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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 25 September 2008

Jeudi 25 septembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 September 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 septembre 2008

*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL INCLUSION
OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES SERVICES
ET SOUTIENS FAVORISANT
L'INCLUSION SOCIALE DES PERSONNES
AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE
INTELLECTUELLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 24, 2008, on the motion for third reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes / *Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, à abroger la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et à modifier d'autres lois.*

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

Mr. Michael Prue: As I was speaking yesterday, when we started the debate, I believe I had spoken for some 10 or 12 minutes, and the balance will be today. I refer to these as my bifurcated speeches, and it seems to me that I've had a whole lot of those over my seven years in this House—speeches that you begin one day and end another.

On the last occasion I was talking about the preamble and about the necessity that—I believe—a preamble should be contained within the body of this bill. I am not alone in that thought, because after we had gone through committee, Community Living Ontario wrote a very good four-page paper outlining a critique of this particular bill and what had happened in committee. I would like to quote them and what they said at the bottom of page 3. They wrote, “One recommendation called for by 25 groups and individuals who presented at the hearings was the need for a preamble to the legislation. We are very disappointed that a preamble was not included and frankly, we are surprised because this seemed like a simple amendment that would have greatly enriched the bill.”

I could not concur any more than that. In fact, I want to tell you how disappointed all of us were at committee when it was determined by the government members that there would not be a preamble or a purpose clause contained within the body of this bill.

What had been proposed—and was proposed by the New Democratic Party—was very simple. I'd like to read it into the record because it perplexes me as to why the government does not want to proceed with the preamble or a purpose clause. What was proposed said as follows:

“0.1 The purposes of this act are,

“(a) to recognize that the inclusion of all residents of Ontario, including persons with developmental disabilities, is the foundation of a strong Ontario;

“(b) to promote the delivery of services to persons with developmental disabilities so that the services are,

“(i) available at a consistent level across the province, and

“(ii) based on person-centred planning to assist the person and his or her personal network to plan for a life in the community; and

“(c) to ensure that core mandated services are provided to persons with developmental disabilities.”

It seemed passing strange to me, and I think to all of the people who were present in that room, that the government chose not to proceed on that line. In fact, questions were asked of the solicitor, Mr. Wood, who was present, to outline what a purpose clause or a preamble might do. Mr. Wood, in his wisdom as counsel to the Legislature, stated, and I quote him in one large part:

“There are two things to distinguish here: One is a preamble, and this motion does not add a preamble; the other is a purpose clause. The purpose clause is part of the bill and certainly therefore affects the interpretation of the bill. As I understand it, Mr. Ramal is saying that the amendments the government is proposing deal with the issues in the purpose clause. All I can say, from a neutral point of view, is that a purpose clause does affect the interpretation of a bill, and there is some danger that if something is in the purpose clause and is not in the content of the bill, the purpose clause could affect the content of the bill. Conversely, if all of the amendments are in the bill, then a purpose clause, in a way, becomes redundant.”

It went on, Ms. Elliott from the Conservatives asked further questions and in the end the members of the Liberal Party voted it down.

Now, I have to question—and I think everyone, including those from Community Living and especially

those who support this bill have to ask—why the government does not want the provisions in there. Does the government not want to recognize that the inclusion of all residents of Ontario, including persons with developmental disabilities, is the foundation of a strong Ontario? I find it very strange that the government would not want to make this statement. Certainly the minister and the parliamentary assistant said very flowery things the other day, but it seems they don't want to enshrine that in the legislation. I'm perplexed why they would not. Does the government not want to promote the delivery of services to persons with developmental disabilities so that the services are available at a consistent level across the province? I will deal with this later, but I know they don't want to do that, because a motion was made to that effect, that the services be consistent across the province, that they not just be available in large cities but that they be available in small towns, in rural areas and in the far north. The government opposed that provision too. So I think I understand why they didn't want this provision in the bill.

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The government also was opposed to, or appears to be opposed to, the provision that the delivery of services to persons with developmental disabilities is based on person-centred planning to assist the person and his or her personal network for a life in the community. In fact, they tweaked the words to make sure that "person-centred planning" was changed to "person-centred direction." I believe that was the way they wanted to go.

Finally, I don't know why they would be opposed to this, but they appear to be: "to ensure that core-mandated services are provided to persons with developmental disabilities."

A preamble, a purpose clause, is essential in legislation. It is essential because from that everything else flows. So if there is an interpretation in the courts or if the judges are called upon to deal with it, they read, first of all, the preamble or the purpose clause and then they reflect on the true meaning of the bill. Sometimes words, especially legal words, are hard to understand. But if you understand the preamble, you know the purpose of the legislation and everything that flows from it.

Of course, people would know the preamble to our own Constitution, promising peace, order and good government, and living next to the United States, you would know the preamble "We, the people, in order to form a more perfect union" and things that flow from that is the hallmark of the American Constitution. You will know that many bills in Ontario have a preamble or a purpose clause in order for the courts and others interpreting the law to better understand it and come to the correct conclusions.

It's not just the judges and lawyers who use a preamble clause; it's those who work in the service industry surrounding people with developmental disabilities. They need to understand what the purpose is as well, and it needs to be clearly articulated, but the government does not want to articulate it. I can only concur with those who

are disappointed. I can only concur with the 25 people who came forward with deputations—that's 25 out of about 100—who named this as a fundamental aspect of what they were requesting. I thank Community Living for putting it in writing and providing the disappointment they have, and I'm sure that is shared literally by everyone, that this government has chosen not to include a purpose clause or a preamble.

The second thing—and I think this is also very disappointing to a lot of people—is that this legislation enshrines waiting lists. I know that it is contained in a couple of other pieces of legislation, including the provision of social housing in Ontario, but it is a rather rare phenomenon to actually enshrine waiting lists in the body of legislation—to state that there will be waiting lists. I think what the government here is admitting is that there will not be sufficient monies after this bill is passed for there ever not to be a waiting list; that for all times eternal, as long as this bill survives, there will be a waiting list, people will be put on it and they will wait anywhere from a day to a month to a year to a decade in order to get service. The government is enshrining this to make sure that it is the law that there will be a waiting list.

We were very dissatisfied, and I believe my Conservative colleagues as well were dissatisfied, that there will be a waiting list, and we tried on three separate occasions to convince the government to take this out of the bill. I know there was some considerable sympathy from the government backbenchers and the parliamentary assistant to see whether there was a way around this, to see whether there was some way, but in the end, the government members, all five of them, voted against take waiting lists out of this legislation.

Just for the record, I'd like to talk about what was proposed; of course, all of this ultimately failed. The first motion was made by my colleague Mr. Miller. This was motion 18, simply asking that paragraph 3 of section 7(2) of the bill be struck out. That won't mean a lot to anyone other than the explanation that he gave, and it's a good one: that "no person with a developmental disability should be forced to linger on a waiting list when they have been assessed and necessary services have been determined. When need has been identified, the level of service to meet this need must be provided." My colleague Mr. Miller thought that that was a basic thing that no one could disagree with.

But the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Ramal, stated, "We will vote against this motion because we want to create some kind of transparency across the board and consistencies when we introduce one section in other sections of the bill. That's why we're not going to go for this one, not because we don't like you, just because it's not consistent with the stature of the bill."

I'm not sure what that means. And quite frankly, I was disappointed when I read what he had to say about the waiting lists: "It's not consistent with the stature of the bill." Not the "status" of the bill, the "stature" of the bill. It is strange that the government has no real rationale for

leaving the waiting list in, other than “it’s not consistent with the stature of the bill.”

So we tried again, and this was NDP motion 51 put forward by me. I simply moved that we strike out “may place the applicant on a waiting list for the services or funding, as the case may be” and substituting “may apply to the minister for additional funds.” This did something else, and it was different from our other attempt. It was anticipated that if the government was intent upon putting waiting lists right in the legislation to tell the whole world that there are going to be waiting lists, there should be an alternative for the agencies and those who deal with the developmentally disabled; there should be an opportunity, as there is from children’s aid, for those agencies to apply to the government for additional funding.

If there is an absolute need, if the waiting list continues to grow, if the services must be provided as they are provided by children’s aid, then surely there must be a mechanism that would allow those agencies such as Community Living Ontario and all the others to come forward and say, “There isn’t enough money. Can we have an additional amount of money from the contingency fund or any other fund that the government might have?” We proposed this. I thought it was pretty rational. If the government’s going to go with a waiting list, then at least make it possible for the additional funds to come forward to reduce that waiting list, should it ever become ponderous, onerous or too longstanding. And of course the five government members voted that down, too.

So I have to say, “Okay, where do we go next?” So we tried something else, and this was NDP motion 50. This was that subsection 19(3) be struck out. The rationale for that was that we did not believe “that a person with a developmental disability should be forced to” wait “on a waiting list when they have been assessed and the necessary services determined.” We went on to say that we were not naïve. And I am not naïve. We know that there are waiting lists for hip and knee replacements in the hospital. We know that there are waiting lists in a broad range of government services, including supportive housing. We know that there is a finite amount of money available. But having known that, we were upset that the government was trying to entrench it and that they even proposed that these waiting lists point to chronic underfunding, and we said that.

I went on—and I’m going quote myself, which I think is often a dangerous thing to do in the committee. I said, “I do not want to see this bill go forward with a waiting list. I think virtually every person who came before the committee over four days talked about abolishing the waiting lists. They talked about how this was something that they did not want to see in the law, and they have asked that it be removed.” We attempted, therefore, to remove it.

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In the end, I guess the government’s position was, “There’s nothing for you here. There’s nothing this year. There may be nothing next year; there may be nothing

for years ahead.” That is what a waiting list does, and the government proceeded. All I can say is how profoundly disappointed all of us on that committee were—including, I believe, the government members—at having to put that into the bill.

There were other things in the bill that caused some great difficulties. One of them was the provision of workers. You see, what is happening here by virtue of this bill is potentially a very good thing: People will be given choice, whether to go to a service agency to get the service, as has been provided for many years; or families who wish an alternative may be able to use the resources of the government to directly fund and hire someone who is not part of a service agency. I know that many people have requested that. I see my friends from London up on the top; they have requested this for a long time.

I can understand why the government would want to accommodate this in what have, in the past, been rare circumstances; certainly it may be something that will go on if it works. But it requires the government to do something correct in order for it to happen, and the government refused to allow it to happen. They refused to do what was necessary to actually give credibility to what many think is a noble idea.

We know that people who work in this sector are chronically underfunded. We know that the wages that are paid, even for those service industries, can range from as little as \$10 to \$12 an hour to a high, we were told, in the \$15- to \$17-an-hour range. We know that the higher wages, in the \$15 to \$17 range, tend to be unionized places of work, by those belonging to CUPE or OPSEU or to one of the other service industries; we know they get paid a higher amount of money. We know that those places that are not organized tend to earn at the bottom. What we in the NDP are afraid of, and what I think everyone should be afraid of, is that when there is a direct, person-to-person contract—when there is no service agency and no union there to assist—the workers will be shoved to the bottom of the pay scale.

