of any significance. Why won't you work with the federal government to come up with a meaningful answer to the youth crime and the violent crime we're facing right now?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Well, in fact, just like the Harper government on the amendments that it introduced to the youth legislation, the honourable member has it backwards. When they introduced the legislation, we specifically said that deterrence and denunciation for the most serious offences has to be there. I went to see the Minister of Justice. He invited all justice ministers to come and talk to him about his legislation, and the almost unanimous view is that he had it backwards, that his provisions weren't tough enough on the youth who posed the greatest risk. You weren't there, with respect, and you don't know. They all told him to change it. He had six months, but he didn't change it. They have it backwards; they're placing people at risk in our communities, and unless and until they get it right—when he came to Toronto, he heard from the chief of police and dozens of community groups. They just got it backwards: not tough enough on the serious, no support—

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

PROPANE EXPLOSION

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Premier. Today we learned that almost half of Ontario's 196 large propane storage facilities did not comply with provincial safety regulations. Seven of them posed immediate hazards. The massive explosion at Sunrise Propane in Downsview demonstrates just what can happen when these facilities are not properly regulated and inspected.

It was only a few years ago that members who now sit as part of the McGuinty government were very critical of the self-regulation, self-inspection model that is at the heart of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority system. Can the Premier tell us why, when members of the McGuinty government were so critical of this self-regulation, self-inspection model, nothing has been done by the McGuinty government to fix it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services.

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Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me start by saying that what happened at Sunrise is of great concern to our government. This has affected the lives of the people who live in that community. That is exactly why we took very serious action right away as soon as this incident happened. On August 19, I ordered a complete review of all the sites that were similar to the Sunrise Propane site. Out of that, yes, recommendations came that of the seven sites, six were basically to do with the certificates not being there, but the people were properly trained. There was one facility that was serious, and we are going to take all the actions that are absolutely necessary to protect the safety of all the residents in this province. We are absolutely committed to doing everything that will—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: What's clear from the Sunrise Propane experience is that people in this province were not being protected. What's clear is that this model of self-inspection, self-regulation by industry literally puts the fox in the henhouse. Members of the McGuinty government, the now-Minister of Transportation—I don't think I could have said it better—said, "We're having this government place the fox in charge of the henhouse; that is, those who have a close connection to what is being supervised, and perhaps have a vested interest, are those who are now doing the supervising."

I want to ask again; you were very critical of this. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people could have been killed in the Sunrise Propane explosion. What is your justification for continuing to allow this system of self-regulation, self-inspection by industry when it has proven to be so bad and so ineffective in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me just lay out for the leader of the third party what some of the things are that we are doing.

First off, I have asked two experts to really look at what needs to be done in this case, how we should do the inspections, what kind of inspections should happen, and what should be included in those inspections. We have asked the experts to do it. We are not even sure, at this point in time, what has been the cause at Sunrise Propane, so we need to get to the bottom of that.

But I want to assure the Ontario public that we are absolutely committed to doing whatever needs to be done to make sure that the Ontario public is safe. We will take all the actions that are necessary in order to do that.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of Education. As a lifelong educator, a teacher and vice-principal of over 20 years, I feel compelled to seek further clarification regarding comments that were made yesterday by a member of the opposition.

Yesterday, the member from Burlington referred to your ministry spending \$56,000 on a company that

supposedly markets themselves as a wedding planner. I'm sure my constituents and my fellow educators would like to know whether or not this is the case, and if so, what services did they provide?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would like to take the opportunity to thank the member for Kitchener–Conestoga for the question so that I can take the opportunity to set the record straight, because it's really important to us that people in Ontario understand that the money that is spent by our government is spent in the best interest of the people of Ontario. From my ministry's perspective, that means the students, the teachers, the people who work in our schools and in our school communities.

I'm happy to report we did use a company called Eventfully Yours. There was no wedding planning as part of the use of that company. In fact, here is an e-mail from the president of the company, Sherri Jordan:

"Eventfully Yours Inc. is an innovative, cost-effective corporate event planning company. Since 1997, we have provided event management to companies of all sizes, primarily within the financial and not-for-profit sectors. Eventfully Yours has never been in the business of planning weddings and does not plan to do so in the future."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I thank the minister for setting the record straight. The people of Ontario deserve information that is correct, and I humbly suggest that the member from Burlington take more care when doing her research in the future. I understand that Eventfully Yours was a successful bidder in a competitive process to provide services of event planning logistical support for ministry conferences. Would the minister please elaborate on these details?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Eventfully Yours was the successful bidder in a competitive process to provide services for two recent ministry events. The first one was the Circle of Light, which was a First Nation, Metis and Inuit education conference that happened from November 26 to 28, 2007, really a first in the history of the province in education, bringing together practitioners, non-aboriginal academics and aboriginal academics to talk about the delivery of aboriginal education.

In January 2008, the ministry held a two-day symposium on special education assessment and student evaluation, and I know that the member opposite would understand that it's extremely important that educators share information on those issues.

I said yesterday that I look forward to responding to the questions from the opposition. I think it's extremely important for a government to be held to account. I really hope that I'll have the chance to respond to thoughtful questions that are relevant to the people of Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance: Minister, on July 30, TD Economics released its special report entitled *Are the Wheels Falling Off the Ontario Economy?* The report begins:

"Major economic releases out of Ontario in recent weeks have put the province on a heightened state of recession alert. In early July, the Ontario government reported that real GDP contracted by 1.4% (annualized) in the first quarter, bringing the quarterly streak of little or no growth in the province to three."

Minister, given the most up-to-date figures available to you as the Minister of Finance, can you tell the Legislature, is Ontario now in a Dalton McGuinty recession?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Based on the numbers we have now, the consensus estimate of future performance of the economy is "no" to that question. That, of course, changes. It has changed since the budget. The consensus estimate has gone down. I'll remind the member opposite that what we need is a comprehensive approach to the challenges in our economy. Last year, for instance, we invested \$9.9 billion in infrastructure across Ontario, and you can see it. As you drive down the 401, as I do on my way home, you can see the cranes in community after community. Unlike the member opposite, we are working with the automotive sector to keep jobs in Ontario, recognizing the challenging economy. I think that what we all need to focus on is a response to the challenge in the economy that is prudent and balanced, and that will help protect jobs, secure future investments and keep Ontario strong and prosperous as we move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me give the minister some economic updates: Recent releases from the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Royal Bank of Canada show that Ontario is dead last, or second last, in all of Confederation in economic growth. The Conference Board of Canada reported that Ontario's major cities, Toronto and Hamilton, are the slowest-growing cities in all of Canada under Dalton McGuinty.

Minister, people are lose their well-paying jobs. Families at GDX or John Deere in Welland and the Niagara peninsula are feeling the impact of Dalton McGuinty's failed tax-and-spend policies. The 500 people who have lost their jobs at Linamar, in Guelph, are feeling the impacts of Dalton McGuinty's failed tax-and-spend policies.

Minister, people are losing well-paying manufacturing jobs, and the cost of living is increasing for seniors and working families. Will you table immediately an economic statement and start to turn this province around?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I say to those families is that their government is on their side, unlike the opposition. We are investing in skills trades to fill the jobs that go unfilled. We are investing in innovation, and later today, I'll be introducing the ideas for Ontario's future act, which will encourage innovation. We are investing \$9.9 billion in infrastructure to help deal in the short term with jobs and in the long term, with productivity. What we need is a federal partner, a federal partner that will treat Ontarians fairly, a federal partner that will say to the unemployed people who were laid off at those plants that they'll get the same amount of employment insurance as people in other parts of the country.

Will you in the opposition—we welcome your initiatives—stand up for Ontario? It's about fairness. It's about treating workers properly and making the proper investments in our economic—

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

C. DIFFICILE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre, est c'est au sujet des infections à la bactérie C. difficile.

At the end of this month, I understand that Ontario hospitals will report the number of cases of C. difficile infections within their institutions.

En fait, j'ai même eu la chance de rencontrer le Dr Baker quand il est venu à Sudbury pour expliquer les nouvelles procédures à l'hôpital régional, Sudbury Regional Hospital.

But what Ontarians really want to know is why your government has not mandated hospitals to report the deaths directly related to the C. difficile inspection, like they do in Quebec, like they do in the UK and in other jurisdictions around the world. Ontarians want to know.

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question. I want to take this opportunity first in this Legislature to extend my sympathies to all families who have been affected by C. difficile. I want to assure my colleagues and Ontarians and particularly those families who have been affected that we're doing everything that we need to do to improve the safety conditions to be found in our hospitals.

My colleague knows that we've asked Dr. Baker to be our provincial lead on patient safety to help us with this. We're going to be providing public information for the first time at the end of this week, this very Friday, to ensure that Ontarians get a better understanding of exactly the case. I think that when they have an opportunity to see how we compare with other provinces, they'll see that we're performing quite well. There's always more to be done, but we look forward to making that information public for the very first time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member for Hamilton—Centre.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The unfortunate thing is, we learn more about the C. difficile epidemic from the Hamilton Spectator than we do from the Premier of the province. According to the Spectator, 91 people at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital have died because the government failed to issue clear guidelines on how to identify outbreaks and help prevent C. difficile from spreading.

Since the Premier refuses to give the public the full story, will he allow the Ombudsman to investigate or provide a full public review to determine how many people have in fact died from C. difficile in this province? And if not, why not, when this is literally a life and death issue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my advice to my colleague and the reassurance that we're providing to Ontarians is, let's just wait for this information to come out on Friday. Let's just wait for associated information, as well, to see in particular how we are comparing with our fellow provinces across the country.

We have taken a number of steps—this is just the latest. One of the things that we did back in 2004 was to establish something called the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. There were a number of recommendations that flowed from their work, including putting in place handwashing guidelines and education programs inside our hospitals. They have issued best practices, warnings and held education sessions on C. difficile. As I say, this will culminate with public reporting at the end of this week. I would ask my colleagues opposite to wait for that information to be made available, and I think that will go a long way toward reassuring Ontario families.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: Supporting our artists and cultural organizations is important for communities across Ontario and in my riding of Peterborough. Over the last month and a half, the Harper Conservatives have voted a series of funding cuts to arts and cultural programs estimated to be more than \$45 million. These federal programs provide crucial support for artists and cultural organizations by helping them to promote their products and attract foreign investors. Many of these affected groups have expressed their disappointment in the Harper Conservatives' decision, including Artspace in my riding of Peterborough.

Can the Minister of Culture tell this House what the government's position is on the federal government's cut to arts and cultural programs?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank my honourable colleague for his concern about our program and how it impacts the community of Peterborough.

I, too, have been deeply concerned—I would say flabbergasted—that the Harper Conservatives have cut the programs that support Canada's cultural sector. Canada's cultural sector generates \$46 billion to the national economy, and almost half of that is generated right here in the province of Ontario. And it is the last time—it is not the time in any way that the Harper government should be cutting valuable programs that produce the very economic benefits I've been listening to the opposition talk about this morning, such as skills development, the knowledge-based economy and stronger planning for growth. That's why I am calling on all the federal parties to make this an issue. It's also why, when I'm in Quebec City on Friday with my provincial colleagues, we will be addressing this issue and responding to the Harper government's cuts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to hear that the McGuinty government is standing with our arts and culture com-

munity by calling on all federal parties to commit to restoring the cultural funding that the Harper Conservatives have slashed. Artists and cultural organizations in my riding of Peterborough and Ontario will be pleased that they have a strong provincial partner as they urge all federal parties to reverse the Harper Conservative cuts. But a strong provincial partner ultimately means that the provincial government must do its part to help this important sector. Can the Minister of Culture tell this House what our government is doing to support Ontario's cultural sector?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I'm more than pleased to comply with that request. The McGuinty government really understands that investing in arts and culture builds strong, vibrant communities. It is also a major drive to economic prosperity. While the Harper government has cut more than \$45 million in arts and culture—confirmed, by the way, by the *Globe and Mail's* recent stories—the McGuinty government has increased annual funding to the Ontario Arts Council by \$20 million, which brings that to \$60 million. That represents a 140% increase to the Ontario Arts Council, which is, compared to the previous Tory government, double what they invested.

As Minister of Culture, I assure this House that I am going to continue to advocate on the part of our sector, continue to advocate for the 250,000 artists who work in the province of Ontario.

PROPANE EXPLOSION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services: After the massive and deadly explosion at Sunrise Propane on August 10 in Toronto, why did it take him three full days before responding publicly to this crisis? As the minister responsible for public confidence with the TSSA, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, how can he explain his utter failure to act during that crisis?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I am actually very pleased to answer this question. First of all, I want to say again that this incident is of great concern to our government, and our government acted very quickly. On August 18, I basically ordered that all propane facilities similar to Sunrise should be audited, and that audit was actually completed in less than one week. In addition to that, I have also asked the experts to look into best practices around the world so that we can implement them, so that this kind of incident doesn't happen again.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Eight days after the fact is too late, and a review panel is not needed to tell you what you already knew. Two people are dead, thousands were displaced, with no answers from you for days. Regulation of inspections and locations for propane facilities near residential neighbourhoods has always resided with the Minister of Consumer Services, yet he had no public meetings and offered no immediate help: The minister for public confidence ignored the public. Again I ask him, can he explain his utter failure to communicate with the public during this crisis?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me just say this again. My sympathies are with the families of Parminder Saini and Bob Leek. I had the chance to call Parminder Saini's family in India, and they actually came to my office last week and expressed their profound thanks for what I did for that family, including talking to the police officers here so that they could keep the communications open.