It is not unreasonable to imagine and to know that when one is dealing directly, one on one, and hiring through an agent, as this bill will allow, a family will be given an option: Do you hire somebody for minimum wage at \$8.75 an hour, and therefore you can afford 30 hours a week with the funds the government has given you, or do you hire somebody at twice that, at \$17 an hour, and they will belong to one of the unions and you will get them for 15 hours a week? I know what most families are unfortunately going to end up doing, and I don’t blame them. They’re going to hire somebody for \$8.75.

With greatest respect, those people may not have the same qualifications, but they are people and they need our protection too. So we tried to do two simple things, if the government is intent on proceeding this way, to ensure that those people who are brought into this industry, who are now part of the government scheme and who want to seek work in this sector, are protected too.

We attempted to make two motions. The first was NDP motion number 33:

“Deemed member of bargaining unit

“(10) A support worker hired by a person who receives funds under a direct funding agreement is deemed to be a member of a bargaining unit in the geographic area in which the person resides.

“Wages

“(11) A person who uses the funds provided under a direct funding agreement to hire a support worker shall pay the support worker,

“(a) an hourly wage equivalent to the hourly wage earned by employees of service agencies in the geographic area who have comparable responsibilities, job skills and experience; and

“(b) additional remuneration in lieu of benefits....

“(12) A person or entity from whom services are purchased with the funds provided under a direct funding agreement shall comply with such quality assurance measures as may be prescribed.”

It’s not surprising that the government voted this down, because the government has no intent of allowing people who come into the sector under this agreement who are not covered by a collective agreement of being paid the same wages as everyone else. They have no intent at all. Number two, they have no intent of giving them the necessary funds so that they can have hospitalization, so that they can have pay and other benefits consistent with what people who are already in this service industry get. I clearly understand where the service industry and many of the unions came in on this. This is clearly an attempt, they see—and I cannot see any rationale, because the government provided no rationale, for voting this down. I cannot see any rationale except that they want to reduce the wages of those who work in this sector, which is already chronically under-funded.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It’s not relevant.

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend here is saying it’s not relevant to the bill. That’s what he just told me—the parliamentary assistant. I think it is relevant to the bill. I think it is absolutely relevant that when we are setting up an alternative structure, the people who work in this alternative structure not be put in a position that they are second-class citizens, that they earn less, that they have no hospitalization and that they have no benefits. The government didn’t want to go there.

I was extremely disappointed too because we had one deputant who talked about working in Alberta. He talked about working in Alberta with a service agency—Alberta has a similar system to what is being proposed here in Ontario. He worked first of all with a service agency. The service agency went bankrupt and didn’t pay him, so he was transferred to another service agency. That too didn’t work out, so the family came along and said, “We’ll just do a one-on-one with you.” The one-on-one worked all right for a few weeks or a few months, until he was injured as a result of the job. I believe he was pushed or fell down some stairs caring for a person with developmental disabilities. He was not angry about that; he knows that’s part of the nature of the job, that from time to time it can be dangerous. But there he was, stuck, and

he had no insurance, no hospitalization; he was not covered by any laws. He came before the committee to tell us that we needed to make a provision for this.

So we tried. We tried again. This was a very simple thing that we said. I would just like to quote it for the record. We said—and this was motion 117:

“O. Reg. 175/98 (General) made under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

“60.1 Schedule 1 to Ontario Regulation 175/98 (General) made under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 is amended by adding the following to ‘Class H—Government and Related Services:

“5. Operation of a service agency under the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008,’ as has been passed by committee.”

That’s a whole bunch of legal talk, but what that really meant was that people who come into this are deemed to be covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act so that these new employees that are hired by families are deemed to be covered.

Well, I have to tell you how extremely disappointed I was to the government reaction to that. You would think that people who work in an industry where they might be injured, from time to time—and it’s because oftentimes, dealing with people with developmental disabilities, injuries do occur. I do know people who work in the industry, including my own brother, and injuries do occur. They occur. They are often not that serious, but they need to be dealt with.

The government first of all—the parliamentary assistant—tried to rule it out of order. I don’t know what authority he had to rule it out of order because he was not the Chair. When the Chair corrected him that it was in order, he continued to try to rule it out of order until the legal counsel came and said that it was a perfectly legal motion to make, at which time, after I gave continued expression to wanting to protect these workers, the five Liberals present unanimously voted it down—because they don’t want to provide any protection to these new workers. They don’t want to do it, they don’t want it in the bill, and they don’t want it in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. They simply do not want it.

0930

You can understand why people who work in this industry are upset. Here you have a government with flowery language that talks about the rights of the disabled—and I agree with everything that was said—but in implementing the bill, they are forgetting about the rights of the very workers who implement this act; they are forgetting about their rights. I have to tell you how profoundly disappointed I was with the government reaction on this.

We tried other things, too; we tried other things to make this bill a good bill. My colleague Mr. Miller moved a motion about consistency of service. He said: “A director shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that core mandated services prescribed by the regulations are

funded and provided at a consistent level across the province.”

You would think that would be something the government would want to do in a province that has a thing like the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, where you can go to any place in this province and find the prices identical to what they are in Toronto; in a province where you can go anywhere and find a hospital that will attempt to give you, if they have the services available, the same service you can get in Hamilton or in Ottawa; in a province where we try to be consistent and fair, where the rates for welfare and the rates for education and everything are spelled out so that everyone is treated fairly. That is not going to be in this bill. We attempted to have it, but it was voted down.

Mr. Miller gave an explanation. He said: “To uphold the commitment that individuals with developmental disabilities are included as active members of the community, it is unacceptable to leave people languishing on waiting lists. Therefore, services and supports identified under this act must be mandated services. If an individual is assessed, found to be eligible and necessary supports and services identified, then those supports and services should be provided without delay. This amendment ensures that proper steps are taken in order to do so.” Well of course the government is not interested in providing like services across the province. I think that’s because they are not interested in finding the necessary funds to do so.

We go on. There was a fifth thing we tried to do, and that was the whole concept of advocacy. We tried to set up an advocacy office so that there would be an advocate. There is an advocate if you live in assisted housing in Ontario. There are advocates in many fields that we are very proud of. There is a child advocate, there are advocates for everyone, but there is not to be an advocate for people with developmental disabilities. You can understand how profoundly disappointed people are. You can understand a group like ARCH, which came forward and said that this was something that was absolutely essential that we include in the bill—how disappointed they were when this government shot this idea down, too.

Mr. Miller, on my behalf, put forward a motion: “The minister shall establish an independent advocacy office to,

“(a) provide advocacy to persons with developmental disabilities in respect of services and funding under this act; and

“(b) provide education to persons with developmental disabilities about rights under this act.”

We thought that this was a great amendment. We thought that this was in compliance with the United Nations charter on the rights of the disabled. We thought that this was in compliance and was going to be something that every single group would want and that we would want for ourselves. But of course the government saw fit to shoot this down, too. I guess they don’t want to have an advocate, they don’t see a need for an advocate and they don’t believe that people with disabilities should have the same rights that you or I do.

We went on. We talked about the right of appeal: If you can’t have an advocate who speaks on your behalf, at least can we have a right of appeal, so that the families of people with disabilities or the disabled themselves can come forward and appeal an arbitrary decision made against them? We asked for that, and we thought that was a pretty reasonable thing: If we’re not going to have an advocate, can we have an appeal procedure? So in motion number 45, I proposed the following: That there be an appeal. “If an application centre determines on a review”—and this is what the motion was—“that an applicant is not eligible for services and funding under this act, the applicant, or a person acting on his or her behalf, may appeal the determination to a director in accordance with the regulations....

“The application centre shall provide the person appealing the determination with information about the appeal procedure.”

And a very important phrase here: “No person shall take a reprisal against an applicant who has appealed or a person who has appealed on the applicant’s behalf.”

The government saw fit to say no to this, too. Now, they did say, to be perfectly blunt, that you could go through the process, that you could go back to the officer or the person who had made the decision and try to rationalize or reason with them to change their mind. But there is no appeal process; they’re not willing to allow a more senior person or an independent body to look at it to see whether it’s reasonable.

I don’t understand. In almost every aspect of life in this country, whether it be employment insurance, access to welfare, Ontario Works or ODSP, literally anything, there is an appeal process so a person so aggrieved can go before a fairly independent person to talk about what went on and try to appeal it. That’s good enough for everyone else, but it doesn’t appear to be a right that this government wants to give to the developmentally disabled. I’m profoundly disappointed with this, too.

I don’t know where the government is going on this. I listened to the flowery language and listened to how we want to close down institutions. I listened to how “these people,” as the minister said—and I took umbrage with that statement too—“our people” need to be treated exactly the same, and they’re not going to be. So, again, here I am, disappointed.

There were other things. The whole issue of access without a warrant: I know this was more an issue brought by my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party, but it’s an important issue. Access without warrant, if you are developmentally disabled, is going to be the law, so that anyone who wants to come into your place of residence can come in without a warrant. No one can come into my house without a warrant, and I will ensure that they won’t come. I will ensure that they won’t, and I will live up to that. But a person who is developmentally delayed, or their family, will not have that safeguard. I know that the group called ARCH wrote a very long and very good paper about this being one of the fundamentals that needs to happen, that people who are trying to live

independently have to have the dignity and the sanctity of their own place. The government refused to act on this; the government refused to take this out of the legislation.

Now, I do understand that if there was a matter of profound safety, if someone's life was at risk, there may be cause for an emergency action from time to time, but that should be few and far between. My goodness, a warrant is not a hard thing to obtain. If there is reasonable cause to believe that a person is at risk, if there is a reasonable cause to believe that some illegal action is taking place and if there is a reasonable cause to believe that someone may be mistreated within the confines of their home, then surely a warrant will be issued. Warrants are issued every day, not just not just in criminal cases, but in all manners of cases, everything from finances to customs regulations to immigration to literally every government action. There is no reason to believe that a warrant could not be issued upon cause in this circumstance as well. But under this bill, developmentally disabled people will not have the same rights as you or I, and I think what went on is a shame, and I think it is a shame that the government would not bow to what were reasonable requests made by my colleagues in the Conservative Party and groups such as ARCH and others who brought this forward.

0940

There was the issue of legal capacity. Again, I go back to what Community Living has written, and this is on the final page of their four-page letter sent September 15, following the committee hearings, and I think they set it out very clearly and correctly. They wrote, "The bill fails, however, to make any provision for recognizing the legal capacity of people who have an intellectual disability or for providing support to those individuals who need assistance in exercising their legal capacity or making substantial decisions. Without such a clause, there remains a fundamental incoherency in the legislation."