I was at the site two days after. I'm not sure where the member was, except in Ottawa giving the statements. She should have been there and looked at the site herself. We were there. The Premier was there. I was there. Most of the members of our caucus have been there, and we have taken very concrete action. I want to assure the public out there that we're going to do absolutely everything that is possible to make sure that this kind of incident never happens in Ontario again.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On July 20, a hydro vault exploded at 2 Secord Avenue. The 900 people who lived in that building were forced out of their homes and were lucky to be alive. For six weeks, those tenants had no access whatsoever to their homes. The misnamed Tenant Protection Act provided no protection at all for these people. The city of Toronto generously provided housing for many families who had no place else to go, but ministry officials claimed no responsibility whatsoever. What plans do you have to ensure that tenants who are victims of future extraordinary circumstances like this will be protected by their provincial government?

1140

Hon. Jim Watson: It's the Residential Tenancies Act that I believe the honourable member is referring to. Let me just begin by expressing our concern to those residents who were forced out of their homes as a result of the activities at the apartment building. But let me also express my gratitude and appreciation for the Toronto Fire Services, for the police, for the paramedics, for all of the emergency workers who worked very closely along with the not-for-profit groups, like the Salvation Army and the Red Cross, which were involved in helping to find places for these people to live while the building was rehabilitated.

There's no question that the lead responsibility for the particular activity was with the city of Toronto. I commend the city of Toronto for the good work they did. Our staff were there and available to assist them. The Residential Tenancies Act, which many members of the opposition actually voted against, gives greater protection to tenants than the—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened carefully to what the minister had to say, and he never once said anything that his ministry accomplished during that unfortunate circumstance. The act actually punished the families at 2

Secord Avenue by not providing them with the ability to get out of their lease and thereby find alternative places to live. The owner of the property first said that they could break the lease and then subsequently refused to allow that to happen.

Will the government introduce changes to the act today that will help tenants who face extraordinary circumstances by allowing them to break their leases in crises, like the events at 2 Secord Avenue, so that they can go out and find somewhere else to live rather than to be on the streets or in hotel rooms provided by the city?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me just clarify one point: The Residential Tenancies Act does allow tenants to appeal to the Landlord and Tenant Board, seeking remedies as one course of action.

The second point is, I think the honourable member does bring up a very valid concern. I'm quite prepared to ask our officials to examine those provisions that he has raised. At the end of day, our concern has to be with the families who have been displaced. I think the honourable member does bring up some valid and legitimate concerns.

We're very proud of the Residential Tenancies Act. It just passed a couple of years ago. We think it's a more progressive, balanced piece of legislation than was there before. If we can improve on that specific piece of legislation, particularly as a result of what we learned with the Secord Avenue explosion, then we're happy to do so.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for Minister of Labour. I too would like to take a moment to congratulate the minister in his new position.

Minister, I have stood in this House before and asked questions about an issue that is of interest to my constituents: temporary employment agencies. These agencies supply workers in a wide range of occupations, and an employee of an agency might be assigned to a single client or business for several months or even years. This has raised questions about whether temporary help agency workers are being treated fairly compared to permanent or regular employees. This issue, it is my understanding, continues to be brought to the attention of your ministry by many individuals and groups. Would this minister tell us what our government is currently doing about the challenges faced by temporary workers in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for York South–Weston for bringing this very important issue forward. Our government is very committed to ensuring that employees through temporary help agencies are properly protected under the law. We have indeed heard a number of these issues from employees and employers, both partners, as well as the general public. The issues that have been brought to our attention raise concerns about certain practices that are taking place with temporary agencies. My parliamentary assistant, Vic Dhillon,

began this consultation and this work on temporary employment agencies. This consultation took place this summer; it continues.

I ask that the public bring forward some of their feedback to the Ministry of Labour regarding this very important consultation. They can provide the information to us through the Ministry of Labour's website. We want to hear from them. I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is important to know that our government is acting on and addressing outstanding issues for temporary employees in Ontario.

Many of my constituents have asked me about their rights as temporary employees. Many have told me about their problems in the workplace and their efforts to voice their concerns about their workplace issues. It is a benefit to my constituents that the government listens to the concerns being expressed by vulnerable workers in this province and takes them seriously.

Minister, you have explained what we are currently doing. Can you please tell this House what our government is planning to do in the longer term to help temporary agency workers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to share with this House how we are moving forward. I want to let her know that our government is working hard to protect the rights of workers in this province, including those who work for temporary employment agencies. My ministry has over 140 inspectors who go out, checking employment standards, and they investigate over 20,000 claims a year. The ministry has identified temporary workers as an area that needs to be focused on. Our enforcement staff has added additional support materials to assist in those inspections.

We also want to ensure that Ontario's employment legislation reflects the realities of today's workplace. For this reason, I look forward to hearing from Ontarians who have something to say about this very important issue.

I would also like to personally encourage all people across this province to give us their input, their comments and their suggestions during this consultation period.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. This summer has not been kind to Ontario, sir. In Willowdale, there were 2,000 jobs lost, in Welland there were over 1,000 jobs lost, in St. Thomas over 1,000 jobs lost, in Oshawa over 1,000 jobs lost, in Oxford 800, in Oakville 500, in Guelph 800—apparently the plan's working in Guelph. The list goes on—over 21,000 net jobs lost in the manufacturing sector in Ontario in the last three months—and where was the McGuinty government? They were missing in action.

Workers who once held great full-time positions now work two or three part-time jobs while others don't work at all, and economists say that the future is looking

worse. The short-sighted policies of your predecessor failed. She doled out millions in corporate welfare, only to see more pink slips and more devastated families and more lost taxes.

Minister, how will you distance yourself from these failed strategies? What new actions will you take to improve Ontario's business climate?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I appreciate the member's question, especially because he very transparently put his finger right on it. Every jurisdiction that is seeking to be competitive, that is seeking to improve productivity and innovation, is recognizing that that requires government to be there for employees—for training, yes, but also to employers and to the industry. That assistance to employers is what the member refers to as corporate welfare. In this global economy, where businesses are considering whether to stay or move here to Ontario, they look at what the costs are going to be, what the climate is going to be, and whether or not the government is there to provide investments in capital, for instance, that will allow them to be more productive and innovative.

That's the difference between this government and the Conservative Party. They would do nothing for those businesses. This government is stepping forward to provide assistance to retain—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I congratulate the minister. At least he understands the problem. The problem is that Ontario has the highest taxes of any jurisdiction in North America. We have certainly the highest taxes in Canada. All of the companies that are moving to Ontario look at those things and say, "Ontario is not where we want to be."

The minister is offering, so far, nothing new. If he doesn't offer something new, then the cabinet shuffle is meaningless; it's just a new face with the same policies.

Minister, you're a bright guy. You went to Harvard; you've got to be a bright guy. You can think for yourself and you can take some initiative. If you are stuck for some answers, we would be happy to help you. We had an economic summit, and we would be glad to share some of those things.

Minister, I ask you again: What new economic development issues are you willing to bring to the table to turn—

1150

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: The only person who said, "Don't come and invest in Ontario," was the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty.

With respect to tax relief, I say to the member, don't take my word for it. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said: "We must acknowledge the tax relief that has been delivered over the past few years" by the provincial government. "Relief has been both vital and welcome in: corporate capital tax, corporate income tax and provincial property tax portion. That some of the

recent relief came early in the December 2007 economic statement was supported by CFIB as a way to help shield our Ontario economy from being side-swiped...."

But that's not the only approach of this government. It is, yes, strategic tax relief, but it is also strategic investments for the workers and for the businesses to create jobs. We were doing that and we are doing—

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

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, through your government, the Ontario Northland commission has announced cuts to bus services along the northeastern Ontario corridor that they serve. There has been a recommendation by the ONTC that they're going to do this by October 1. It is not going well with people because the more you cut services, the less people take the bus, the less viable that service becomes over the longer run.

So my question to you is simply this. There's been a suggestion made by the Teamsters and by member communities that are serviced by the ONTC to delay this decision at least until January so that the ONTC can consult municipalities, riders and the unions about other steps they can take in order to save dollars. My question to you is, are you prepared to grant that request to delay the implementation until January 1?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for the question. It's an excellent question to ask, because we're very much aware of the reliance of individuals in that area on this kind of service. I can say to the member that we are always willing to consider any and every idea that happens to come forward. I recognize these changes are certainly an inconvenience to people, and in some cases it's quite essential. I want to at least say to the member that I will go back to my staff, I will talk to them and try to provide the necessary information to bring together so that we can give full consideration to the member's request.

I want to, as well, congratulate him while I can for being a candidate for leader of the third party. I notice some changes in him already that are clearly a part of running for the leadership, and I wish him well in that endeavour.

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

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: During question period, the member for Kitchener–Conestoga asked a question of the Minister of Education. It clearly was set up as an effort to criticize the member for Burlington. In the past, previous Speakers have ruled

that it's inappropriate to use question period time to engage in personal attacks on other members. I would ask you to review the Hansard and report back to the House as to whether or not this was an inappropriate use of question period time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for his point of order, and I will oblige his request and, in consultation with the Clerk's table, review the Hansard.

I would, just as a general note, remind all members that we are in an adversarial world of politics within this chamber, but at the same time, on all fronts, we do need to maintain respect for one another as members. We may come from different parties and different philosophies, but we are all here representing the same constituents. I would ask members on all sides to be conscious of it. But we will review that.

The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Mr. Speaker, just to that point of order: As you review it, I would certainly say that if you look at the words, they were, I think, quite carefully worded so that there in fact was no criticism personally of the member. There was criticism about the substance and the research, but there was no criticism of the member. I would ask that as you review it—of course, I would anticipate you would look at whether or not there was a personal ad hominem address in there. I would say, listening very carefully to the question, that there was none whatsoever, but it is in your hands now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member. That review will be undertaken.

It is time for petitions.

PETITIONS

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: A petition for fair journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios in the manufacturing and construction sectors in Ontario are both outdated and unfair; and

“Whereas the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship in many other jurisdictions in Canada is already one to one; and

“Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios put small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario requiring skilled trades at a disadvantage to other provinces; and

“Whereas MPP Laurie Scott and MPP Garfield Dunlop have both brought forward notices of motion requesting the government and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to make the necessary regulatory changes to current ratios;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprentices be one to one.”

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition put together by the Ontario Health Coalition and supported by the people of Niagara Falls and Fort Erie.

“Whereas understaffing in Ontario's nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff;

“Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care dropped below the previous 2.25 hour/day minimum;

“Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

“Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments;

“Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes....”

Therefore, they petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

They call on the government of Ontario to “immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the new Long-Term Care Homes Act.”

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it is in support of the proposed western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin

planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

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

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Wellington-Halton Hills have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

"Whereas whatever one-time money has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

I want to thank Mark and Connie Robinson as well as Isabel McCutcheon for helping to contribute these signatures from the riding of Perth-Wellington to my petition.

1200

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have a petition signed by a number of Hamilton-Wentworth elementary teachers as well as postal workers and many other citizens. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas workplace harassment (physical and psychological) and violence need to be defined as violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act so that it is dealt with as quickly and earnestly by employers as other health and safety issues and;

"Whereas employers will have a legal avenue/obligation to deal with workplace harassment and violence in all its forms, including psychological harassment, and;

"Whereas Bill 29 would make it law to protect workers from workplace harassment by giving workers the right to refuse to work after harassment has occurred, require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related harassment, and oblige employers to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario to treat workplace harassment and violence as a serious health and safety issue by passing MPP Andrea Horwath's Bill 29, which would bring workplace harassment and violence under the scope of the Occupational Health And Safety Act."

Obviously, I agree with this and am sending it with page Paige to the table.

CHILD CUSTODY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Falls. A belated happy birthday to the member; I understand it was your birthday yesterday. All the best.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The petition reads as follows. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents as requested in Bill 33 put forward by MPP Kim Craitor.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I sign my signature in support and I'm pleased to give this to page Karlie to present.

ANGUS EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the way in which we care for children during their first six years sets the stage for a child's lifelong learning, behaviour and health; and

"Whereas the Angus Early Years Centre offers vital services to help parents and caregivers in all aspects of

early childhood development, including early learning and literacy programs and important links to early years programs in the community; and

“Whereas E3 Community Services is currently reviewing the feasibility of continuing to operate the Angus Early Years Centre;

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

“That the Minister of Children and Youth Services take every step necessary to ensure that the Early Years Centre at 211 Mill Street in Angus remains open so that it can continue to be a place where parents and caregivers can get answers to questions from early years professionals and so that they can continue to participate in the excellent programs that are currently being offered in Angus.”