In fact, that is correct. The absolute need for recognizing the legal capacity and a mechanism to fund assistance for people so that they can understand, is inherent for their being full citizens of our society. It was not contained within the body of the bill, and I can assure you that if it's not within the body of the bill there will never be such a position, nor monies for such a position. It makes rational sense to me.

I have a friend; his name is Martin Levine, and I'm going to talk about him in a minute. He describes himself as a slow learner. That's the adjective he uses for himself, but he understands and he knows. What he needs is just a little bit of time and a discussion to get his head around the issue, and some assistance. Then he knows exactly what he wants and exactly what he needs. I think that this should have been contained within the body of the bill, and there were attempts and discussions to bring this within the four walls, but it did not happen.

Just a little bit about Martin Levine, because I don't think I could talk about this issue without talking about him and the profound influence he has had upon me around all of these matters. Martin Levine is a person

who lives in the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence. Martin is well known to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, Mr. Colle, but he's also well known to a great many politicians around this place, because Martin writes at least one letter a month to the Premier—at least one. He writes and tells the Premier what he thinks the Premier should be doing around a whole list of things, such as assisted housing, affordable housing, welfare rates, ODSP provisions and the like.

He's quite a remarkable man. I met him for the first time when he and a group came forward to give their life stories of what it was like to grow up, to have people call you "retarded," to have people not give you an opportunity, to be put in an institution when he was nine years of age. He sent me a few weeks ago—and I had never seen it before—a copy of a little book. It's photocopied, but it's a copy of a tiny book that was written by Martin Levine, as told to Gary Kogan, and it's the life story of Martin Levine. I don't want to read it all, although I could read it all in less than the six minutes remaining, but just a couple of quotes.

The first thing I knew is that he had epilepsy as a young man and that people didn't know how to deal with it, and his family didn't know how to deal with it. He went to school and he had a hard time learning. Today, we would have remedial classes and everything else, but in those days it didn't happen. So his family ended up putting him in an institution and he languished there for 19 years. He had never done anything wrong, but he spent 19 years of his life, until he was pretty well grown. A psychologist who was at the institution said he was too sick and would have to stay in the institution for the rest of his life.

Martin, in his story, writes:

"He did not listen to my side of the story. So I spent the next 20 years in institutions.

"I have been out of those institutions for 17 years now. My epilepsy is very much under control.

"Thanks to my workers Jill Yeatman and Valerie McKinnon, I moved out of the institution and in with my foster parents Bruce and Mary Phillips.

"They made a new life for me. It was not easy for them but they brought me out into the world and made me part of their family. I lived with them for 13 years.

"I was 35 years old when I got my first schooling. The institutions never had any schooling, so we could not learn reading, writing and math."

He went on to talk about how he was amazed that he could go to school and that the government paid for it. There were classes at the school and there were teachers who were patient and there were tutors who came and helped him in the literacy program at the North York library.

He goes on to talk about some of the pride that he has as a person in Ontario. He goes on to talk about the three jobs he's had and how happy he is and how he's worked there for seven years. He went on in his little book to talk about his contributions to society, even about having a bar mitzvah, as Martin is Jewish, but it didn't happen till

he was 42 years of age. You would know how difficult that is for a young Jewish man. Mostly that happens when you're around 13, and it happened to him when he was 42.

That said to him that he could now make his own decisions and, in fact, he does. He helps to raise money for Big Brothers, he works every day, he belongs to many community social groups. He works on political campaigns for people who he believes will help him. I believe he may have worked for Mr. Colle in the past; I know he came out and helped knock on a couple of doors for me.

We need to recognize that there are so many people like Martin Levine. We need to recognize that assistance is necessary. We need to recognize that funding has to be made available. There are no funds or provisions for funds within the body of this bill. We are waiting, I guess, with trepidation, with a little fear and perhaps even a little hope for that day, October 22, when the Minister of Finance stands up in his seat and tells us the state of the economy, whether there is going to be money to do the things that we know need to be done. We know from what the Premier had to say in the last couple of days, including yesterday at the Royal Ontario Museum, when asked about poverty, that there's going to be a great plan but there is not necessarily going to be any money to go with that great plan. So although they're going to identify what needs to be done in the long term, there may not be the resources to do it. That was reiterated yesterday by my colleague. The Honourable Minister of Children and Youth Services, the lead on poverty, said much the same thing in this House and later in scrums.

I am afraid of what is going to happen with this bill. I am afraid that the lofty goals and the fine words that were said by the minister and the parliamentary assistant yesterday will be for naught, that what is contained within the body of the bill, as weak as it is, will not have the resources to make it all happen. People like Martin Levine and the tens of thousands of others with developmental disabilities may not have what they need.

I believe this government has an obligation. If they are not going to be able to put the resources forward, then they should change the bill to make it even tougher and even stronger in order to allow hope. They should have made the changes that were requested of them for a pre-amble. They should have agreed to the requests that were made of them to take out waiting lists wherever they occurred within the bill so that people would have hope, that they would not languish for years and years waiting for service. They should have put provisions in the bill that allowed for workers to have workplace safety and health provisions provided and a decent wage. They should have agreed to core mandated services so that service could be provided anywhere and literally everywhere in this province. They should have allowed for an advocacy office so there would have been an advocate for the disabled. They should have allowed for a right of appeal in the absence of an advocate. They should have forbidden access to private homes without a warrant.

They should have given some funds and thought around legal capacity. They should have done all of those things that were necessary for the Martin Levines of this world to fully participate in this wonderful place we call Ontario.

I am saddened that they chose not to do that, that they went so timidly forward and that they are so full of such flowery words, but the actions, I think, belie all of that. I know the government has the necessary legislative muscle to pass this, and it will pass. I can only hope that something more is done in the future.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to the member from Beaches–East York since yesterday. He talked on many different issues. I was listening carefully to all the elements he described, which we discussed during the journey of the bill from Ottawa to Timmins to London and Toronto, and we listened to many different people.

I know this bill exactly. Everybody knows that the current Developmental Services Act is almost 35 years old, and it was part of its time, its face turned to the past, while Ontario looks forward to the future.

This bill is about choice, about people with disabilities, about their families. That's why we wanted to create choice. Also, when we listened to people from across the province, they mentioned and talked about many different issues. They talked about the title, the language of the bill, person-directed planning, applications, inspections, agencies taking over, waiting lists, complaints and regulations, and we dealt with all these issues. We dealt with them in many different fashions and many different ways. Maybe it's not exactly what the honourable member from Beaches–East York wants, but at least we discussed it, we talked about it and we made substantial changes.

He talked about salaries. We are not going to enter that debate, because salaries are not our jurisdiction. The aim from day one, as I mentioned, was to create choice for the family, for the person with the disability. That's what we're trying to do. Salaries are under the jurisdiction of the bargaining agreement with the Ministry of Labour.

He talked about advocacy. As we know, when we changed the application centre as part of this bill, we created two entities: one to process information and applications, and one to do the funding. As he mentioned, people can go back to the person and appeal and talk about it, and maybe they'll be able to change the decision.

He talked about inspections. No one said a private home should be inspected. But we talk about workplaces being subject to inspections—the minister spoke about it a lot yesterday—because we want to protect people with disabilities.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It was a pleasure to listen to the new leader of the NDP—perhaps I'm a little premature in that comment. We look forward to his comments. You

could hear the passion in his voice on this subject. It was obviously very important to him.

The issue that I thought I might comment on is where the government is allowing people to enter residences without warrants.

If you live in a long-term-care home, you need a warrant to come in. If you live in an apartment, a condo or government-subsidized housing, you need warrants to come into these places where people live.

In thinking about it—someone may have other examples—I believe the only place you can live and not have the protection of a warrant is when you're in jail. Guards in jails can enter cells without a warrant, and I think most of us would agree that's probably appropriate.

But this bill proposes that handicapped people living on their own in supportive housing are not subject to the same rights enjoyed by every other individual in our society, with the exception of people who are in jail: the protection of unauthorized entry. Handicapped people in our society would not enjoy that very, very basic right.

I think the government should take a very serious look at that. They should have an internal review of that. I think it's absolutely disgusting that in the 21st century we would look at the possibility of relegating someone to that status by legislation in this time and place.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We in the NDP are proud of the leadership of our colleague from Beaches–East York around this whole area of access. And that's what he has been talking about: access. Not a ramp up to the back door, not tokenism; he's been talking about the right of every Ontarian to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of this province. The member for Beaches–East York has been very clear about the fact that you either believe in that as a fundamental right or you don't. There are no half measures.

New Democrats are insistent that tokenism simply doesn't cut it. New Democrats are insistent that there isn't any more time to wait, just like the plea of Mr. Prue and other New Democrats around the issue of poverty in response to the government's announcement that they're going to defer their anti-poverty agenda because now is not the right time. Hell, when workers are losing their jobs left and right—a quarter of a million of them across the province—when poverty is booming, now couldn't be a better time.

I say this to you: Let's understand who's poor in this province. Workers who lose their jobs are poor; persons with disabilities are poor in this province. I say to you, to be poor just because you have a disability is in and of itself a fundamental violation of the most basic concepts of human dignity.

The New Democrats are going to keep working on this file—count on it. Michael Prue is going to keep providing leadership across the province—count on it. New Democrats are going to be there.

Mr. Bob Delaney: After three quarters of an hour of listening to the member for Beaches–East York, I think it's time to return to what Bill 77 was written to achieve. The current legislation is 35 years old. It dates back to

the era of Bill Davis and Pierre Trudeau. The world has changed, it's changed again and it's still changing. Even the scope and the range of the services and the supports for people with developmental difficulties has changed. This bill recognizes that men and women with developmental difficulties can live independently if they have the right supports.

The bill empowers people with more choices and more control over these supports. Bill 77 improves services. People only need to go to one place to apply for services and support. Bill 77 offers more choices: One size doesn't fit all. People could receive funding directly for supports that are tailored to their needs. Bill 77 levels the playing field. It makes the system more fair. Everyone will use the same application and the same assessment package.

Even the member in his just-completed remarks acknowledged these benefits, so let's go forward together. Let's update the language and the terms in the bill and bring them into the 21st century. Let's get the province moving to create application and funding entities for developmental services. Let's authorize them to make decisions to allocate resources and to deliver services. Let's stop sending people around town to multiple agencies and focus on the solution rather than the process.

Ontario spends more than \$1.5 billion every year on a system that serves 40,000 people. Let's help the agencies that deliver these services focus more on the people whom they serve and less on bureaucratic processes and paperwork.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Beaches–East York has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank my colleagues the members from London–Fanshawe, Halton, Welland and Mississauga–Streetsville.