I agree with this petition and sign it, and I'm going to hand it to page Michael Ralphs, who is from the great riding of Simcoe–Grey.

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the family of Lyle Defoe and supported by the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt, including people from Coniston, Capreol, Hanmer and Val Caron.

“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 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 (page 60 of Mining Regulations), paragraph 74 states that, ‘A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded. RRO 1990, Reg. 854s 75(1).’ 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” he was driving “was raised. Lyle’s body was recovered from behind the scoop tram.

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

“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 Supriya.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: A petition 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 patient 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 ...; 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 the Ajax-Pickering hospital within Lakeridge Health, thus combining all of our hospitals in Durham region under one Durham region administration.”

I shall affix my signature and pass this to page Paige.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios in the manufacturing and construction sectors in Ontario are both outdated and unfair; and

“Whereas the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship in many other jurisdictions in Canada is already one to one; and

“Whereas the current journeymen tradespeople to apprenticeship ratios put small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario requiring skilled trades at a disadvantage to other provinces; and

“Whereas MPP Laurie Scott and MPP Garfield Dunlop have both brought forward notices of motion requesting the government and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to make the necessary regulatory changes to current ratios;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeymen tradespeople to apprentices be one to one.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to rise today to read a petition prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition and signed and supported by the people of Windsor and Fort Erie.

"Whereas understaffing in Ontario's nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff;

"Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care were dropped from the minimum of 2.25 hours/day;

"Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

"Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments; and

"Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more serious and complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes;"

They petition the Ontario government to "Immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the Long-Term Care Homes Act."

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions is about to expire. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RAYWAL ODOUR RESIDENTS WATCH

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today on behalf of the people of my riding living in the vicinity of the Raywal Kitchens plant in Thornhill. My purpose is to put the Minister of the Environment on notice.

The Raywal Odour Residents Watch, a community group with whom I've been working to ensure enforcement of environmental legislation, has been actively seeking the minister's assistance to protect residents from excessive fumes and pollution, but to no avail. So far, the minister, his inspectors and the ministry's investigators have failed to do so. Repeatedly, the grievances of the community have fallen on deaf ears. My constituents tell me that the York-Durham district office of the ministry has offered them little more than lip service and excuses instead of action, all of this on the minister's watch. Meanwhile, I am receiving reports that residents are becoming ill, that their quality of life has been sabotaged and that they can derive no enjoyment from their properties.

This is not new, but it's extremely serious and it's extremely urgent now. It is high time the ministry took my concerns and the complaints of my constituents seriously. As the member of provincial Parliament for Thornhill, I demand a proper scientific investigation of the problems, appropriate ministry orders to resolve the situation, and enforcement of those orders to completion.

It is time the minister did his job to ensure the health and safety of the people of Thornhill.

RESIDENTIAL SPRINKLERS

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: This weekend in Minneapolis, the International Code Council, an association dedicated to building safety and fire prevention in the United States, overwhelmingly backed code changes that would make residential sprinklers mandatory in all new one- and two-family dwellings.

In June, our government brought forward changes to the building code mandating sprinklers in all new high-rise residential construction beginning in 2010.

This weekend in the Toronto Star, they reported that some builders are installing systems before the deadline. The vice-president of Canderel Stoneridge Equity Group, who are developing a 75-storey condominium, said, "It's not about marketing, it's about safety. All 930 units will have sprinklers. Sprinklers save lives." He says customer feedback consistently shows high-rise fire ranks high amongst buyers' concerns and that the decision to install sprinklers is resonating with those buyers.

Our government has done the right thing with respect to high-rise residences. I want Ontario to continue to move forward in making all buildings safer in the future. I encourage our government to follow the historic example set by the International Code Council and demonstrate that Ontario is a leader in protecting what is most valuable to all Ontarians, their lives.

PREMIER'S PETITION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier's so-called fairness plan and his petition—it's a sham, just like his economic plan. The Premier is trying to deflect attention from the 200,000 manufacturing jobs that have left this province under his watch. He is trying to distract us from his dismal economic plan and his results.

The Globe and Mail today reported that his plans and his pleas for a fairer deal from Ottawa are "falling on deaf ears in his own province." Why? Because people right across this province are worried about their future and their kids' futures. Ontarians want meaningful and effective action, not more blame-game stunts, and that's what he's doing with pulling this petition out.

When is the Premier going to stop blaming everyone else and do something for once? His petition is a sham because, in Ontario, we all know this Legislature does not accept online petitions. This means that anyone who signs this illegitimate petition is wasting their precious time.

We all in this province and in this Legislature want a stronger Ontario, but the Premier has got to stop blaming everyone under the sun, including Stephen Harper, and he's got to start acting like a Premier. I know that over the weeks ahead we're going to have meaningful debate in this Legislature about the economic inaction of the Liberal government.

SOFTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: September is the return to school, and for every student it is the opportunity to recount what they did for the summer. A group of girls in the Melbourne area in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex have the added excitement of being able to brag about winning back-to-back Ontario Rural Softball Association provincial championships in the Atom B division for both 2007 and 2008. These seven- to 10-year-old girls dominated the regular season, coached by Millar Nicol and Greg Prichard. Then they were undefeated in the Melbourne tournament, and finally they captured their second consecutive championship in the ORSA competition.

I had the opportunity to speak to these young ladies in Glencoe last Saturday as they waited on a parade float. They were appropriately proud of their achievement as they sang out cheers to demonstrate their team solidarity.

The girls deserve full credit for their hard work at bat and dominance in pitching. Winning back-to-back championships not only proves that they have what it takes to be champions, but it also speaks volumes about what young people can achieve when a team bonds the way these girls have.

I want to congratulate the Melbourne Atom softball team and all these girls as they enjoy a banquet in their honour in southwest Middlesex on October 18.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Toby Barrett: I offer a welcome to Brad Duguid, the member for Scarborough Centre, as the new face at aboriginal affairs. I have a question: What did he do to deserve this appointment? As I stand in the House, we have difficulty seeing him. His predecessor sat in the front row, right next to the Speaker, and the minister is back in the third row. I was asked this morning, "What does this mean?" Perhaps the Premier is taking the minister back behind the sofa with him with respect to land disputes.

You've had Caledonia for two and a half years, and now Brantford. This government has had Ipperwash for five years now and accomplished nothing, not even the promised legislation. There's nothing on the docket for this fall.

Where are the priorities? Will you immediately relocate Dave and Dana Brown? They've spent the last two and a half years in hell, adjacent to DCE. This family's safety and their health have been at risk for far too long, and the community is very concerned for them.

I ask the minister to come to Caledonia and witness first-hand the problems this land dispute has created. Come to Brantford; come to Dunnville; come to York; come to Hagersville. We don't need a new face, we don't necessarily need a new beginning; we need an end. Those involved in the crisis know little to nothing about Minister Duguid. We ask him to go out and make a name for himself.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: On September 3 I attended an event at the Theatre Centre, attended by I would say over 300 people from the different disciplines in the arts—painters, dancers, writers, actors, designers, filmmakers, sculptors, performers, directors, curators, musicians, architects, fashion designers and more—to defend themselves and organize against the assault on the arts by the federal government when it decided to eliminate \$60 million from the cultural and heritage granting programs. These programs are many: the PromArt program—close to \$5 million cut by—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have you here, Minister.

Trade Routes—\$9 million, the Department of Canadian Heritage; stabilization projects and capacity building of the Canadian Arts and Heritage Sustainability Program—\$3.4 million; the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund—\$1.5 million gone; the national training program in the film and video sector—\$2.5 million gone; the Canadian New Media Fund—\$14.5 million gone.

People like Claire Hopkinson, Toronto Arts Council, Susan Swan, former president of the Writers Union, and Naomi Klein, writer and political analyst, were there to defend the arts and defend against the cuts. They set up a group called the Department of Culture, and you can visit that group at www.departmentofculture.ca to get a sense of how we organize against—

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

1510

WELDING WEEK

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: According to a recent study, the welding industry employs over 300,000 Canadians and contributes over \$5 billion to our economy each year. It is very important to our manufacturing and construction industries. Unfortunately, the industry is facing a severe labour shortage as fewer students graduate with a welding education and as the aging welding workforce begins to retire.

To draw attention to this, I am proud to say that the Canadian Welding Association is celebrating the first-ever National Welding Week from September 22 to 27, 2008. This initiative will help to make Canadians aware of the important role of welding in their lives and encourage students to consider welding as a career.

The Canadian Welding Association is developing a national program in support of welding education in high

schools. It recently contributed \$20,000 toward the specialist high skills major program at Barton Secondary School in my riding of Hamilton Mountain, and has contributed over \$300,000 to welding programs at 30 high schools in Hamilton and the greater Golden Horseshoe region.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the House join in celebration of the Canadian Welding Association's Welding Week and encourage young Ontarians to consider welding as a viable career option.

ALGOMA UNIVERSITY

Mr. David Oraziotti: Earlier this month I was joined by Premier McGuinty in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie to officially open the new, independent Algoma University. It was fitting that the Premier was on hand for this historic event, as it was under his direction that our government dedicated the time and resources necessary to ensure that the process was successful, culminating with Minister Milloy's spearheading legislation that passed earlier this spring.

The young people whom the Premier and I welcomed back to school a few weeks ago will be the first to attend the stand-alone degree-granting institution in the Soo. They will have access to expanded learning opportunities and a chance to complete their education in the community with the support of their families and friends.

With independence, the school is projected to more than double in size to approximately 3,000 students and increase enrolment from across the province and around the globe.

Here's what Dr. Celia Ross, president of Algoma University, had to say: "The entire university community, and the community of Sault Ste. Marie, is celebrating. Already we are able to offer a wider array of degree programs to our students, and that trend will continue. We are building stronger partnerships to benefit the students of Ontario, and we will be a significant contributor to the development of northern Ontario."

Our government also announced new funding that would help the university attract more students, bring in research dollars and create more high-paying jobs for northern and aboriginal students.

Granting independent university status to Algoma is part of our government's plan to ensure that students in all parts of the province are prepared for the next generation of jobs so that Ontario can continue to compete in the new economy.

CANDLELIGHTERS CHILDHOOD CANCER FOUNDATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to highlight the good work of the Candlelighters childhood cancer support program in the city of Ottawa. Each year, approximately 400 children are diagnosed with cancer in Ontario. More than one child per week will be diagnosed with cancer in eastern Ontario, of

whom 65 will receive treatment at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

The Candlelighters organization offers tremendous support to families coping with the daily realities of childhood cancer. They provide the simple things that mean a lot to families: financial assistance, programs that help families cope and informal weekly drop-in sessions for parents and caregivers.

Candlelighters have been working hard to raise awareness about childhood cancer, including organizing local activities to promote awareness about this important issue. Today I'm wearing the Candlelighters pin in recognition of their efforts to have September recognized as Child Cancer Awareness Month. I encourage all members to show their support by wearing the same pin.

Today I am joined by Brian Heaney, chair; Jocelyn Lamont, executive director; and Tamsin Roach from Candlelighters, who are hosting an information reception this evening in committee room 230. I encourage all members of the House, on both sides of the aisle, to join with me this evening to find out more about the work of this wonderful organization. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Perhaps the member for Ottawa Centre may want to seek unanimous consent to be wearing that pin.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and I seek unanimous consent of this House to wear the childhood cancer awareness pin on behalf the Candlelighters organization.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report of intended appointments dated September 23, 2008, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 107(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR DES IDÉES D'AVENIR

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 100, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007 / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des sociétés et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

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. Dwight Duncan: During ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A fast-moving global economy is the reality and Ontario must compete, and compete to win. Innovation is one of the keys to the future of our economy. This afternoon, I introduced the Ideas for the Future Act because we want Ontario to be a leader in innovative businesses.

This bill is meant to attract individuals with great ideas from all across Canada to set up their businesses in Ontario. If they qualify under this act, they would receive a 10-year corporate income tax exemption.

This bill would provide a tax incentive to qualifying corporations in Ontario to further the commercial strength of intellectual property. This 10-year corporate income tax exemption would be for new start-up companies that commercialize research from Canadian universities, colleges and research institutes.

This bill, if passed, would allow a start-up company to take new ideas developed at Canadian public research institutes to market and enable more highly skilled people to work in a more robust and productive economy.

Qualifying companies could be eligible to receive a refund of Ontario corporate income tax for each of their first 10 taxation years. The refund would be equal to the amount of income tax and corporate minimum tax paid by the qualifying corporation under the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007.

This is historic, landmark legislation. The landmark corporate tax measure would be the first of its kind in Canada. It would help launch the next wave of Ontario's innovators by helping companies keep more of their income to invest and grow. It would also reinforce the critical role that universities and other public research institutes play in our economy and the next generation of jobs.

The measure would provide an incentive to firms that undertake the challenges of commercializing intellectual property or these ideas of the future. It would give these new companies a refund of all Ontario corporate income tax to reinvest in their businesses.

The McGuinty government recognizes the importance of innovation and our need to foster creativity in an increasingly competitive global market. This government believes that Canada's universities, colleges and research institutes provide a wealth of knowledge to be tapped into to capitalize on innovation.

My colleague the Honourable John Wilkinson, Minister of Research and Innovation, and I are working closely on this initiative that would create a better environment for business to generate more well-paying jobs.

This initiative would assist the culture of innovation for the creation of jobs in the high-priority areas of the economy. In addition, this legislation would provide for flexibility so that other innovative technologies can be added in the future.

This initiative complements existing programs that support commercial innovation, such as the Ontario commercialization investment funds administered by the Ministry of Research and Innovation.

I'd like to mention some of the key qualifications for this proposed tax incentive. The company must be a new start-up incorporated in Canada after March 24, 2008, and before March 25, 2012. Substantially, all of the company's revenues must come from a new active business in the priority areas for economic growth, which include advanced health, bioeconomy, which includes initiatives related to clean energy and telecommunications, and computer or digital media technologies. The company must be in the business of commercializing eligible intellectual property developed by a qualifying Canadian research institute.

This initiative would build on our existing measures to cut taxes for business, such as eliminating Ontario's capital tax and reducing high business education tax rates across Ontario.

1520

I ask for this Legislature to pass this measure so that we can get these ideas of the future working here in Ontario today to create revenues, and most importantly, to create jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the official opposition to the minister's announcement and introduction of the bill. The minister has been very good in providing detailed briefings to the official opposition, and we thank him for that and look forward to the opportunity to similarly walk through the bill piece by piece so that we can brief our respective caucuses on that.

In advance of the bill actually being introduced into the assembly today, there has been commentary on this—I guess the minister knows—some skepticism expressed, for example, by the C.D. Howe Institute, who on July—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Oh no.

Mr. Tim Hudak: C.D. Howe was a Liberal minister, if I recall. The C.D. Howe Institute—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, he's dead. The C.D. Howe institute called it "ill-designed" and said, "Tax holidays, also used in Quebec, are high-cost, low-impact policies typically found in Third World countries and well proven to be ineffective." That was the C. D. Howe Institute in July 2008.

Jim Milway, the executive director of the government-funded Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, criticized the government's decision to give the 10-year tax reduction to new businesses. "If a new technology becomes available," Mr. Milway said, "an existing business will have no particular incentive to develop it—even though an already-successful firm might be able to do so faster and better than a start-up company could. Lowering overall taxes would be more effective," Mr. Milway said. "It would do more for innovation." That was the *Ottawa Citizen*, April 30, 2008.

So certainly we will give the bill a full review. But the initial comments on the bill cast some question: if this is a better approach or rather what the PC caucus has brought forward, which is broad-based tax reductions. There seems to be a belief from Dalton McGuinty that Dalton McGuinty and his cabinet can choose the best companies to invest in, that they, more so than markets, will have the wisdom to determine which businesses are going to be successful and which are not, and allocate funds in the forms of grants or loans that way, and in this form of a tax holiday, a specific sector of the economy.

What John Tory and the Ontario PC caucus have suggested is that we need to lower the overall tax burden. Slightly after Dalton McGuinty was elected, he increased the business tax rate so that now Ontario has the highest burden of taxes in all of North America on new business investment. Roger Martin—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Some of my colleagues are heckling me, and I'll say back that Roger Martin, the dean of the Rotman School of Management, said, "In Ontario, we still have one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world." And Roger Martin, at a recent economic summit that Mr. Tory, Mr. Chudleigh, Norm Miller and I hosted, said that we have one of the dumbest tax structures on the face of the planet. So we certainly hope that the McGuinty government will take our advice and lower the overall tax burden on the economy on businesses so that they can reinvest in our province.

When you see some 220,000 well—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the government members that the opposition parties were respectful as the Minister of Finance delivered his address, and I would ask that that same respect be afforded to the opposition members. Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'll continue. I appreciate that.

Roger Martin did indicate that taxes are among the highest in the world on business investment in Ontario. Ontario maintains the highest tax burden in Canada at 34.8%. And let's not forget that once taking office, Dalton McGuinty increased those taxes dramatically on businesses, and on working families and seniors in the province of Ontario. So what we suggest is to lower that tax burden, encourage businesses to invest to create real, well-paying jobs here in the Ontario economy, so that our talented young people—who, incidentally, left in record

numbers in 2007 to go to other provinces—to actually make their fortunes here and expand businesses and start up their own. We also believe that their energy policy has chased out significant jobs from the province of Ontario—now among the highest rates of energy costs compared to our competing provinces and states. No doubt the runaway spending increases of the McGuinty government, which would make Bob Rae blush, are also a disincentive to new business investment in this province, and that is why, while Dalton McGuinty will try to boast about jobs being created in the province, about half of them have been created in the government, many of which were created in the Premier's office, or those offices of his ministers, including a brand new ministry that won't create one new well-paying manufacturing job in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses? The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Every day it seems we come into this Legislature, whether it was before the summer recess or now, and hear of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs that have been lost; jobs across this province that people have relied upon for themselves and their families, jobs that I am afraid, once lost, may never return. We hear from them, and today we have a government response. I have to tell you that I am somewhat perplexed. In the fashion of this place, of course the minister stands up to speak and the minister tells us how wonderful he or she thinks their new policy is going to be. At the same time, the opposition parties are handed a copy of the bill and a compendium, and of course we have to scramble to try to read it. But in reading it, I want to contrast what the minister has to say with what the compendium has to say, because they appear very much to me to be at odds.

The minister stated: "Qualifying companies could be eligible to receive a refund of Ontario corporate income tax for each of their first 10 taxation years. The refund would be equal to the amount of income tax and corporate minimum tax paid by the qualifying corporation under the Corporations Tax Act and the Taxation Act, 2007."

I would like to contrast that with what the compendium says, because it seems to me that although it's not antithetical, it is very, very different. It says on the first page of the compendium: "A refund would only be made to the extent the corporation has complied with its continuing obligation to pay its corporate income tax for the year and any corporate minimum tax."

Now, it seems to me that that is not exactly the same as what the minister is trying to put forward. So I read more carefully into the compendium, trying to understand what in fact this bill says, and of course all I have is a whole bunch of gobbledygook. I challenge the minister to tell me or anybody watching the television what this means: "If the corporation's income for the taxation year under the Income Tax Act (Canada) is greater than zero, all or substantially all of its gross revenue for the year would have to be from one or more eligible commercialization businesses and all or substantially all amounts

received or receivable by it on the disposition of capital property would have to be from the disposition of capital property in the ordinary course of an eligible commercialization business.”

That’s all one sentence, and that’s supposed to tell us what this bill is about. This bill is not about a whole lot; it’s about the government trying to hide what is happening out there in industry. They are trying to hide what is happening in manufacturing. We have some very serious concerns about this bill, not withstanding that it is unreadable, not withstanding that it cannot be understood by ordinary mortals.

We have serious concerns about this bill and about the direction the Ontario government is heading on its commercialization of research. Ontario’s total investment in research and development lags behind the G7 average. So although somebody could stand up today and say, “Isn’t this a good thing that the Ontario government is doing today?” in fact, we are only doing it, or perhaps this minister is only doing it, because we are so far behind the G7 average.

It is the business sector in Ontario that has been underperforming, and perhaps that is why the minister is flush with his largesse here today, and we are lower in our business spending than any other place within the G7. This bill, if passed, would make everyday Ontarians pay for the R&D investment that businesses are not choosing to make in this province. I don’t know why they are not choosing to make it, but this bill will put the shoulder and the responsibility on the ordinary taxpayer, who will now pay for those businesses to do what I would suppose they should have been doing all along. And the taxpayers are going to have to ask the question: Why should they be providing this cross subsidy?

1530

After the bill, not only will businesses get university research at a discount, they will also get a break on their corporate taxes. You know, that’s the problem we have here. We are going to ask that universities, colleges, places of higher education, do the research. Then we are going to say that the Ontario taxpayer is going to subsidize that so that the businesses can make money. I am all in favour of research and I am all in favour of new jobs, but I wonder why this minister is putting the bill forward in this way that is going to cause ordinary taxpayers to foot the bill. I think there are better ways of doing it. He should find out about them and change the bill to accomplish that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LAKE SIMCOE PROTECTION ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA PROTECTION DU LAC SIMCOE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 22, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An

Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of water quality trading / *Projet de loi 99, Loi visant à protéger et à rétablir la santé écologique du bassin hydrographique du lac Simcoe et à modifier la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l’Ontario en ce qui concerne un système d’échange axé sur la qualité de l’eau.*

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I’m pleased to be able to join the debate on second reading of Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. This is the government’s latest attempt to present itself as a defender of Lake Simcoe without actually spending any money to help clean up the lake.

Before I discuss any of the provisions of the bill, I have one question for the government: Why do you continue to refuse to fund a cleanup for the lake? Your last budget did not provide any funding, this bill will not provide any, and we have no guarantee you will provide any funding in the future. In fact, there is reference throughout the bill to framework legislation. Is this bill simply a way for the Liberals to appear to be keeping a promise without actually doing anything? It reminds me of the status of the artist act, a promise made prior to the previous election, and then, throughout the time of office, not actually doing anything and finally passing, quite frankly, a meaningless act that allowed you to suggest you were keeping a promise.

If you wanted to help the lake, you could fund projects directly from the Ministry of the Natural Resources, which, by the way, is the historical lead ministry involved in the studies and projects that have been funded over the last many decades on Lake Simcoe, or certainly, the Ministry of the Environment as one of the ministries that is a partner in the LSEMS program. Or you could help Lake Simcoe municipalities with infrastructure funding for sewers and storm sewers, eliminating that source of runoff that goes into the lake. You could give money to the conservation authority to rejuvenate streams and their banks as well as protect wetlands.

The conservation authority already knows what needs to be done. In 2006, the authority completed an exhaustive comprehensive study with an estimate of the funding that was needed. To implement best management practices to accommodate then-current approved growth would cost \$163 million. The funding at the time was \$1.1 million. I’m not suggesting that you need to write a cheque for \$163 million, but you could start by funding projects that help the lake. What is needed is money, not new legislation or more bureaucracy.

So who understands that money is needed? Well, the federal Conservatives do. Unlike the McGuinty Liberal government, the federal government has actually put up cash for the lake. They created a \$30-million cleanup fund—a federal first, I might add—they established ecosystem protection from invasive species, they banned waste dumping, and they banned phosphates in detergent. My friend Peter Van Loan made some specific announcements less than a month ago. In my own riding,

the federal Conservatives will spend \$48,000 for the Maskinonge River adopt-a-watershed project; \$36,000 for the phosphorus-efficient agriculture for Lake Simcoe watershed project, and \$100,000 for the management and control of atmospheric sources of phosphorus to Lake Simcoe; \$70,000 for the Zephyr Creek and tributaries habitat restoration water quality improvement project.

These are only three of 36 projects worth \$1.9 million in 2008 alone that will help clean up Lake Simcoe. I might add that it's important to look at the fact that these sometimes are relatively small amounts of money, but they demonstrate the importance of the community understanding the value of some of these projects. The most expensive one listed is \$100,000 out of \$30 million, but it's the old story about adding up. Those individual projects all add up. With partners, these projects will put \$5 million towards the lake cleanup.

Another one announced in my riding, the Keswick storm water management study in my hometown of Georgina, will retrofit existing storm water control ponds and build new ponds to improve water quality.

These initiatives, I should add also, are in many cases pioneered, quite frankly, by the real science and research that has been done over the years by the conservation authority. These are real, tangible funding announcements.

The federal Conservatives are spending money and taking action to help the lake. Sadly, this bill that we are debating here does not provide any money for specific projects. I congratulate Peter Van Loan in my riding of York-Simcoe for fighting for this funding and achieving results. I congratulate Patrick Brown, member of Parliament for Barrie, for achieving funding of \$60,000 for Sophia Creek in his riding. The goal of this project is to improve the water quality of Sophia Creek that drains into Lake Simcoe by removing accumulated sediment and stabilizing the creek banks to reduce nutrient and sediment loading.

In the city of Barrie, \$315,000 will be spent on the Hotchkiss Creek outlet to Kempenfelt Bay to increase aquatic habitat, improve water quality, increase flow conveyance and enhance passive parkland.

Kidd's Creek erosion control will benefit from almost \$80,000 in federal funding, which will enhance aquatic habitat by improving the quality of storm runoff that drains from the creek into Lake Simcoe. I am very glad that Patrick Brown has achieved these results for his constituents in Barrie. Helping clean up the water that flows into the lake from his community will help everyone around the lake.

Bruce Stanton, MP for Simcoe North, announced federal funding for the Kitchener Park naturalization project; \$30,000 will be spent to reduce phosphorus inputs into the lake by planting a shoreline buffer strip to discourage geese from entering the park area. The new 10-metre-wide shoreline plantings will create a filtering system for the runoff from the park to the lake and will stabilize the shoreline to reduce erosion.

Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MP Barry Devolin announced \$72,000 in funding for Lake Simcoe cleanups in Brock township and Kawartha Lakes.

These are all examples of the action that the federal MPs have taken for funding projects that will benefit Lake Simcoe. They did not wait around, and the federal Conservatives did not wait around to set up a plan or a committee before they took action.

The Ontario PC Party also knew that that was what was needed for Lake Simcoe. We had a 12-point plan for the lake before the last election: to invest \$12 million over the next two years, matching the support of the federal government, to support a Lake Simcoe action fund to speed up the cleanup of Lake Simcoe; to develop a new governance structure for the lake, working with the stakeholders; to create a Lake Simcoe charter; to increase and streamline funding for water and waste water infrastructure for projects impacting Lake Simcoe and across the province; to end the dumping of primary sewage into our lake; to hire more conservation officers to protect the lake and rebuild the Ministry of Natural Resources so it can better maintain the lake's health; conserve more green space with a land conservation challenge fund in areas like Lake Simcoe; and invest in better GO train service through the Lake Simcoe area to reduce pollution, smog and the impact of climate change, which all threaten the health of the lake.

1540

You will notice that our first point was to provide funds. I'm amazed that this government doesn't seem to understand this. So what is the government proposing to do? Well, it's writing a law to develop a plan. It will require the Ministry of the Environment to file an annual report; it will appoint a hearing officer; it will set up one committee; it will set up a second committee; it will make agencies and municipalities responsible for doing various things. But what will the Ontario government do that will have real effect? The actions that are necessary to take are well known. The conservation authority has told you what they are. Lake Simcoe needs a dedicated revenue stream. Every year that this government fails to provide the appropriate funding, the problem gets worse and worse.

Lake Simcoe needs a provincial government that is willing to provide real leadership. It does not need more studies or plans or bureaucratic reorganization. At one time, the conservation authority only had authority over half the lake, which might seem very surprising, but that is actually the case. It was the PC government that changed the legislation, which put the entire lake under its purview.

The conservation authority over many years coordinated the Lake Simcoe environmental management strategy system. This was a system that allowed the various levels of government to participate in the conservation authority. There were four, and then five, ministries that were involved as well as the regions of York and Durham, the county of Simcoe and the various municipalities.

I think that in this piece of legislation the complexity of all of the municipalities and levels of government have been overlooked, but through the LSEMS program, the

conservation authority was able to research the issues that we are looking at today, and they have been researched for some years. The conservation authority as well as the Ministry of Natural Resources have the expertise and the knowledge to provide the leadership to protect the lake for years. I note that some of the people who have been appointed to this committee that the bill purports to have, in fact, are people with as much as 30 years' experience with the Ministry of Natural Resources, doing exactly that—studying the lake. So I think the point is that we have the expertise. We simply need to ask them. When you receive their advice, you should take action immediately.

An example of the conservation authority is that it has carried out more than 600 remedial projects to lower the phosphorus loads entering into Lake Simcoe, yet when Minister Gerretsen was Minister of Municipal Affairs, he once headed a plan to increase phosphorus levels in the lake. I questioned him in this House two years ago about his ministry's intergovernmental action plan to assist in planning development in Simcoe county. As part of this, the government paid the Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority \$1.5 million to develop the framework that provided advice on development plans and their impact on Lake Simcoe. Despite the conservation authority's advice, the IGAP process recommended a strategy for development that would allow the levels of phosphorus flowing into Lake Simcoe to actually increase, even though the authority said that phosphorus levels in the lake are a problem. The minister would not answer the question with a commitment to halt phosphorus. It was probably not part of a plan or the result of lengthy discussions of a committee, another example of lack of action.

The minister's statements yesterday constantly referred to possible actions. He spoke of his proposed plan and suggested public consultation. In fact, he provided a litany of facts about the importance of the lake, the number of rivers and islands. He told us of all the stakeholders living around or even in the lake. He spoke of stewardship opportunities. I assume that this means other people or groups doing those things that the provincial government should be doing.

Perhaps the McGuinty Liberal government should look upon this lake as its own stewardship opportunity. Instead of widening and deepening the bureaucracy that governs the lake and its people, start taking action. Start printing up big cheques. If you want to come to my riding and get all the credit, I would be happy to see you come.

Since you are determined to move forward with this bill in place of immediate action, I call on the government at this time to hold full public hearings in my riding and the ridings of the other Lake Simcoe watershed members. I want you to come and hear the constituents and all of the advocates who have worked so hard to protect the lake.

There are so many groups around the lake that have come together, that have put in countless, countless hours

to advocate, to promote, to teach people—their neighbours and others in the watershed—of the value of this lake. It would seem to me that in the face of all of their work, it is only appropriate that hearings be held, which would allow them to comment on the proposals that are in this bill.

One of the messages that I certainly take from their work is the sense of urgency that those of us who live around the lake recognize. And so, for you to offer a bill that essentially offers no particular set of actions, other than committees and meetings and things like that—we want to see action. We want to see the kinds of things that the best science has demonstrated would work well in our community. We want you to look at the work that has been done over the last 50 years on the lake. We want you to recognize the kind of world-class science that has been done on this lake and move forward with action. That's really what we were hoping for in this bill.

To call it the Lake Simcoe Protection Act is not demonstrated by the content of this bill. It needs to be accompanied by very aggressive funding and aggressive consultation, looking at all of the competing jurisdictions that exist within this watershed. Even as you yourselves have laid upon this same area so many pieces of legislation—you have the greenbelt, you have the growth plan, you have source water protection, you have nutrient management, and on top of that you have put the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

This will take a long time to sort out, the jurisdictional issues that accompany any new piece of legislation, and all of that time is time wasted, as things such as the erosion on streams, the question of retrofitting and stormwater management—those are issues that require the cheques today. That's really the issue that I feel the most strongly about, that you need to take action more than this bill appears to suggest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to make a few comments on the remarks of the member for York-Simcoe, who has some real insights, we would all know, into the challenges facing Lake Simcoe because of course parts of the shoreline, some 100 or so kilometres of the shoreline, are in her riding, which is my understanding, anyways. That's something that was raised yesterday: Significant portions of this lake are in the member's riding.

1550

I think it's very, very important that the government take the time to hear not only the criticisms, but the suggestions and particularly the recommendations around process that the member brings to the table. She raised a number of extremely important issues that I think need to be acknowledged and moved on by the government, particularly the ones that speak to engaging those community activists who have already been involved for so many years in the issues surrounding the decline of Lake Simcoe. We know from yesterday's debate and again from today's debate that there are many engaged citi-

zens' groups that are involved. A couple of them were here in the gallery yesterday when the bill was being introduced. But I think they would very much like—actually, I would go so far as to say it behooves the government to undertake hearings on this bill in the area of Lake Simcoe. I think the member herself, as well as the other members who represent areas close to Lake Simcoe, would easily be able to recommend and suggest an appropriate location for those public hearings to take place in.

It seems to me that with that much interest in engagement—the very fact that the bill exists is very much due to the work of this member as well as the work of the member from Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop. But really they got that energy, they got that impetus, from their constituents who are so engaged in this fight to reclaim the lake.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It gives me great pleasure to enter this debate. I will be speaking a little more fully later on the subject, but I feel that it's extremely important to clarify our government's position in light of the member for York Simcoe's remarks.

Of course the Lake Simcoe protection plan is being supported by a \$20-million investment that will target protection measures, scientific research and on-farm stewardship activities. This is in addition to the very recent announcement through the Investing in Ontario Act. I know that York region, as an example, received some \$53 million for infrastructure projects. They can use that for capital projects, sewage treatment plants—any type of amelioration that they might consider a priority for them to engage in.

I would also like to remind the member for York Simcoe that the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority has applauded the province of Ontario for its leadership in developing a proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act. Of course, they have been involved for many, many years. In fact, I remember through the 1990s the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority coming to regional council and requesting grants from us. I would like to ask the member for York–Simcoe, when her government had eight years' opportunity to take action on Lake Simcoe, precisely what financial actions they took during that time.

In terms of community consultation, there has been considerable consultation. I personally attended the consultation on this act on April 23, 2008, in Newmarket. It was extremely well attended. The community activists were there, the people involved in the health of Lake Simcoe for the last 20 years were all there, and they applauded the plan.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise in support of the comments made by my colleague from York–Simcoe, who obviously, by the content of her speech, knows this bill inside and out, the initiatives that are behind it and

the history that had happened before the bill was introduced here in the Ontario Legislature. I think she made some very wise calls. Obviously, when you're moving in this type of direction, we need to make sure that these decisions are based on science: on the environmental science, on the biology of the area, the plants and the animal and fish life in the lake itself. It seems very clear.

Sadly, in its approach, what the McGuinty government has done in these types of initiatives is employ political science instead of environmental science. We all remember the Greenbelt Act, for example, where Dalton McGuinty basically drew lines on a map, coloured it in green and said, "Presto, there is the greenbelt." It was not based on science. We saw as a result of that some farms that were split right in half: half in the greenbelt, half outside of the greenbelt. We saw pristine, sensitive environmental areas that were excluded from the greenbelt, while areas that would never be viable, quality farmland were frozen in communities like Grimsby, inside the greenbelt.

Preposterously, there is even a piece of land in Grimsby that has the services under the ground today. It is already hooked up for water and sewer and for expansion, but the McGuinty government used political science and put that inside the greenbelt, so the taxpayers' investment is completely lost. If they had sat down with Mayor Bentley and the officials of the town of Grimsby, they could have told them where the environmentally sensitive lands were, and the high-quality farmland, and where they were not, and we would have had a better outcome.

My colleague from York–Simcoe raises some similar concerns, that for this to go ahead, it has to be based clearly on science and on extensive local consultation. I do hope my colleagues on the government side will listen to this member's valuable advice.

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

M. Gilles Bisson: Je pense que, quand on voit de la législation comme ça qui arrive de par cette Assemblée, cela nous indique des fois que le processus peut marcher. Comme ma collègue la députée M^{me} Horwath a dit, ce projet de loi vient directement des efforts des membres locaux qui ont travaillé longtemps avec leurs communautés pour trouver la réponse à un problème qui est franchement assez sérieux non seulement pour la communauté d'où ils viennent, mais qui est un problème qu'on trouve à travers la province.

Un point que je veux faire c'est qu'on sait que le lac Simcoe était affecté avec des années, parce que le développement qui est arrivé aux environs du lac et même plus loin a affecté la qualité de l'eau dans ce lac. Il y a aussi toute la question de tous les bateaux qui amènent des fois des organismes dans le lac, ce qui possiblement—pas possiblement, on le sait—devient très problématique pour le lac lui-même.

Ce qu'on réalise dans cette législature aujourd'hui, c'est qu'on a besoin de trouver des règles qui font du bon sens, qui font la contrebalance entre le développement et

la nécessité de protéger l'environnement local. Donc, le projet de loi essaie d'aller dans cette direction.

Généralement, je suis d'accord avec le projet de loi. Il y a certains points dont je pense qu'on va avoir besoin de parler un peu plus en détail une fois qu'on arrive au comité, et on va avoir l'opportunité de faire cela dans ce temps-là.

Mais le point que je veux faire, c'est qu'on aura besoin, possiblement, d'avoir un projet de loi qui regarde d'autres lacs et d'autres endroits de la province de l'Ontario qui ont les mêmes problèmes, parce que cela n'existe pas seulement au lac Simcoe; ça existe, par exemple, à Sudbury, le lac qui est directement à Sudbury, et autres où on a les mêmes problématiques. On pourrait possiblement apprendre, à travers ce processus, quelque chose qu'on pourrait mettre en place pour aider à protéger d'autres lacs à travers cette province qui se trouvent en danger avec tout le développement dans leur voisinage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I will return to the member for York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to just respond to a couple of the comments that have been made.

I recognize that in the bill the suggestion is there that there would be \$20 million—spread, by the way, over four years. The point is that, because of the nature of this problem, it gets worse and worse in terms of the lake and the pressures of growth, so people are looking for some kind of demonstration that there is a very definite plan and money attached to that to be able to move forward. Certainly, that was the intent of my comments, that that's the kind of thing that is necessary.

I think the other thing that is important to recognize is the complexity of this particular area. It is under significant pressure. It's one of the fastest-growing areas in the province. As I mentioned in my comments, it's also got a very complex area of jurisdiction. So I think the government has to, in its legislation, not only be very clear about a fiscal plan to go along with this piece of legislation, but something that is going to become a very clear direction for the decision-makers at the local level as well, because it's frankly something that the government is injecting itself into.

1600

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on the record about Bill 99, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. Some of you will know that my colleague Peter Tabuns, the member for Toronto-Danforth, is our environment critic and he laid out a number of issues in his leadoff speech yesterday. But I think this is an important bill and one that I feel it's necessary to put some remarks on the record about myself. I believe that this is the thin edge of the wedge when it comes to finding ways to protect natural areas that are at risk of huge impacts from climate change. So if we get this bill right, just as it is a stepping

stone from other things that have occurred in the past in this province, we can then replicate the success and use it in other locations around the province.