A couple of points in the very brief two minutes: I'd like to thank the member from Halton for what he had to say about warrantless entry again. I had never thought of it quite in that context, that the only people other than disabled who do not have the right not to have their places of abode searched are those in jail, but I guess that is in fact correct. I think that one statement said legions in this debate.

I'd like to thank my colleague from Welland because he brought up an issue which I had not really had time to explore in the hour available to me, and that's the whole issue of the disabled and poverty. We know that not all disabled live in poverty, but we know that too many do, especially those with developmental disabilities. They tend, in almost every case, to live in poverty.

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I'm reminded of a wonderful group that Carolyn Lemon runs called Lemon and Allspice. It's developmentally disabled or delayed people who work in a kitchen. Sadly, what happens to them is that they get ODSP, but much of what they earn is clawed back. I've said before to this government, and I'll say it again today, that having a disability should not be tantamount to for-

ever, for your entire life, living in poverty. The government needs to recognize that people, whatever their disabilities, whatever their skills or abilities, provide a service to all of Ontario and they should be allowed to keep those monies they earn and to escape poverty.

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

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to join in the debate this morning. I want to talk for a minute about where we were 35 years ago when this developmental services sector was last refreshed and revised and where we are today.

La Loi de 2008 sur les services et soutiens favorisant l'inclusion sociale des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle est une nouvelle loi qui va aider les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle à être plus autonomes et plus libres dans leurs choix.

C'est certain qu'il y a 35 ans, quand la loi a été premièrement mise en place, la société était très différente. Il y a 35 ans, j'avais cinq ans. Quand j'avais cinq ans, le monde était très différent. Quand j'étais jeune enfant, ma grand-mère travaillait dans une des institutions où les gens étaient mis quand ils avaient une déficience intellectuelle. Depuis ces 35 ans, on a bien changé le domaine et la façon dont on donne le soin—un soin compassionné, un soin de communauté—à ceux qui vivent dans nos communautés.

Alors, cette loi va aider l'Ontario à continuer à bâtir un système de services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle qui est plus moderne, plus équitable et plus durable. C'est un système qui va être accessible aujourd'hui et qui va nous aider à nous rendre à demain. C'est un système qui va donner à ces gens une plus grande autonomie et une plus grande liberté d'action.

La loi qu'on met en place, la loi dont on discute ici dans la législature aujourd'hui, va avoir un langage plus moderne et plus nouveau. Cela va mettre en place un système de demande et d'évaluation. On va continuer à regarder comment on peut gérer un système qui va aider les gens à continuer à vivre dans nos communautés et dans chaque région, où ils vont avoir les mêmes outils. On va avoir des normes standardisées.

Il y a aussi une compréhension qu'on doit avoir une planification axée sur les personnes, une planification où les personnes elles-mêmes vont pouvoir faire des décisions avec leur famille, et puis on va centrer sur eux.

Alors, c'est une approche différente de celle qu'on a eue dans le passé, quand on mettait tout le monde dans une grande institution. Même si on leur donnait des soins avec beaucoup de compassion et de conviction, c'était un système où on ne les traitait pas comme individus. Alors, pendant 35 ans, les gens ont beaucoup demandé d'avoir pouvoir avoir un traitement individuel, un financement direct. Cela donnerait aux personnes et à leur famille plus de choix et plus de souplesse.

D'après tout ce qu'on a appris dans 35 ans dans le domaine, une nouvelle définition de la déficience intellectuelle est bien importante pour qu'on comprenne qu'il y a beaucoup de différents types de personnes qui ont des

situations individuelles et des déficiences différentes. Ils ont aussi des spécialités, des choses qu'on devrait requérir pour avoir un système équitable.

On doit aussi assurer que ce nouveau système répond aux demandes des familles. Dans ce domaine, il est très important de savoir qu'on a eu plusieurs présentations quand on était en comité. On a reçu beaucoup de demandes des familles et on a répondu à beaucoup de leurs demandes.

Bill 77 had a high degree of consistency when we heard presentations from various communities across the province. Based on that feedback, a number of motions to amend Bill 77 were brought forward. I want to speak just specifically to a couple of those motions so that when folks are listening at home or around the province, they understand the process that has been taking place.

One of the recommendations brought forward by many of the families and many of those who made presentations was that we needed to change the name of the act because they wanted the act to be reflective of the inclusion of persons. That amendment was made, to change the short title of the act to Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008. That came directly from those who are most in the know and most closely connected to the work being done in communities to help those who need the help of the province with respect to those developmental services.

The other choice of language that was brought forward at committee was to put forward the language of supports, and that the bill should include services and supports. Those amendments were approved at committee to make sure that was reflected in this new modern act that, as I said in the beginning of my submissions, is to take us from today, where we're refreshing after 35 years of not refreshing, to be ready to reflect the future that we will need going forward.

Another important concept—and I talked about the autonomy and the individual approach that needs to be brought forward—is the concept of person-directed planning. That amendment was also approved to include person-directed planning as a ministry-funded service and support under the act. That's so critical for the families that I meet in my community in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who come forward and who want us to move very much from the past that I talked about earlier, where you're institutionalized, maybe very well cared for, but not treated as an individual. We have moved over 35 years to today to a time where we recognize that even those with developmental disabilities need to have that individual treatment and need to be respected, and our legislation needs to reflect the fact that individuals and their families have decisions to make, and may make different decisions depending on their circumstances.

Recommendations also came forward with respect to the application process. Bill 77 was amended to set in place and outline a consistent process for applying to access developmental services, supports and funding.

One of the discussions on the floor of the Legislature over the last couple of days has been concerns with

respect to inspections. I do want to highlight that concerns with respect to inspections were brought forward to the committee and an amendment was approved by the committee to outline, in regulation, the conditions that must be met in order to enter and inspect a supported group living or intensive supported group living residence without a warrant. I know the minister spoke about this issue yesterday and highlighted the importance of being able to get in quickly in instances that are necessary to protect the safety and the well-being of those we have the responsibility to care for, but at the same time, the committee reflected and understood that you need to have protections in place to make sure that only under certain conditions are inspections undertaken without a warrant. That is committed to in the legislation to be put forward by regulation.

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Another area that we've talked about over the last couple of days is with respect to waiting lists. I want to highlight the amendment that was approved by the committee with respect to waiting lists. The provisions put in place allow the establishment that a waiting list would remain in the act. For those of us who work in our communities and understand the importance of transparency, and families understanding how individuals are prioritized and how waiting lists are managed, the establishment of a waiting list is to promote transparency in the process of prioritizing individuals and managing waiting lists. Funding entities will provide the ministry with annual reports on waiting lists, which the ministry would post on its website or in any other appropriate manner. That's critical for those who think that some work is done in backrooms and that there's not a transparency and an understanding with respect to how we are ensuring that individuals and their families get the services that they are looking for.

I think that those areas are ones that will help, again, lay the foundation in a piece of legislation that we need to govern and help model in this sector for many years ahead. The world was a very different place 35 years ago, and, as I said earlier, I was five years old. I don't even want to think how old I'm going to be 35 years from now. I'm going to be too old and too grey, but I certainly know the world will be a very different place again. We are trying, with the revision of this important piece of legislation, to speak to the needs, to reflect the needs of communities, of individuals, of their families, of a sector that does incredibly important work in all of our communities across the province. I know some of my most privileged discussions have been with families I work with in my community to make sure that their sons and daughters are well taken care of by those in this sector who do important and wonderful work on behalf of all of us.

So we're trying to set in place a structure and a piece of legislation that will help make sure that this sector is in a good state for many years to come, that reflects the modernization of where we are at. I'm very proud that we have been the government who has taken the steps

necessary to make sure that 35 years of inaction is now replaced by an important and modernized piece of legislation.

With that, I cede the floor to someone else who might like to debate this important bill, and I certainly look forward to standing in my place and supporting it when the vote is held.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and/or comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to respond to comments by my friend from Etobicoke-Lakeshore with reference to this bill. I'm concerned about the passage of this bill in its present form simply because I've had a belief, probably all of my life, that handicapped people are people, just like anybody else. The difference between a handicapped person and myself is that I'm not handicapped and they are. We have to treat them with the utmost respect. I've held round tables in my own community on this subject, and I've had occasion, like many members in this House, to meet with those on the receiving end of what this government has in place. We can agree on one thing: We certainly need to revisit, review and change legislation that indeed is too old and too tired to address the realities of today.

But we come to committee as a party to try to make contributions with open minds and to work in the true bipartisan spirit that should mark this House. When I hear my honourable friend speak, I know that she's sincere, but back in committee, I also know that we got slapped down: 66 amendments, all of them reasonable, none of them—not one of them—accepted.

This bill remains flawed. We are simply introducing another level of bureaucracy and built-in wait lists by passing legislation in its present form. There is an unworkable appeal process built into this. Can you imagine facing your accuser to appeal a decision? The same body that says, "This is the way that you're going to be treated" is the body that you appeal to when you don't like the treatment that's being meted out. This, in effect, as it stands, is a form of abrogation of personal rights because it includes warrantless entry. We can do better.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I, for one, down where I come from in Welland riding, have been blessed and fortunate to have had the assistance and guidance of people who are in the Community Living movement, perhaps itself close to 35 years old. Are my colleagues opposite going to suggest that they be replaced? I think not. I'm talking about people like Barb Vyrosto, down with the Community Living centred at Welland, and the work that these people have done for the maturation of this movement. It's an access movement.

I just find it incomprehensible after listening to the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore—and look, I understand. She's in the government benches. She's got to shake the pompoms and lead the cheer for the government. She's paid to do it. If she doesn't, she'll find herself sharing a caucus room with Billy Murdoch. But for the life of me, I don't understand why the government was not more responsive to any number of proposals put

forward by Community Living Ontario. I think one of the most substantive ones was the request for a preamble that would provide guidance to what is, in and of itself, some pretty stark, bare-bones legislation. You've heard Mr. Prue talk about the significance of a preamble. You heard the submissions at committee. Why would the government not have adopted that very wise—and I say “wise” because it is a wise proposal, because it provides guidance for those who have to interpret the legislation and avoids the anomalies that are inevitably going to flow.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I also want to add my voice to the discussion on Bill 77. The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore talked about how things have changed, the fact that we haven't revised this legislation in over 35 years. We are now moving forward with this.

It brought to mind, even for myself, how things have changed in my lifetime. As young people, we used the word “retarded” in reference to people with developmental challenges. That no longer is the case. At one time, we weren't exposed. People hid these children. They were ashamed. They didn't know how to handle them. They were told that they should institutionalize, and they did. Parents didn't have options. They didn't know what to do. Now we have parents who want to take care of their children and keep them at home. There's a group called the Lifelong Caregivers' Support Group of Sarnia-Lambton, who have arrived, I see. My sister is a member; my niece has developmental challenges and the family embraces them. There are opportunities there for her now that she wouldn't have had 35 years ago.