It's interesting, because unfortunately there are people who have looked at this legislation, people who have been consulted in the process of trying to save this lake for decades now, but there are concerns that are arising that the bill has its challenges in terms of meeting that very high test of actually being able to turn around the direction that Lake Simcoe is going in. That's why I thought it was important to make a few comments, because unfortunately the sense that I'm getting from several people is that instead of this bill being giant steps, big leaps forward, in fact it's pin steps, little baby steps forward. That's really not good enough for a lake that is extremely threatened at this point in time.

I say that because I do believe that if the government takes the time to do the public hearings, and hears back in specifics from people who have been so long engaged in this battle to save Lake Simcoe, it will be able to improve this legislation and expand it from baby steps into giant steps so that we will end up at the end of the process with a bill that will do everything that it purports to do and then can be used as a model in other locations across the province.

It's interesting to know that there have been so many community organizations and groups that have been engaged in the process of raising the issue of the decline of Lake Simcoe with local politicians, with provincial politicians, and that's where we end up, here with this bill. It's pretty much the same thing that happens in most communities on major environmental fights. It's the community people who really see change happening day in and day out. They're the ones who are active, mostly on environmental issues, oftentimes on other issues as well, and they're our canaries who, by calling us or by sending e-mails to us or by going to public meetings, raising the issues, set off the alarm bells. They're the ones who say, "There's a problem here and somebody had better start paying attention." Unfortunately, it sometimes takes quite a long time before we actually pay attention.

In this case, I think it's a classic case where the lake is in serious trouble right now and, had there been some action prior to today—again, this is one of the criticisms of the bill, and it was raised by the member for York-Simcoe, that the bill itself, as it stands, may not even be taking any action, which is problematic.

Nonetheless, if we start listening to these voices in our community, these people who are passionately engaged in environmental issues, much more early on in the process, then we have, first of all, a much better chance of trying to reverse some of these effects. But also, I believe that we can halt any further degradation and end up having to spend a great deal less in terms of the financial cost of cleaning up some of these messes.

I come from a community where we have had significant environmental problems and challenges, but also significant environmental victories. I think only of the

old Lax properties in the north end of Hamilton. It was literally a dump land, and in the early 1990s the government of the day at the time made a huge investment in cleaning up a significant brownfield site, a huge toxic site. They invested in the cleanup and then the city partnered. Now, that whole area is really the jewel of Hamilton in terms of not only environmental reconstitution, if you will, but also in terms of being a beautiful waterfront for the people of Hamilton.

It involved all kinds of things, not only environmental cleanup in terms of the brownfield site itself, but also taking the shoreline, the waterline, taking what used to be a marsh area and regenerating it back to what it used to be in terms of its function in the broader watershed. We took a place in Hamilton that needed so desperately to be rejuvenated, and we did that. The job is not done yet, but we took it back from being a place that was pretty much not functioning as it was supposed to be in terms of the biodiversity in the watershed there, and we've begun to reverse the trend completely.

Why has that been the result? It's been the result because of the numbers of active participants in the project. So yes, the city and the province of the day, but also the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Hamilton regional conservation authority, which by the way has got a big anniversary coming in about a week or so that we'll be celebrating very soon, the Bay Area Restoration Council, Environment Hamilton, the Hamilton Waterfront Trust—there have been a number of organizations that have worked very hard in bringing the bay back to the people in Hamilton.

I know that this kind of work can be very, very rewarding, and I know that it is possible to make huge gains and make an amazing difference in terms of reversing some of the trends that we've watched happen over the years that have eroded the quality of Lake Simcoe.

There are specific pieces of this particular bill that we think need to be strengthened. I'm going to speak to them a little bit, but I think what's important to say is that the bill itself is something that—in principle, everyone here would agree it's important to bring something forward to begin to protect Lake Simcoe. Where we need to really spend some time is on those pieces where there's an identification that either more can be done or things can be done differently to make sure that we're not mired down and we can actually get things happening very quickly and that the bill itself is broad enough that we don't inadvertently pass something thinking, "Oh, phew, we've saved Lake Simcoe. The whole thing's over. Our job's done," only to find out within a year or two that in fact there are pieces there that need to be put in place that were not accomplished in this bill.

Yesterday, when my colleague spoke about the bill, he laid out a number of issues that New Democrats think need to be addressed. A big part of the analysis that he put on the table is that it's not just a matter of the lake itself and its watershed areas. In fact, I think it was the member from Peterborough on the government side who was talking about his own community and how many

pieces of actual watershed even travel eventually into the whole Lake Simcoe area and/or how his own area can possibly be positively affected by doing the right thing in this bill in terms of particularly, hopefully, some of the amendments that we would like to see.

So a big part of the issue that we raised yesterday was around putting policies in that are designated specifically to protect, improve and restore the watershed's key natural features and functions and to ensure that natural forest and wetland cover enhance Lake Simcoe's water quality and watershed's biodiversity. Basically, the idea is that it's not good enough to just deal with the very adjacent areas but that the entire land use planning system in and around the Lake Simcoe area needs to be part of the solution here. It cannot be a narrow focus; it needs to be quite a broad focus.

Another issue that was raised, and that I agree on, is that the policies and the plan itself should be applying not only to the watershed but also to the adjacent areas. My critic did mention specifically the area on the west side of the lake where development pressures appear to be the greatest and also where the watershed is physically the narrowest. It's not possible in anybody's imagination to restore the lake eventually because we have to basically restrict the uses. That's the bottom line. The pressure on the lake is there because of increased development, because of increased runoff, because of increase as a result of phosphorus levels. There are significant people activities that are impacting on the lake, so it's not possible at all to restore the lake without making sure that the entire watershed area is looked at. The plan has to not only be the Lake Simcoe area but the Georgian Bay-Lake Simcoe source protection region also has to be expanded to be that entire piece. The bottom line is that there are multiple impacts from many different sources and we have to identify those and act proactively on all of them if we're truly going to save the lake, if we're truly going to reverse the negative impacts that have happened over the decades.

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There's also an interesting kind of concern about definitions and about wording within the bill. The bill distinguishes between two phrases, one being "policies" and the other being "designated policies." There is some concern that designated policies are the policies that are usually conformed to by land use planning processes. So if there's a designated policy, if you're doing a rezoning or if you're doing any kind of land use plan or regional plan, these kinds of plans have to be in step with designated policies. But the bill also speaks to other environmental policies without the word "designated" in front of them that raise some questions around this being a loophole. If it's not a designated policy, if it's simply an environmental policy or simply another kind of policy, then does that mean that developers can use that uncertain language as a loophole to have zoning changes that are not going to be consistent with the idea of protecting Lake Simcoe?

The bill also includes provisions particular to subsection 5(2) that allow policies under this plan to override

municipal standards. For instance, if municipalities have official plans in place, they have zoning bylaws—and within these documents they have existing policies or existing standards that are more restrictive or more challenging in terms of challenging development and not allowing development to go forward or restricting the development significantly—and those land use plans or those zoning bylaws are quite restrictive compared to what happens in this act or what happens in the eventual plan, unfortunately, the way the bill reads, the more restrictive policies are not in force; in fact, it's the plan itself and the act that supersede.

We've seen this problem already in the province of Ontario just recently when this government decided that when they brought in their pesticide bill, instead of respecting the municipalities that have already put in place pesticide legislation and bylaws at the local level, instead of respecting their wishes and allowing them to have a higher standard in those municipalities, where they were leaders in terms of being proactive around the banning of pesticides, this government decided no, it wasn't up to the municipalities to make those decisions. Municipalities would get patted on the head and told, "Even though you've gone further and even though you have a more restrictive regime, we, the province, are going to set a ceiling here whereby you cannot have better or more restrictive or more stringent pesticide bylaws." And that's unfortunate. It's unfortunate in terms of disrespecting municipalities, which is totally contrary to the spin of this government all the time, which says, "Oh, we're full partners with municipalities. We see them as an equal partner going forward in everything we do." And we all just know that's a spin and it's reflected every time they bring forward legislation like pesticide legislation and like this, where it says very clearly that if the municipalities have a stronger standard, if they're going further, then their wisdom and the community participation that they usually have to undertake to get to that piece of wisdom, to get to that bylaw, to get to that zoning bylaw, can all go by the wayside, and that in fact the government of Ontario knows better than what the municipalities know and what the activists know, those who have usually been very active in bringing those policies forward.

That's a significant problem, and I would really expect that the government, when they hear the comments at the public hearings on this bill—I think this is somewhere where they need to rethink. I really do respectfully believe that the government needs to rethink overtaking municipal insight and municipal perspective on these kinds of issues, particularly with the Lake Simcoe act.

As I said earlier, this particular problem wouldn't even be at this table if it wasn't for the decades of activism that have taken place in those communities around Lake Simcoe. Yesterday there was mention many times of the Ladies of the Lake, who have been here as well. I know Garfield Dunlop—I'm just doing a plug for Garfield now—has got his Ladies of the Lake calendars for sale. I think they're 15 bucks a shot, so for anybody here who is

really interested in helping support that organization, which continues to provide insights and continues to do community work with those funds that they raise, that \$15 calendar, I think, is a good investment.

The last thing that I think is important and that I wanted to raise is that there's an issue around activity in the broader area. I guess what that means is, as we continue to identify the Lake Simcoe area as having potential for a higher population load, we have to acknowledge that that higher population load is going to also impact on Lake Simcoe. We need to rethink what we're doing, from the bigger-picture perspective, around loading population around that lake when we know that with the existing population that has grown so significantly over the last several years, we're already in trouble. Continuing to suggest that we have to continue to grow the population around the lake, I think, is really problematic. We need to start going in the opposite direction and really restricting the kinds of activities and the population growth directly around that lake.

The big point is that I think the bill, in terms of its general thrust and its goal or its aim, which is quite clear in its title, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act—I don't have the full title in front of me—is a laudable bill, a laudable goal. I think we can all look forward to having a final version that is completely supportable. I do believe there are improvements that need to be made. I think I've outlined most of those improvements that I would like to see. The issues of municipalities and their ability to have more stringent or more firm development restrictions or bylaws—whether it be the zoning bylaws or other kinds of bylaws—are particularly important.

I think clarifying the language is extremely, extremely important. We don't want to have any loopholes. Language is only one of those kinds of places where we find loopholes, and so making sure that there is no opportunity for developers to do the speculation thing, buying up land around the area—we know what they're like. They'll just put pressure and pressure and pressure, and they'll find any way that they can to tear down the intentions of the government and of all those people who have been involved in the process of protecting Lake Simcoe. We cannot let that happen. It would be an absolute tragedy.

I think there are things we need to do about ensuring that when the government takes this bill into the next phase, which is the committee phase, there is an understood obligation, or at least a commitment, to take that bill out to Lake Simcoe and to have the conversation; after second reading in committee, out at Lake Simcoe, to make it easy and to facilitate the opportunity of those community groups that have been so involved to have a say in what they would like to see in terms of possible amendments and improvements to the bill.

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So, yes, this is a good direction. It is what I would characterize as a baby step. We have the opportunity, the government has the opportunity, to expand that into a giant step, a giant leap forward in terms of protecting the

lake or in terms of actually reversing the degradation of the lake and making the ecosystem there and the watershed pristine.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and to follow the member from Hamilton Centre. I listened carefully to some of her comments. Some I'd agree with; some, I think, were a little overly harsh.

This process has the hallmark of potentially being one of those pieces of legislation where everybody plays their part in a proper way, and that is that the citizens have been actively engaged in the general area around the watershed. I think it's been a political issue that's drawn people's interest in a non-partisan way. I think the government has responded to that in a co-operative way. Most, if not all, of the comments I've heard from the opposition to date have been fairly constructive, and I think it's an attempt to make the bill even better.

So it's got all the hallmarks of a process that people like to see out of their government. The previous speaker talked about some experiences down in Hamilton. Cootes Paradise is an area that I know she'll be quite familiar with. Sometimes the environment surprises you. I was on the board of directors for the Royal Botanical Gardens when it was decided that we were going to restore Cootes Paradise. The scientists said it would take a very, very long time, and with a little bit of care and doing all the right things, we were able to bring that area back in a very, very short period of time.

I'm hoping to see the same thing happen with Lake Simcoe, and that's why I'm anxious that this process move forward. We need to get it to the committee stage; we obviously need to get public input on it from people. It's a process that I think has been really typified by asking people in the general area just what they think and trying to incorporate that into the legislation to the highest degree possible.

The funding is in place. We've announced \$850,000 already for early actions for that. Half a million of those dollars flowed to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. We've also got a pilot project going, on Phoslock, which removes phosphorus, and \$100,000 went to local environmental groups. So the funding is in place; everybody is—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Hamilton Centre gave a good talk there, a very practical presentation on issues environmental.

And to be practical, we do have to talk about money and funding for some of the good plans that we have been hearing about during this debate. We had an indication, by the parliamentary assistant, of a bit of money coming forward or having been spent, but we have to know, with respect to these good plans that are on the docket here, how will they'll be resourced, how we go beyond the planning stage or layering plans on top of plans, and how we go beyond just another pile of red tape and confusion and more forms to fill out.

We know that a number of volunteer groups have done an excellent job of raising money: We think of that famous calendar put out by the Ladies of the Lake. We do know that last February, the federal government pledged \$18 million dedicated to what's called a Lake Simcoe cleanup fund. Julia Munro and Garfield Dunlop know this program and have worked with the members on this program, and it's a program at this point that has identified \$30 million over five years dedicated to a federal Lake Simcoe cleanup fund to deal with phosphorus loading, to rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitat, to address the issue of sewage control, sewer overflows, storm water overflows. And much of that money, I'm sure, would be leveraged through municipal funding as well.

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I too want to thank the member from Hamilton Centre for her very thoughtful comments about Bill 99. I rise today as well to speak in support of Bill 99. I really wanted to take this opportunity to speak about this bill and how important it is not only to the citizens surrounding Lake Simcoe but to all of the province of Ontario. Bordering Lake Huron, you really have a sense of how important water quality is, and not only in the environmental sense but also in the financial impact when we look at how much we rely on the water to attract not only the fish and the natural wildlife but also the people coming to the area. Certainly we understand how delicate a balance it can often be.

When we work with our citizens, as it is being proposed in Bill 99, this can only make their community stronger. The McGuinty government has, time after time, brought forward good public policy that in fact strengthens our communities, and this is clearly demonstrated by Bill 99. I have not had the opportunity to see the Ladies of the Lake calendar, but I look forward to that. I know how many of my constituents volunteer a great deal of their time in order to ensure that Lake Huron remains strong.

I want to congratulate all the volunteers that work on making sure that Lake Simcoe will be restored to its natural heritage, and I congratulate all the volunteers. It takes so many, and it is a lifelong work. So I want to thank the member from Hamilton Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment. I recognize the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate and make comment on what has been said already. I look forward to having more to say about Bill 99, an important piece of legislation if in fact the government does support it and, as my colleague Ms. Munroe said earlier in the debate, actually comes to the table with financial support to do the things that the preamble of the bill states it wants to accomplish.

No one in this House—in fact, I don't know of anyone who would disagree with the stated intent of this legislation. What we will be watching very carefully, how-

ever, is whether or not this is yet more smokescreen for the government on the one hand to appear to be appeasing those who have environmental objectives and yet, on the other hand, to really do nothing. It seems that what we have here is really a plan to do some more planning, and that's not what we need. If the government is serious about the environment, about Lake Simcoe and the health of Lake Simcoe, then what the government will do is identify very quickly some specific projects which can be undertaken that will immediately affect the health of that lake and of the surrounding environment. That takes a financial commitment. It's easy for us to spend hours in this place debating what can or should be done. It's up to the government to show action by putting the financial resources to get the job done. I'll have much more to say about that in my comments further along the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Hamilton Centre has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I appreciate the comments of the members from Oakville, from Haldimand–Norfolk, from Huron–Bruce and from Newmarket–Aurora.

I thank the member from Oakville for mentioning Cootes Paradise, because in my head I kept thinking, “Princess Point,” and I couldn't get Cootes Paradise out, so I appreciate that. Of course you know that project well, and it has been an extremely important success, a piece in the whole waterfront reconstitution in Hamilton which has been fabulous.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk as well as the member for Newmarket–Aurora I think bring some urgency to the issue that is important. I appreciate their comments because I believe that it's been raised a number of times through the discussion that the time for action really is now. In fact, the time for action was probably years ago, not now. So while being careful to involve the community and make sure that we're in step with community activists and then the people who have owned the Lake Simcoe restoration issue for such a long time, we need to find proactive ways to make a significant difference, and to make it quickly.

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I also want to thank the member for Huron–Bruce, particularly for her comments around environmental activists in all communities and taking the issue of what's happening in Lake Simcoe and relating it to her own community around Lake Huron. I think she raises the important issue of what these bodies of water mean, not only to people who are living around that area or vacationing around that area, but just from the broader perspective of what they mean to all of the people of Ontario in terms of being an important part of our natural heritage as a province. That's extremely important as well.

The member from Oakville, I think, said that I was being a bit harsh, but really, sometimes you have to take a hard look at these things, look them right in the face and decide that they need to be improved. It's with that

courage of conviction that things actually change. Hopefully, we'll see the few changes that we need to make this bill as strong as it can be.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm very pleased to rise in support of Bill 99, an act to restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed. Over 350,000 people live in the Lake Simcoe watershed, many in northern York region and many in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. Lake Simcoe is extremely important to us. It provides clean drinking water for eight communities and it assimilates waste from some 15 sewage treatment plants. It encompasses some 23 municipalities. Agricultural production in the Lake Simcoe watershed generated close to \$300 million in 2006, and it is the largest lake in southern Ontario outside of the Great Lakes. As most of us in York region know, it is also the ice-fishing capital of North America.

It is, as many members have commented this afternoon, also a high-growth area of the province. According to Statistics Canada, the population in the watershed's municipalities grew by over 57,000 people between 2001 and 2006. Though the highest proportion of this growth was in Barrie, many of the other municipalities in northern York region also accounted for a large part of this growth.

Obviously, population growth places extra pressure on water supplies and land resources. New housing reduces forest cover and wildlife habitat. According to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the population of the Lake Simcoe watershed is expected to increase from 350,000 to more than 750,000 by the year 2031.

How did the lake get to its current state and why is it so stressed? It has been years of inaction by the previous provincial governments, most notably of course during the time of the late 1990s and the early part of this century when the Harris and then the Eves governments had every opportunity to do what we are doing now.

We've known about the problem since the early 1990s. As the medical officer of health for York region, I was regularly closing beaches along the southern shore of Lake Simcoe. We were well aware that we had high phosphorus loads. I'm sure most members in this House realize that phosphorus is one of the major problems related to ecosystem health. Too much of it causes plants in the lake to grow excessively, and when these plants eventually decay they use up a lot of the water's oxygen, leaving the lake's fish with less and less of the oxygen they need. The lake has had to be restocked since the lake no longer can support a naturally breeding cold-water fishery. Of course, phosphorus comes from septic tile beds, storm sewers, urban and agricultural runoff and even airborne particles.

We've also had a major issue with invasive species. Some of these examples that have been transported into Lake Simcoe are the rusty crayfish, the round goby and the zebra mussel. These invasive species disrupt the natural balance of the ecosystem. Climate change has

also influenced the state of Lake Simcoe. In fact, in 2001, the Canadian Ice Fishing Championships had to be cancelled.

I think it's important to acknowledge the very good work of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. They have been trying, in somewhat of a piecemeal fashion, as the member for York-Simcoe has alluded to, over the last 15 years to improve the health of the lake. In fact, since the 1990s, when there were some 100 tonnes of phosphorus that entered Lake Simcoe each year, the efforts of the conservation authority and municipalities have seen those levels drop to 67 tonnes by 2004.

However, this is clearly not enough, and this is the time for a comprehensive plan to improve the ecological health of Lake Simcoe. I'm so pleased to see that in fact the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority has applauded the province of Ontario for its leadership in developing a proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act. Of course, the staff of the LSRCA has been actively engaged in this process to date. They've attended public consultation opportunities, they've submitted comments on the discussion paper and they've co-chaired the provincial stakeholder advisory committee. They have provided provincial staff with all their scientific reports, documents and programs regarding their watershed-based protection and restoration programs—in fact, throughout their 55-year history. This is the kind of partnership that we think will be extremely valuable as we move forward.

But it is clear that there is now a need for provincial legislation. Lake Simcoe deserves provincial protection. Ontario is taking a major step to address the effects of more than 200 years of human activity that have had effects on Lake Simcoe's water quality and ecosystem. Legislation introduced would, if passed by the Legislature, require the province to develop a comprehensive plan to restore the lake's watershed and address the issue of phosphorus discharge, invasive species and challenges related to climate change. We're going to do this on a science-based approach, so that we ensure that development and activities around the lake are environmentally sustainable. And of course, we are committing \$20 million in an investment to target protection measures, scientific research and on-farm stewardship activities.

This type of scientific approach includes developing indicators, monitoring, evaluating and communicating to the community the results of the progress that will be made. The LSRCA, the province of Ontario and Environment Canada operate monitoring sites and stations throughout the watershed where information is gathered to monitor its health. These monitoring stations measure precipitation, weather, temperature, quality and quantity of groundwater, quality and quantity of surface water, the fish in the lakes and tributaries that flow into Lake Simcoe, the organisms that live at the bottom of the lake and its tributaries, and the lead characteristics, including forested areas, hardened surfaces and streamside areas. This information is gathered through 12 precipitation and climate gauges throughout the watershed; 12 flow-monitoring stations; groundwater monitoring of 14 wells

at 11 sites; thermometers and waterways throughout the watershed; site visits; an advanced land classification system; seasonal inventories of fish and other aquatic life forms; 18 water quality stations within the tributaries; and 12 water quality monitoring stations on the lake. This shows the comprehensive and scientific nature of what we are attempting to do.

There has been considerable public consultation to date. I did attend the consultation on April 23, 2008, along with Minister Gerretsen and his parliamentary assistant, Kevin Flynn. This was an exceptionally well-attended and lively consultation session. Numerous views were brought to the table, and as this process continues with public hearings, no doubt we will hear some more good advice from the communities that know the lake the best. There was another consultation in Barrie, and the Chippewas of Georgina Island have been also been consulted.

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A particularly welcome endorsement came from Annabel Slaight, who in fact is co-founder of the Ladies of the Lake, of calendar fame, and what Annabel had to say was that Bill 99 is “another great step forward, particularly because it envisions residents of the watershed and government working hand in hand”—A full appreciation of our approach.

So, as we move forward with our plan, I'm confident that the residents in my riding, the people of northern York region, will see measurable improvements to the quality of the lake. Over the next few years, I hope that we will be able to return it to that type of pristine state that the first Europeans saw back in the 17th century. The Huron natives called their lake “Ouentironk,” which means “beautiful water.” We all feel it's beautiful now, but now we know that it can be even improved as we move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Are there any questions and comments?

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I heard some comments earlier about the canary in the coal mine. Of course, that was a popular adage reflecting back to the industrial age in the coal mines and what would happen with pollution. I don't believe we have too many canaries or coal mines in Ontario today, but I think what's clear is that we do have carp in the creek instead of canaries in the coal mine.

This piece of legislation is so similar to the gristmill that continually reams out more and more legislation from the other side. There are always many ways to address a problem and to solve a problem. An incentive-based approach is one way. My colleague from York-Simcoe was talking earlier about funds to address specific projects and clean up the carp in the creek. That's an incentive-based approach. Or you can have a punitive approach, and without fail and without doubt, the Liberal government today in Ontario believes in a punitive approach. They always default to a punitive method instead of this incentive-based approach.

I'd just like to make further mention—other people have mentioned it today and yesterday—about how the

federal government has come to the table, has stepped up to the plate about Lake Simcoe. They didn't spend days, weeks or months debating or crafting up legislation. They targeted \$30 million to cleanup projects. They didn't pass any new legislation; they used existing legislation to address the problem.

I think what that demonstrates to all of us is the real commitment of different governments to address a problem. Here we saw, on the federal side, action. What we see on the provincial side with this is more of the same, as my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora said, “smoke-screens.” I think in this case it's more of a silkscreen that we're getting. Just look at the burden, the silting in of legislation, the greenbelt, the Oak Ridges moraine, the Clean Water Act, the water resources act—on and on—the Nutrient Management Act. More and more legislation gets built up and built up, but with not even a plan. They haven't got the plan yet. We have 10 different pieces of legislation with hundreds of pages of regulations in each but no plan and no targeted investments.

When I heard the member from Oak Ridges earlier talk about the \$20-million investment, I was reminded very much of the investment that the Liberal government announced with their greenbelt legislation. Of course, the bulk of that went out to radio advertising to say how great the greenbelt plan was, but there was no targeted investment.

I think we have to look at what the consequences are of this piling on of legislation, one after the other after the other. Who is going to be able and how much money is it going to cost just to learn, just to understand the legislation that you have to go through to do anything in the Lake Simcoe area now? Whether you want to put a little addition on your house or put a barn up for your animals, you'll have to go through all these pieces of legislation, and you're not even going to know which one applies until you get to them all to find out which one is most restrictive, and you're still going to have to find somebody who will make a decision about which one applies.

This Liberal government is very adept, very skilful at creating red tape, at creating regulations. But what the people of Ontario want and what the people of Ontario expect is action and results, not just more smokescreens. This government is creating burdens, creating false expectations, and they are deceiving the people of Ontario with this sort of legislation. It's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to be careful with the language he's using and to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw that. But so often, we see the same wording and same phrases, the same methodology in these pieces of legislation. We see the exact phrases and the exact same consequences people talked about in the protection of Lake Simcoe.