Are we perfect in how we're dealing with developmental challenges today? No. We still have a long ways to go. But I think Bill 77 opens the door for that kind of change. We are going to move forward in a way that we haven't done before. We're giving families options that will allow families to make decisions for themselves that weren't there before. I think that's very important. I'm very proud to be able to say that as a government, we are addressing something that other governments—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Whoever gets up.

Mr. Michael Prue: Is he standing up or not?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I don't know.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): There are two minutes. Two minutes: the honourable member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much for an unexpected opportunity to respond. I listened to the honourable member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and what she had to say, but I have to agree with my colleague from London that this was just more of a cheering section, a member who is speaking on behalf of the government and what they're doing because that is what is expected. I did not hear the passion in her voice that one would

expect if one believes that this legislation is so good. I did not hear the reasoned and rational argument about why certain things were put in the bill and others were neglected.

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Quite frankly, I remain disappointed. I hope that other government members, when they speak to this bill, will explain in some detail why the government chose half-hearted measures; why the government did not listen to groups like Community Living and put in a preamble; why the government did not listen to the 34 people who talked about not enshrining waiting lists in the legislation; and why the government did not listen to those who were advocating, like ARCH, on behalf of persons with disabilities and looking for funds and offices for advocacy and for appeal. I haven't heard any of that.

All I hear are the same flowery words, that 35 years have gone by and we're updating a piece of legislation and that people with developmental disabilities are part of our community. We all accept that the legislation is old. We all accept that people with developmental disabilities are part of our community. But, you know, the actions need to be taken to strengthen this legislation. If a government is content to go forward with half-hearted legislation, then stand up and say, “That's all we want to do. We're going to take this half-hearted approach.” Be honest with it. Be honest with the community and then, perhaps, we can proceed from there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I always do find it passing strange to listen to the opposition who, in the recent history of this province, had the opportunity to move forward legislation, to make the decisions in this Legislature, and they chose not to. They did not make it a priority to reinvest in this sector and they did not make it a priority to change this legislation.

The commitment of our government is loud. We have moved forward to modernize a piece of legislation more than 35 years in the waiting. In addition to that, my constituents in my community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore know the importance that we've placed on this sector because we have committed to investing a half a billion dollars in developmental services since coming to office. A half a billion dollars is a significant amount of money. We've made it a priority.

Each of us sitting in this Legislature—I know from working with my colleagues from all over the province—sit down and work closely with our parents and with our Community Living foundations. I work very closely with Community Living Toronto. I work hand in hand with parents in my community who are looking for the best for their children. Where those children are now adults and their parents are aging, we're working to find creative solutions to make sure that those children who are now adults, and many who are young, will be able to have what is best.

As every single parent knows, and I know, you would do whatever it takes and you will move every mountain

to help your kids. They have a government who understands that. They have a government who's willing to work in partnership with them, willing to modernize a piece of legislation that, frankly, nobody cared about for 35 years. Those on the other side of the House who are sitting here now saying they would have done it very differently, well, you know what? Those are hollow, hollow words, because they did not.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I've been listening to the debate and this is an important subject for myself. I think, very clearly, we can all see in this House and throughout this province that one of the fundamental and important roles of government is to provide for and protect those who are not capable of doing so for themselves.

As I listened to the debate and the discussion, I heard that the purpose of bringing in this legislation is because we have old legislation, that it has to be revised, that it's the age of the legislation that requires new legislation, not the betterment of the protection of our handicapped people, people with disabilities. That's not why this bill is being changed, apparently; it's because the old one is 35 years of age.

The members of the third party make a significant point. The preamble that was requested is absolutely fundamental in a piece of legislation such as this, to provide that guidance for the people who will be interpreting this legislation down the road. The government has failed miserably in not providing that guidance in this legislation, for down the road what will be the intent of this legislation other than it replaced something that was 35 years old?

There are good elements to this legislation, but it is a half-hearted attempt at addressing problems. I would like to just focus on what I see as flaws, but not just myself; many community groups have indicated, through committee, that there are indeed flaws that are going to hamper their ability to provide good services to those most in need. The first one is that, clearly, the government does not expect to fund completely people with disabilities, and that is why wait times will be entrenched in this legislation. Just for clarification, we have wait times now in that 35-year-old legislation. It's not defined in the legislation, but we do have wait times.

I'll just give you a couple of examples from one of my community forums in Lanark county earlier this year: 234 people are on a wait list for residential services; 273 people are on a wait list for program services. And of those 273, 134 are children; another 142 people are on wait lists for day program support services.

We have wait times. Now, instead of just being unacceptable and intolerable that we have wait times, they will be legislated as acceptable. I find this totally unacceptable, that the government intends not to fund, not to provide and not to protect those most in need, and is willing to entrench its mediocrity in legislation.

The bill also creates more bureaucracy for individuals and families to deal with, if they don't have enough

already. We've seen so many examples of parents and caregivers of people with disabilities travelling through the maze of bureaucracy. It's hurtful for me to see it when I hear their stories of going through all the empty doors, the false doors of bureaucracy, trying to find services for their loved ones, only to find more dead ends.

I'll just give some examples. One was the Passport program, which sounds great—much like the flowery words and rhetoric that we've heard from the other side. In my area last year, there were 229 applicants for the Passport program. Five applicants were approved. That's right, five of 229—2%. That's what happens when government creates programs, elevates expectations and then sits on its hands with funding. I find those numbers disturbing—I think everybody in this House would find those numbers disturbing—but now they will be entrenched. Again, mediocrity is the order of the Liberal day.

1030

I'll give you an example. Out of those Passport applications, 20 carried the same priority score of 41. Karen York, whose son has disabilities, received one of those priority scores, and she got the same word back: "Unfortunately, your application cannot be funded at this time. However, Passport will keep your application on file for the next three years." We are spending significant dollars administering a program that does not fund anything other than the administration of the program.

This Liberal government can do better. It is not the 35-year-old piece of legislation that is at fault; it is the lack of political will, the lack of political oversight that is at fault, not the legislation.

Many speakers have spoken about this warrantless entry and, clearly, we must judge governments not by their intentions, but by their actions. Again, a government's role is to provide protection and not to abrogate the rights of its citizens, least of all its most vulnerable citizens. This idea that because someone is disabled they no longer have the protection of privacy that we all enjoy—our homes are our castles. This is not for disabled people. Disabled people have no privacy under this legislation.

I find it difficult to believe that anybody in this House, any legislator, would even bring such an abhorrent thought into legislation—that we can just enter somebody's residence and remove their privacy because they are disabled. But, like many of the other amendments—there were over 200 amendments to this bill. A few did get put through, the ones that were sponsored by the Liberal Party, not the ones by all the community groups, members of the third party or members of the Progressive Conservative Party. Still, there was a half-hearted attempt to address the failings of their execution and implementation of support and services and protection for people with disabilities.

In the same vein as this warrantless entry—that is a fundamental tenet of justice: that we have our right to privacy, our freedom of privacy. Another tenet of justice

is a review process, an appeal process. We often hear the terms from this Liberal government of “openness” and “transparency,” and that everything is good as long as they use those words in front of their phrase, as long as it’s “open and transparent.”

The appeal process for this assessment: If somebody with disabilities is assessed by an individual or group, the only appeal process is back to the assessor. It is absolutely, fundamentally and totally incomprehensible that the Liberal government would include that in this half-baked legislation. It would be like getting a ticket for going through a yellow light, and then having the police officer who gave you the ticket being the judge and the jury. If the Liberal government indeed believes that openness and transparency is important, they will modify this and install and include an appeal process that is not just flowery, but effective; not one that is just open and transparent, but one that is real, one that is tangible, one that has effect and value for those engaged in being assessed. The PC Party believed, and brought forth an amendment, to have the Ombudsman as a vehicle and a means to deal with appeals. That amendment was struck down as well.

I’ve seen so often in this last year, as I’ve spent time with members of the disabled community in my riding, that there are indeed hardships, there are troubles, there are difficulties—without a doubt, too many of them for us to bear or tolerate, in my opinion. But I see in this bill—as we have seen in other bills and other legislation—that the minister is removing herself from oversight and responsibility in this legislation. She’s taken a hands-off approach, creating arm’s-length arrangements where really any minister of this portfolio will be able to sit back and say, “I’m only responsible for funding; you have to deal with others.” That’s been a great thing, and I think of how over the last number of years politicians and government are willing to abdicate our ownership, our responsibility to the citizens of this province. It is not enough to hand off responsibility to an arm’s-length organization and then plead ignorance or plead inabilities. They can do that already, quite effectively.

We need to take to heart our responsibilities. We have to ensure that when there’s a problem, people can access government, access ministers, and demand accountability and oversight. It’s not enough that we just pass off all the regulations that this bill will create to the bureaucracy and not have any political oversight over those regulations. We are unsure of what those regulations will be, but we know we will not see them. They will have the force of law and nobody on this side of the House will have an opportunity to debate them or challenge them. Nobody in our galleries will have the opportunity to review them, discuss them or debate them—they’ll just be done.

I really request the Liberal government to take time to rethink and reflect on this piece of legislation. Look at the flaws that you are creating with this legislation and address them, fix them. There are many people out there who are counting on your government to fix the problems, not entrench them.

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I have to address one other failing in this, and we already see it right now. In my community, there is a pressures and priorities group that defines the needs and services requirements, and it creates budgets for them. We spend countless hours developing that pressures and priorities budget, and then the ministry provides funding, not on that budget but on a per capita basis. These are elements that will continue to be flaws under the new legislation. This new legislation does not address that at all. In fact, it is my belief that it expects not to fund these pressures and priorities, and once again, to ensure that wait times are the order, not improved times, not beneficial times.

For all the members here, all the members in my community of Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, it’s time for the Liberal government to stand up, to think about this and to fix and correct the flaws, and ensure that the people of this province who are the most needy and who are the most vulnerable are not forgotten by this legislation and by your government.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about time for introduction of visitors, I think we’ll move to introduction of visitors. We’ll just wait for the Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning, members. I’d like to introduce a few guests today.

On behalf of the member for Welland, Jozef Kormos from Haniska-Prešov, Slovakia, in the west members’ gallery. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

On behalf of the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, we’d like to welcome the Lifelong Caregivers Support Group of Sarnia–Lambton. Welcome to Queen’s Park today as well.

I’d ask all members to welcome former member Gary Malkowski, from the riding of York East, from the 35th Parliament, in the east gallery. Welcome today, Gary.

ORAL QUESTIONS

C. DIFFICILE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. I’d like to warmly welcome the Minister of Health to his new position.

Minister, earlier this week you supported the Prime Minister’s call for a public inquiry into listeriosis, which killed 19 people across Canada. When 44 people died of SARS, you repeatedly demanded an inquiry and we responded. There are now at least 500 deaths from C. difficile across Ontario that we know of. The actual number is unknown and it could well be in the thousands.

Minister, I ask you, how many more excruciating, painful and undignified deaths in our hospitals will it take before you call an investigation to get some answers?

Hon. David Caplan: I do want to first of all accept the good wishes of my colleague opposite. I do want to extend my sympathy to all of the patients and families who have been affected by hospital-acquired infections. I want all members to understand and know that I take patient safety incredibly seriously.

Hospitals are actively working to continue to manage outbreaks when they occur and where they occur. We've done the studies. There have been three independent inquiries, reviews and investigations into C. difficile in Ontario hospitals. That's why, and following the advice of medical experts, we will have mandatory reporting at the end of this month. When you track, as we found in other jurisdictions around the world, you can improve upon it. The best prevention does remain handwashing, and in Ontario some of the best protocols anywhere in the world—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: You haven't learned from any reports because the reports do not exist. Despite the fact that you say you've learned from the Soo, you've learned from Joseph Brant, you haven't.

Pursuant to a freedom of information request that I have here, we've learned that the coroner who investigated the 22 deaths in the Soo never produced a report. Yesterday, your Premier said it was a coroner's jury that looked into C. difficile in the Soo. That's incorrect. There was never a jury. There was never a report.

We've also learned that your ministry doesn't have a report of the outbreak at Joseph Brant. In fact, your ministry has, according to the response, no notes, no memos, no records whatsoever into either report. There's no paper trail.

Are you prepared today to retract those false statements that you, your Premier and your predecessor have made? You have not learned everything that—

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

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the acting medical officer of health and the associate deputy chief coroner of Ontario have said that the investigations that have taken place are sufficient and it would not add anything new to have anything in addition. That's why we've brought in Dr. Michael Baker, one of the noted and well known patient safety advocates and experts, to form a medical expert committee to be the lead on patient safety.

The provincial infectious disease advisory committee, or PIDAC as it is known, is providing that expert advice to the government. That's why we are beginning, as I had mentioned earlier, the tracking, the mandatory reporting, which will be in place at the end of this month. But in addition to that, we have 137 new infection control positions in hospitals around Ontario. We have 14 regional

infection control networks to promote best practices. We have—

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

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Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This minister, like his predecessor and the Premier, continues to stonewall and not provide the public with the answers they deserve and have the right to know. Not only are you stonewalling us, but you're stonewalling the families of the people whose family died. Dr. Warren Hewitt's father-in-law died at Joe Brant. He tried to get a copy of Dr. Gardam's report into Joe Brant and he was told by your ministry that you don't have it. This is his FOI request. And then, you wonder why the public's lost confidence. He says, "My question is, insofar as the ministry and the minister did not possess a copy of the report outlining the extent of the outbreak at Joseph Brant, how could the minister possibly be in a position to fully consider the merits of an inquiry?" I agree.

You failed to tell Ontarians the truth. You don't have any reports. You're hiding from accountability and liability. You have a choice today, Minister. Be different from your predecessor and your Premier. You can show leadership. Will you—

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

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree. The premise of the member's question is simply wrong. This government—my predecessor, the Premier and all members—has taken the leadership to put in place the necessary resources and supports to ensure patient safety. That's why we're beginning, and we will be the second jurisdiction in Canada, to have public reporting on C. difficile and we'll be expanding to include other hospital-borne infections. That's why we put in place, as I mentioned earlier, 137 new infection control positions in hospitals. That's why we've created 14 regional infection control networks. That's why we're working not only with the expert committee that we've brought together, but we've brought together the Ontario Hospital Association and their constituent partners in individual visits and teleconferencing in order to share those best practices that have been recognized to be amongst the best in the world as far as the kind of handwashing protocols that ought to be in place.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last night, we witnessed the President of the United States on television indicating that America's economy is at risk and that they could be facing a long and painful recession. As you well know, living in a border community, Ontario's economy is very closely linked to the economic well-being of the United States and the President's message has to be of concern.

Minister, can you advise the House what plans your government has in place to, as much as possible, protect

this province's jobs and savings if there is further deterioration in the US situation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've laid out a five-point plan that is solid, that is working. It involves targeted business tax cuts. It involves substantial investments in skills training and substantial investments in infrastructure, which will provide short-term employment and long-term productivity improvement. It provides for investments and innovation to help prepare for the economy of the 21st century and it involves building partnerships: partnerships with our municipalities, partnerships with our First Nations, partnerships with the federal government.

There is no doubt that the state of the US economy is of deep concern to all of us here in Ontario and indeed around the world. We will continue to implement the plan we've laid out. We believe it is the right plan and we believe it is showing results.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The minister's response should fall under the heading of alarming. We know the economic outlook facing the government has weakened noticeably since the spring and now it looks like it could get much, much worse. This government clearly has no contingency plans in place. Its answer is always the same: Point fingers at the federal government and repeat the mantra, "Five-point plan, five-point plan," and then apparently hide their heads under the blankets and hope it all goes away.

Minister, will you please try to give people worried about their jobs, their kids' futures and their pension some comfort that you are prepared to deal with a potential crisis in the US economy? Please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member this is not a potential crisis in the US economy; it has been there for 18 months. What hasn't been in this debate is your party.

The people of this province are looking to all levels of government to respond appropriately. We have laid out a plan which does just that. We have laid out a plan that makes targeted critical investments in the areas that we have been advised, by the business community, labour and others, are the appropriate places to make investments. We do so in the context of a balanced budget. We do so in the context of an economy whose growth—while there continues to be very modest growth, there continues to be growth. I will lay out on October 22 precisely where our numbers are, and I would remind the member that we built in reserve and contingency at all levels of the budget—

Interjection: Prudence.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —prudence—to ensure that Ontario is prepared to face the challenges that we have acknowledged for more than 18—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The reality is that they are ignoring experts and seem oblivious to the storm clouds circling this province. Almost 85% of our exports go to the United States. Almost one million Ontario jobs

are dependent on those markets. Before the recent crisis in the financial markets, TD Bank Financial Group predicted Ontario's unemployment rate going up above 7% and personal income stalling. Inflation is up; we know this. Housing starts, manufacturing sales and international merchandise exports are down. The signals are there; the alarm bells are ringing.

Minister, when are you going to admit that your five-point plan is failing the people of this great province and bring in policies, recommended by a range of experts, that can protect the economic well-being of this great province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we reject are the policies of tax cuts, which were present in the United States, and deregulation, which was present in the United States, the same panacea that you and your friends propose to offer. The time now is for prudence. The time is to hunker down. We have laid out a plan that does just that. I remind the member opposite that the very economists he has quoted have also said that our plan makes investments in the right places, our plan is prudent. Our plan, in the view of many people, including the 21 business leaders I met with yesterday morning, is the right plan. It involves careful and cautious response to the circumstances not only Ontario and Canada find themselves in, but indeed all western economies. This government is moving in—

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

POVERTY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. This government's long-term poverty plan is getting more long term by the day. First, the Premier says he has to go slow on poverty because of the economy. Now this minister says that the government strategy is not even "about what's in the budget next March." During these difficult economic times, how does this minister justify telling Ontarians that there will be no new expenditures for poverty in the upcoming budget and that they should just continue to wait for a plan that may never come?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me make it really clear that what has been said by the Premier and by myself is that we are on track to deliver a poverty reduction strategy, a long-term, comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for this province by the end of the year. The implementation of the strategy, as we have always said, will be in a manner that is as aggressive as we can do. Despite the attempt of members opposite to pull out certain questions from our consultation document and ignore the others, we are moving aggressively forward on this. I am as committed to this as I have ever been, as are members of my caucus and as is the Premier.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As economic downturn pushes more Ontarians into poverty, the government is backtracking on its poverty promises. The backtracking is also very disrespectful to the thousands of Ontarians who took

time to participate in their poverty consultations. Yesterday, the minister said the consultations were extraordinary. She's right. They are extraordinary, because the government won't even reveal what was said. That's extraordinary.

When will this government release a report, not just on its poverty plan, but a report dealing with the consultation and what those participants said during that process? We need to know what the consultation gave you in terms of information from the people who are actually living in poverty in this province. Why won't you reveal what's in those reports?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member opposite well knows, we have released all of the submissions that were made from organizations through the website. You have those reports, and you know what was said. I was happy to finally get a copy of your report yesterday, which was a list of things you heard—very similar to the things we heard. I wouldn't describe it as a strategy, but that's another point. We are not wasting any time. We are not waiting. We are delivering on issues immediately. This past July, the first Ontario benefit cheques started to be delivered to low-income families across the province. The minimum wage has gone from \$6.85, when we were elected, to \$8.75—it's on its way to \$10.25. We have introduced a low-income dental plan in our last budget, we have doubled the funding for student—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that this minister still will not reveal what was said in her consultations that she held across the province. She will not say what the government will do; she will not even say when the government will do it. In fact, she won't even state clearly who the plan is going to help. Sometimes the government says the plan will be comprehensive, and sometimes it's only going to apply to children. Could the minister at least clarify one thing for Ontarians: Will her government's plan really be comprehensive and apply to all people living in poverty in Ontario? Or will it only apply to children?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The answer to your question is this: We will be delivering a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for the province of Ontario. It will lay out a road map that, if implemented, over time, will reduce poverty in this province. We have every intention of implementing the strategy. It will speak to all people living in poverty in this province.

But our highest priority is breaking the cycle of poverty. Our focus to begin will be with children. We know that the most important thing we can do for kids living in poverty is to ensure they get the education they need to be successful in their lives. The evidence is very clear that investments made in young children pay off multiple-fold. We intend to listen to the research, and we will implement the strategy.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We don't need a long, long road map; we need the rubber to hit the road by this government.

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY SECTOR JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This next question is to the Minister of Finance. It appears that this government's sole response to Ontario's job crisis is to plead to all who will listen that Ontario needs to be treated the same as all other have-not provinces. What he refuses to admit is that it's his government's inaction over the past five years that has directly been responsible for Ontario's ongoing slide into have-not status. When will the minister admit that 235,000 lost manufacturing jobs, 40,000 lost forestry jobs and the growing list of devastated communities across Ontario is his responsibility? When will he stop passing the buck?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, in fact, the government has a five-point plan. We have invested over a billion dollars in skills training, which you voted against. We have invested in the last year \$9.9 billion in infrastructure, which the NDP voted against. We have invested \$3 billion in corporate tax cuts and tax cuts designed to protect the jobs of Hamilton workers, and you voted against it.