I would like to read just a couple of things in this piece of legislation. First off, we're going to hire another significant number of inspectors, and these inspectors will be able to have greater powers than our police services.

They have the power of warrantless entry into your properties for a host of indications. Is warrantless entry going to protect the fish in Lake Simcoe? Is it going to protect the water quality that I've heard talked about? These are the same methods that were employed with the Clean Water Act and a number of others.

But there's also this belief from the McGuinty Liberal government that private individuals ought to carry the full expense and burden of government policy, that the government doesn't need to protect the environment; they'll put the burden on private individuals. I'd like to just refer again to the legislation itself. On page 19, it says, “No costs, compensation or damages are owing or payable to any person and no remedy, including but not limited to a remedy in contract, restitution, tort or trust, is available to any person in connection with anything referred to” in this legislation.

Changing policies, changing the rules of the game and then restricting, preventing, refusing remedy: This is not acceptable. The role of government is not to place hardships and burdens on individuals in advancement of public policy. This is again the punitive approach of the Liberal government—punitive, and a hammer. Every problem is a nail, and they wield the sledgehammer for those nails.

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I ask the Liberal government to be thoughtful. Let's think about incentive-based environmental legislation that will fund targeted projects, that will clean up our environment, clean up our lakes, but not cause hardship and injustice to the people of this province.

I think everybody would recognize it is not an individual who is to pay for this Liberal policy. It should be all people, not just one, and not fixing this problem in Lake Simcoe by buying some more radio advertising like they did with the greenbelt legislation. Let's clarify, let's streamline, let's remove these pieces of overlapping legislation. Let's get to the meat of the matter and let's start fixing the problems, not just trapping our residents in these nets of legislation that the Liberals are so adept at creating. Thank you very much.

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm certainly pleased to respond to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

In this day and age, you can't pick up a paper without reading concerns about food security, food safety, and environmental concerns. For a member to stand up in this House and talk about inspectors in the disparaging comments that were made—quite frankly, I'm surprised. And when we hear comments made about no consultation, you know, “Just go in and do it,” quite frankly, we've seen that; we've lived through it. I just would remind the member that you don't have to look very far, even in the province of Ontario, to go back to that time, and there are still communities that are suffering through decisions that were made at that time, when we just went in and got it done and we weren't respectful of the needs

and the reasons we come forward with a regulatory framework in respect of that.

Quite frankly, I just could not let the comments go unnoticed. I really think that for this member to stand up and not be supportive of a piece of legislation that clearly—and if he is, then, my goodness, his comments are certainly not going to be reflected in how he will vote. I have certainly heard nothing here today that would lead me to believe that this member is going to be in support of this legislation that is community-driven and is action that they want to see taken today. So I think it's very unfortunate that we are not listening to the communities and acting on what direction the communities want to see today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to add my comments today to the members for York–Simcoe, Huron–Bruce, Oak Ridges–Markham and, of course, the final summation from the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I don't think I heard in his remarks anywhere that he wasn't supporting the legislation. What he was doing was drawing attention to a number of the shortfalls and the overregulation. I think he'll speak to that when he does rise, but I don't think I heard him anywhere say that he didn't support it, because I know the members on this side of the House do support it. What he was pointing out was the overregulation.

We hear this every day. I conducted a number of interviews over the last couple of weeks, and when we have small business people come in, they talk about overregulation, about how government bills and so on are affecting their small businesses, and this is another example of that. But in principle, we support Bill 99, and what we're doing is trying to point out the impact of overregulation and regulations when well-thought-out and well-meaning people bring forth legislation that can impact individuals. I live on Lake Huron as well; I share some of the lake with the member from Huron–Bruce, and also the St. Clair River. At the end of the day, we all want to have clean water and clean rivers and we want to have a habitat that our friends and family can enjoy for generations to come. I think what we need to do is always be cognizant of what overregulation can do if there's no recourse, like the member said—where something is overregulated and is a cost to the individual.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further questions and comments? I'll return to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just to clarify, I am fully supportive of not only protecting our environment, but also improving it. As I mentioned, there are many ways of fixing a problem: the incentive-based or the punitive-based. I thought that was pretty clear in my comments, but just for clarification, that's reiterated now. This piece of legislation relies heavily on the punitive aspect and nothing on the incentive-based aspect.

The member spoke about inspectors. We can hire more and more inspectors or we can target an investment

to actually do things. What's clear to me, and I think to most people, is that the Liberal government would like to hire more and more inspectors, and I think what's clearly happening is that we have a chief inspector over there whose name is Mr. Clouseau and they're going to hire more and more inspectors without bothering to solve the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have an agreement between both the government and the opposition to move the following unanimous consent motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins–James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion. Does the House consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 97(c), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' business: That Madame Gélinas and Mr. Kormos exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Kormos assumes ballot item 38 and Madame Gélinas assumes ballot 58; and that, notwithstanding standing order 97(g), notice be waived for ballot item 38.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bisson has made a motion with respect to private members' business. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I would like to put some issues on the record concerning Bill 99 and, on behalf of my constituents, challenge the government to put some traction to this legislation, so that it not become yet one more in a series of announcements that this government makes, leaving the perception of action and, in the trail of the legislation, leaving a great deal undone and yet one more broken promise along the way.

I want to start off by stating very clearly that I believe the government has created a serious problem for itself here and I look forward to finding out how the government is going to unravel the confusion that it's creating through the introduction and passage of Bill 99.

Section 1 of Bill 99 states as its purpose the following: "The purpose of this act is to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed." No one is going to argue with that purpose. We all support the objective.

1700

But it's interesting that we have another act in this province called the Conservation Authorities Act. Section 20 of the Conservation Authorities Act, which was passed many years ago, states the following, "The Conservation Authorities Act provides for the object of the authority which is 'to establish and undertake in the area over which it has jurisdiction a program designed to further conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil and minerals.'"

Section 21 of the act permits the authority to complete many activities to accomplish its objects including—and again I quote from the act—“study and investigate the watershed, and to determine a program whereby the natural resources of the watershed may be conserved, restored, developed and managed.”

Now, the challenge the government is going to have is that they have two pieces of legislation that overlap. We have the conservation authority, in this particular case the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, that has been empowered through the Conservation Authorities Act to in fact undertake the very objective that is set out in this new act, Bill 99, to do exactly the same, although Bill 99, interestingly enough, does not empower any particular agency to actually do the work. So the first order of responsibility that this government has is to clarify for the conservation authority where they fit in, and the conservation authority would be first in line to ask that question. I'm asking it on their behalf in the course of this debate.

I want to give credit to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for the good work that they have done over the years. I find it interesting that the member for Oak Ridges–Markham in her previous remarks went out of her way to talk about how Lake Simcoe had been so neglected over the previous years and of course, as usual, could not resist pointing the finger at the Mike Harris government—of which, by the way, I'm proud to have been a part. So, on the one hand, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham said that nothing had been done for Lake Simcoe, that had it not been for the McGuinty government that somehow this lake would be in serious trouble. She, as the medical officer of health, had to constantly close down beaches and so on and so forth. But in the next breath—and Hansard will show—the member, to her credit, commended the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for the successes of bringing back the health of Lake Simcoe.

The reason that there is measurable improvement in the health of Lake Simcoe is not because of action taken with a few months. This takes years to develop, and I'll tell you what happened. The reason is that the previous government provided the funding, the support and the resources to put in place those programs through the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and under their good management, so that there is the kind of improvement that we have today in Lake Simcoe.

Much needs to be done; there is no question. That's why I will be at the front of the line to say, we will support—I will support on behalf of my constituents—any measure that's going to take us the distance to ensure that not only Lake Simcoe but the entire watershed becomes resilient and that we have a responsibility, yes, as a Legislature, but the broader community, for its stewardship, and that is ultimately the objective.

But not only is there a conflict in terms of the Conservation Authorities Act and this proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Act of 2008; there are some other pieces of legislation that also come into conflict, and somehow the

government is going to have some difficulty. I will watch with great interest to see how the government is going to again deal with the overlapping responsibilities of several pieces of legislation that include, for example, the Oak Ridges Moraine Act, the greenbelt, the Places to Grow Act, and that also involve a plan, a growth plan, brought down by this government. It imposed a growth plan for the Golden Horseshoe and that plan, interestingly enough, a decree by the provincial government, imposes some pretty significant growth on the very region that we're discussing today.

It's also interesting that now what we have is a conflict—a tug of war, if I can put that it way—between the Ministry of the Environment, that will have the responsibility for overseeing this Lake Simcoe Protection Act, and another ministry, called the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, that has a responsibility for overseeing and managing the growth aspect of this government's legislation. How to deal with that is going to be up to the two ministers.

By the way, interestingly enough, I feel for Minister Gerretsen, who, in his previous life as a minister, was responsible for developing the growth targets and the growth objectives and had to do battle, if you will, with municipalities to say, “Oh, by the way, we know that when we were running for election, we said we're going to not impose or download responsibilities on municipalities, and we want municipalities to have their independence and have their say and participate in developing these programs. But as the minister now, I'm telling you that the province will tell you how much growth will take place within your municipalities” and, in this case, within the watershed. And in fact, he told them where it's going to take place.

Now that same minister is the Minister of the Environment, and he now brings forward this bill, which says to the general public—this is what the public is hearing. And by the way, that is what the new minister, in the new clothing of the environment minister, wants the public to perceive: that he is now the champion to hold off growth, to keep everything green and to make sure that all people hear are birds chirping. Yet he's the very minister who imposed the growth targets. It'll be interesting. It'll be interesting to see how now this new minister, reincarnated into the environment minister, is going to do battle with the new superminister, Mr. Smitherman, who now, as the minister responsible for public infrastructure renewal, finds himself on the other side of the coin. We'll be watching very carefully.

I want to make it very clear: As I said at the outset, I fully support the objective of this bill. Our responsibility as legislators, however, is to cut through the façade and to cut through what perhaps is a perception and help the public understand what is actually going on here.

1710

You and I know that when this bill was announced, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, the perception on the part of the onlookers was that this government was now taking a strong stand against growth and that all would be

well on the environment side. The reality is that a closer review of this bill shows that there is no depth whatsoever. There is no clarity to a plan—there is no plan. At best, this is a plan to plan and at worst, it's a plan for confusion because the stakeholders, be they the conservation authority, be they the municipalities, be they the regions involved and affected by this plan, have no idea what their role is going to be. I predict that it will be years before there is any unravelling here at all, and perhaps that's the plan of the government. Perhaps what the government is really trying to do here is to do nothing, to be seen as doing something, to spend as little as possible and hopefully, people will go away and not bother them with this.

But fortunately we do have stakeholders who for many years have been actually doing the work of bringing Lake Simcoe back to life, who take their work seriously, who have been implementing programs and conservation programs, who have been forming partnerships through municipalities and regions and who have been forming partnerships with the private sector, who have made major contributions through the Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation, where there are projects along the entire shoreline that are doing their part to bring Lake Simcoe back to life.

I have serious concern that this government has no intention whatsoever of getting serious about these projects, about putting in place practical projects that will have their impact in the short term.

The member from Oak Ridges makes reference to a \$20-million commitment. Anyone in the province of Ontario who hears the announcements by this government, be they for \$20 million, be they for \$30 billion, knows full well that those announcements mean nothing because what we don't see is the cash. We see the promises; we see a great deal of money actually spent on public relations, on advertising; we see a lot of effort being put into communication, but we see very little by way of substantive projects that actually improve the quality of life for people in this province.

What I believe, however, the government may not be bargaining on is that there are some very astute people who are watching what is happening with this legislation, who have expectations and who will be holding the government to account, and we'll be there with them. We won't let the government get away with yet one more dog-and-pony show, we won't accept spin over substance, which is really the track record of this government, and we won't allow them to smokescreen on this issue. We will hold them accountable, and what we expect is that the stakeholders in this watershed will be treated with respect by this government, that they will take the time to sit down with the conservation authority, with the municipalities and with the regions and work through the details of who does what, who will be responsible for what.

I want to close by saying this: A great deal of work, as I said before, has been done by the conservation authority. That work has to be incorporated into this plan. In fact we're going to move on with a new piece of legislation, we cannot lose the good work that's already been done by the conservation authority. We have the expertise; we have the professionals who understand this watershed and who know what has to be done. We call on the government to work with the conservation authority, to build on their work, and to empower them to carry on their responsibilities as they were empowered to do by the Conservation Authorities Act.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to add my comments to this debate. I look forward to hearing from the minister. In fact, I look forward to hearing from both ministers—Minister Smitherman with regard to the public infrastructure renewal aspect and the growth objectives and the growth challenges that this region has, and Minister Gerretsen as the environment minister. I'm very interested to see how they intend to balance what, on the surface and in reality, are really diametrically opposed pieces of legislation. I wish them well. It will be interesting to watch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments? Further debate? Are there any other members who would like to participate in this debate?

Mr. Gerretsen has moved second reading of Bill 99, An Act to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act in respect of water quality trading.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): To which committee shall the bill be referred? I recognize the member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Northern Development.

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1718.

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