We are calling on the federal government for a partnership, and I'd like to know: Will Jack Layton stand up for Ontario? Will he ensure that if Ontario qualifies for equalization, Ontario will be treated fairly? Will Jack Layton ensure that Ontarians get equal per capita health care funding? What about it? What's Jack Layton's view on that issue? I ask the member opposite.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's even more clear from the minister's answer that he and the Premier intend to spend the rest of the federal election blaming everybody but themselves for Ontario's slide into the economic minor leagues. It's also clear from the minister's answer that he refuses to take responsibility for the failure of his own economic program, the five-point failure, such as doling out more than \$400 million to some of the world's largest auto companies without securing job guarantees.

When will the minister admit that his so-called "fairness for Ontario" campaign is nothing more than a cheap diversion from the real issue at hand: his government's complete and utter failure to sustain Ontario's manufacturing and resource jobs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier of Ontario is today at a Honda plant welcoming 300 new jobs to Ontario with money that we provided, which that member and her party voted against—the NDP, the "never done pandering" party.

This government has made strategic investments in the automotive sector and the high-tech sector to attract and maintain the jobs that will keep communities like St. Catharines and Windsor working. What we need is a federal partner. What we need is an opposition that won't vote against helping companies keep jobs. They voted against the Stelco assistance package. Were you against that, I ask the member? There is an appropriate role for government to take in working with business. We remain committed to that to protect the jobs and incomes of

Ontarians in Hamilton, in Windsor, in St. Catharines. Thank goodness—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We've had an astonishing 235,000 good-paying jobs lost in Ontario's manufacturing heartland, and all this government can say is, "It's not my fault. It's the federal government's fault." More than 40,000 forestry jobs have been lost in the north, and all this government can say is, "Please, Mr. Harper, just treat us like any other have-not province."

Well, the people of Ontario aren't buying the Premier's lame lines. They want this government to take responsibility, not shirk it. When will you finally quit playing the blame game and start protecting the jobs that are the lifeblood of Ontario communities?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I never thought I'd see the day when the Ontario NDP stands so firmly behind Stephen Harper.

This government is taking responsibility. This government is delivering a five-point package that is protecting our economy and helping to maintain jobs. I would invite the party opposite, instead of just talking about things, to put real proposals on the table. Explain to Ontarians why you voted against \$9.9 billion in infrastructure money. Tell unemployed Ontarians why you voted against more than a billion dollars for skills training. Tell Ontarians why you voted against targeted tax cuts for our manufacturers that are designed to help protect Ontario jobs. Tell them why you voted against it.

This government is taking appropriate measures with appropriate tools, recognizing—

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

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. This afternoon in the House, we will be discussing the issue of providing opportunities for young skilled workers in Ontario by changing the journeymen tradesperson to apprenticeship ratio from its current 3 to 1, which puts Ontario at the back of the pack in Canada, to a fair and reasonable ratio of 1 to 1.

Both you and the Premier have used the excuse of safety to avoid dealing with this matter. If this was a safety issue, then I think you would be on the phone screaming at the Liberal Premiers in BC and in New Brunswick, both of whom provide their skilled workers with 1-to-1 ratios.

Minister, I'm not sure if you're planning on being here for the debate this afternoon, so I'd like to take this opportunity to ask you: Do you support changing the current ratio from 3 to 1 into a fair and reasonable ratio of 1 to 1?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the member's question. We've had a chance to discuss this issue a number

of times in the House, and I just want to put some facts on the record.

First of all, we're one of the first governments in the history of Ontario to make apprenticeships a priority. Under our watch, we have seen an increase of 50,000 apprenticeships, which is quite extraordinary when you look at the dismal record of the last government that was in power.

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The member opposite likes to go on about a 3-to-1 ratio in the electrical sector. The fact is that this ratio only applies to larger companies. Smaller contractors, who represent the majority of electrical companies, are governed by a 1-to-1 ratio.

We are committed to improving and reforming the apprenticeship system. Based on industry advice, we have changed eight ratios in the construction trades during our time in government, as opposed to—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I just want to put on the record for the minister that the PC Party introduced the first apprenticeship program. So your history is wrong. You can't continue to duck and dodge this important matter at the expense of young and eager workers.

We also know that the colleges are well suited to teach skilled trades—they are getting that part—but what the people need is for you to remove that bottleneck that happens the minute they're done their schooling. They can't get their hands on training to complete the apprenticeship because of your ratios.

This afternoon, there are going to be many apprentices here at Queen's Park. Are you telling us this morning that Dalton McGuinty and you, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, are saying to those young people, even though you encourage them to drop everything and obtain a skilled trade, that they've made a mistake in their career choice to become skilled tradespersons? Yes or no: Do you support changing the journeyman-to-apprentice ratio in Ontario to 1 to 1?

Hon. John Milloy: I am very proud of the emphasis that we've put on apprenticeship training under our government. Let me give you a few facts about the PC Party. In their first three years, they had 37,000 new registrations; the Liberals, 60,000 new registrations. In their second mandate, they increased new registrations by over 30,000; we have doubled the number of annual registrations to over 60,000 in our first three years.

We have said over and over that we acknowledge the fact that we need increasing reforms and modernizations to the apprenticeship system. We looked for the best advice from Mr. Tim Armstrong, a respected expert in the field, who came out with a report a number of months ago which has been available to the public. That report made a very thoughtful and innovative recommendation for a college of trades, which we want to proceed with. I ask members opposite to join us in making sure that we have a college of trades to strengthen the system and to—

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

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Acting Premier: What did the McGuinty Liberals do to protect the 800 John Deere, Welland, jobs that have been shipped to Mexico?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To those families affected by that decision, our government continues to be concerned about them, and all others. We have made a number of investments across a range of sectors that have helped our economy weather the storm in manufacturing that is being felt all over North America.

To suggest that there are not challenges and that we can fix every problem simply is not accurate. The investments we've made in manufacturing, including the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, have helped protect a number of jobs, including producing new jobs which we are announcing today. There's more to be done. Those families in Welland affected by this need a government that is on their side, and they know that this government is, based on the investments, based on the undertakings—

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Some 800 jobs out of 1,000 that week alone, thousands more in the months preceding. I ask the government one more time. The workers in Welland don't need the Premier to wring his hands and tell them he feels their pain. He can send them a damn Hallmark card that says the same thing. They need work. They need jobs. What is this government doing to protect the jobs of workers in Welland, Niagara, across southern Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We were involved immediately, upon notification, with Welland. We are continuing to make investments in the manufacturing sector to help keep jobs, recognizing the tragedy of those job losses in Welland and job losses in factories across North America, indeed in the western world in the manufacturing sector.

There is no easy answer to this challenge and anybody who suggests that there is one is wrong. You need do no more than watch what was going on in the United States yesterday evening to come to terms with the order of magnitude of what the North American economy, indeed the world economy, is faced with. To suggest that any government can solve every problem is wrong. The solutions we've laid out are a good help, they're the right direction, and we'll continue to find innovative ways to work with those families who are dealing with the—

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

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Many constituents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham are concerned about the proposed construction of a 350-megawatt, single-cycle,

natural gas-fired generating plant in the northern York region. Some municipal leaders and citizen advocacy organizations have also expressed their concern. There have been conflicting reports about the need for this generating facility, especially since you, as the new minister, have made it clear that you're going to be focusing a lot on conservation and renewables.

Minister, what reassurance can you offer my constituents and the affected citizens of northern York region that the proposed power plant is needed?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for her interest in this and I know that other members have also been expressing interest in this. I think it's important to know, first off, as it relates to our electricity system, that reliability is job one. In the circumstances of York region, because it's an intensely growing spot, we do have some risk with respect to reliability. We have to recognize that the residents of York region have previously opposed transmission upgrades, which would have brought more power from off site, and that with the 3% projection in growth each year for electricity demand we really do get into a very vulnerable spot. As the reliability goes, the premise of the weakest link certainly comes into play.

Conservation is part and parcel of the mix. We anticipate 56 megawatts of saving in the northern part of York region, but as we look to the pressures of peak demand when people turn up the heat or turn on the air conditioning, the sufficiency of supply is not there, and that's why it's necessary to move forward with this peaking plant in the northern York region.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I know that the citizens of my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and indeed all Ontarians, understand the need for an adequate and reliable supply of power for our homes and businesses. My community has been working hard to reduce their energy consumption through a variety of conservation programs. This year, in his 2007 annual report, the Chief Energy Conservation Officer reported that Ontario had met its peak demand reduction target of 1,350 megawatts by 2007.

Last Thursday, at a speech to the Ontario Energy Association, you made an announcement about the government's integrated power system plan. In that announcement, you directed the OPA to review a modest portion of the IPSP, including the section about conservation. Can you tell this House what those changes were and how it will help the citizens of my riding?

Hon. George Smitherman: On the matter of conservation, the integrated power system plan has a very aggressive target of 6,300 megawatts. It is aggressive; everybody, I think, acknowledges that. What we want to make sure of is that the progress that we've made to date can be sustained, and that we can achieve those numbers. In part, we'll take a look at whether there are prospects to achieve them on an even more aggressive time frame than that which has been established.

In the province of Ontario, 75% of our energy supply last year was met by what I call the two ends—Niagara

Falls and nuclear—that is, the combination of our nuclear assets and our hydroelectric assets provided about 75% of our needs. We've made good progress, in fact, progress better than was first anticipated, with respect to the implementation of renewables into our supply mix.

Last week, I asked the Ontario Power Authority, working through their IPSP, to take a look at whether we could offer more aggressive targets with respect to renewables and whether those conservation targets, which are aggressive, could be met in a more timely manner. These are matters that are currently under review.

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APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I want to read from an e-mail that was sent to Dan Racicot, a member of the provincial advisory committee, or PAC, on construction and maintenance electricians. It's from Anika Fernando, an employee in your ministry. The e-mail asks Mr. Racicot to fill out a form to update the information in your ministry's database. Ms. Fernando goes on to give directions on how to fill out the form, and she says, "Please note that for the union member column, 'True' means you have a union affiliation and 'False' means you do not."

Minister, can you tell me why it's so important that your ministry ask for this information of whether you're a union member or not?

Hon. John Milloy: I'd be happy to look at the document the member is referring to, but again we go back to the first principle, which is that we look to the industry for their best advice in terms of apprenticeships and moving forward, and I'm very proud of the progress that we've made.

Our government has freely acknowledged the fact that we need further reforms in terms of our apprenticeship system and we need to look at how we get that advice from the industry. That's why, based on a recommendation that was brought forward by noted industry expert Tim Armstrong, we're proceeding with the establishment of a college of trades, and we've asked Kevin Whitaker, the head of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, to undertake work over the coming months to put together the framework for such a college, which is going to look at a variety of issues facing apprenticeships, keeping in mind how we can strengthen the system and how we can make sure more people are coming into the skilled trades and receiving the training they need.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, again today you've been hiding behind these provincial advisory committees, or PACs, and saying they are the ones that set the apprenticeship ratios in Ontario and decide how many young people will actually get an apprentice position in Ontario. But it's obvious from looking at the lists of the membership of the PACs that you've been stacking these PACs with your union buddies. They have no interest at all—in fact, they have a vested interest in ensuring that

the ratios aren't changed to one journeyman to one apprentice, like they are in other provinces.

Let me give you some examples. The brick and stone masonry PAC has four union members and three business reps. The drywallers, acoustic and lathing applicator PAC is stacked with members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters. The boilermakers PAC is pretty well completely filled up by members of the boilermakers union, Local 128.

Minister, again, these unions have no interest at all in changing the ratios, so you're giving us nothing but rhetoric. You're hiding behind the PACs. What are you doing, and why won't you—

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I find it a little passing strange. We've seen ratios change eight times under our watch; when they were in government, they changed none. If this was such a big issue, why didn't they change the ratios when they had the opportunity?

Again, we look for the best advice from PACs on how to strengthen the system. Let me give you one example: construction and maintenance electricians. Let's talk about the success in that field. New registrations have increased by 32% since 2003. Completion rates have increased by 151% since 2003.

To repeat again, we fully acknowledge the need for further reforms in the apprenticeship system. That's why we asked for the thoughtful advice of Mr. Tim Armstrong, a noted expert in the field, and that's why we're proceeding with his advice in terms of a college of trades. Again, I invite all opposition members, I invite all members of this House, to be part of this process to make sure we have the strongest apprenticeship system in Canada.

PROPANE EXPLOSION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. Will the minister hold Sunrise Propane accountable for the \$1.9-million cleanup?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thanks very much. First of all, let me say that our Ministry of the Environment was on the scene almost immediately after it happened. Our main concern is to make sure that the health and safety of the people in the area is protected.

Secondly, we issued a number of orders against Sunrise to make sure that the cleanup was done in the proper fashion. When they didn't come through with it, the city of Toronto, I think rightfully, then took action to make sure the people of that area were protected.

As Shelley Carroll said in the paper today, they appreciated the work that the ministry has done there over the last couple of months, particularly early on, to make sure the people of that area were best protected.

Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but the question was, who's going to end up holding the bag around the cost of the cleanup? The province is ultimately responsible for overseeing the propane industry. Municipal councillors in Toronto argue, very rightly, that the \$1.9-million bill should not be covered by the local property taxpayer. If Sunrise Propane is pushed into bankruptcy and cannot cover the costs of cleanup, will this minister commit right now to fully covering the cleanup costs incurred by the city of Toronto?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I think the city of Toronto took the right action. When no action was taken by Sunrise, they took action to make sure that the site was cleaned up. Number two, they now have the ability, in legislation, to go after Sunrise to make sure that they pay for the cost that Sunrise itself should have had to pay initially. Why don't we wait and see what happens there, and then later on we can always discuss what would happen in the event that Sunrise can't come across.

The number one priority was to make absolutely certain that the people in that area were protected. I personally went out there, spoke to a number of the people who were involved in the cleanup of the site and spoke to the MOE people that were on-site as well. I think that the whole operation from this terrible event was handled in a very professional manner by all concerned.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, there is no doubt that more and more students are seeking a post-secondary education and are choosing Ontario schools to obtain it. In my city of Hamilton, Mohawk College and McMaster University have seen the numbers of applicants surge over the past four years. In fact, I understand that post-secondary enrolment is up by 25% in Ontario since 2004, with 100,000 more students attending college or university. Although this is good news, there is no doubt that increased enrolment is putting additional pressures on our colleges and universities. I would like to know, what is the minister doing to ensure that colleges and universities have the means necessary to support this growth?

Hon. John Milloy: I would like to thank the member not only for her question but for her commitment to post-secondary education, both in Mohawk College and McMaster University, which are part of her community.

The member is correct. We've seen a tremendous growth in post-secondary education in the province, which is something that I think all of us should celebrate—100,000 more students. At the same time, we have to make sure that there's the capacity there to support those students, and one of the thrusts of our skills-to-jobs action plan, as well as last fall's economic statement, has been on the infrastructure side of the equation. We saw last year alone almost \$700 million invested in colleges and universities to maintain and enhance their facilities, as well as meet their capital needs. Over the

summer, the Premier and I announced \$190 million for strategic skills training projects at a number of colleges, including Mohawk, and I'm pleased to announce that Mohawk College received \$9.2 million for the —

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

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I want to tell the minister that when I've had the opportunity to meet with the administrations of Mohawk College and McMaster, what they tell me is that institutions need more than investments in infrastructure to accommodate the growing numbers of students in their classrooms. They worry about what's happening with the faculty-to-student ratios and the increased demand for graduate spaces. Could the minister tell us what is being done to address the pressures caused by enrolment growth at Mohawk and McMaster and all other post-secondary institutions in the province?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I'm happy to address the operational, but if I can just put it on the record, it was \$9.2 million for the final phase of Mohawk's Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Research, Resources and Training Institute, more commonly known as the STARRT Institute. But the member is correct, it's more than bricks and mortar. We are committed to ensuring that our province's universities and colleges have the means to support the growth. I'm happy to say we've increased operating funding for colleges and universities by 58% since 2003. That's \$1.5 billion. At Mohawk, operating grants have increased by 59% since 2003. That translates to an additional \$337 million that we've invested in Mohawk to make sure that we have excellence in education and they can accommodate this tremendous growth which all of us should celebrate.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In 2005, as part of the Places to Grow initiative, your government mandated growth in my riding of Halton. Indeed, the region is now the fastest-growing region in all of Canada. However, your growth plan was dangerously incomplete and health care infrastructure must accompany mandated economic and population growth, but in Halton the equation is lopsided. As the population skyrockets, the hospitals are overloaded and staff are overworked. Minister, why has the construction of the new hospital in Oakville been delayed and why is the expansion of the Milton hospital yet to begin?

1130

Hon. David Caplan: One of the interesting effects of having so many hospital projects—over 100 that we've been able to support throughout the province—has been the fact that we're projecting what the trades needs are. Infrastructure Ontario has done that work and has determined that there are capacity issues as far as the ability to respond to tenders and provide the trades. That's why they have been able to contact a number of hospitals or proponents who are on the project list and let them know

what the re-staging plans were. I would just say that the member for Oakville, Kevin Flynn, has made a very strong representation. If there is the ability to move them up on the list, we would be very supportive of doing so.

I would say to the member, in relation to other projects, that, yes, while 100 hospital projects is, in size and scope, the largest expansion in generations in Ontario, there is still more work to do—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, your excuses mean nothing to the people of Oakville, the people of Milton and the people of Burlington who face overcrowded emergency rooms. The fact of the matter is, your government insisted and mandated the growth in Milton, Oakville and Burlington. Your responsibility to provide those people with health care has been absolutely, totally lacking in the process.

Minister, when is Oakville going to get their hospital, which they desperately need? The current hospital is full to the seams, it's bursting at the seams. They need that new hospital and they need it now. When will that hospital commence construction?

Hon. David Caplan: I would refer the member to Statistics Canada and the census data from 2001 to 2006. The town of Milton grew 75%. No one on this side of the House or any government has dictated that Halton region grow at any particular pace. But look at the historic rates of growth that have taken place in Halton region and other municipalities over the past number of decades. In fact, the support for Trafalgar Memorial is still proceeding. It's proceeding on a re-scoped schedule. We are eager to see it move ahead. But I would add for the member that we do recognize that growth areas in the province face some significant challenges. That's why my predecessor brought in specific growth funding to support health care, particularly in the 905 and in the GTA. The 2008 budget some—

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

SIGN LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Minister of Education: The Ontario College of Teachers is preparing to set minimum American Sign Language/LSQ standards for teachers of deaf students. However, the Ontario College of Teachers is waiting for approval from the Ministry of Education to allow them to develop and implement ASL/LSQ proficiency policies before they can develop and implement the ASL curriculum in the classroom. In light of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code, and in light of your own regulation statements in this regard last year, when can we expect you to instruct the Ontario College of Teachers to do the job they want to do?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very glad to be able to speak to the issue of ASL capacity in the system. I want to acknowledge the work of Gary Malkowski on this. He has been a fabulous, tireless advocate for building ASL

capacity in the system. I can say that a lot of the work that we have done over the last couple of years can be directly attributed to the work that he's done with us in the ministry.

We have developed a draft ASL curriculum and we've assigned extra teachers to provincial schools to help develop that ASL curriculum. Nipissing University has worked with the provincial schools branch to offer additional qualifications for teachers of the deaf. We had 50 teachers this summer at ASL immersion camps and two provincial school teachers received grants through the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program to provide ASL training.

So my answer to the member opposite is that I will work with the Ontario College of Teachers as part of our overall strategy to increase ASL capacity in the system.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand that you acknowledge the work of Gary Malkowski. My question was, when will the Minister of Education authorize the Ontario College of Teachers to proceed in developing and implementing the ASL/LSQ proficiency policies in the classroom? That's the question. We understand Gary has done a lot of work; you're working with him, you're doing something. But specific to this question, and specific to the fact that tomorrow there's going to be an International Day of Sign Language Rights and deaf education rally, might you be willing to go to the rally and tell them when you're going to say to the Ontario College of Teachers, "Here are the rules. Here's what we expect. Now go out and do your work"? Will you do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I actually am meeting with the Ontario College of Teachers today. It certainly is one of the things I will talk to them about. I am actively engaged in this file, whether it's ASL or LSQ, which is the Québécois sign language. It is extremely important to me as a minister and to us as a government that we improve ASL/LSQ capacity in the system. I will be talking with the Ontario College of Teachers; I will work with them to allow for that capacity to be built. We changed the regulation; the law had been brought in by the NDP but the regulation was never brought in. We brought in the regulation that allowed for ASL delivery in the classroom on the part of school boards. I will continue to work to improve capacity and I will be talking to the Ontario College of Teachers immediately.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Roughly half of all newcomers to Canada make Ontario their home. These people bring with them important social, economic and cultural contributions, and they're a vital part of our province's diverse workforce. In western Mississauga, one can literally hear scores of different languages, regional dialects and accents. This cultural and linguistic diversity is one of our principle strengths; in fact, it's a strategic asset that allows our province to compete with the world.

However, this same linguistic diversity is often a newcomer's biggest challenge. Newcomers come to Ontario with many skills. The ability to speak English or French is often not one of them, and is in fact a barrier to meaningful employment. People in Mississauga know that getting their careers restarted is their top priority. How does your ministry help equip newcomers with language skills to reduce this barrier to employment?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Mississauga–Streetsville. My ministry is certainly aware of the important role that language plays in finding meaningful employment. The ability to speak English or French opens up doors of opportunity for newcomers. This is why I am pleased to tell the honourable member that my ministry invests almost \$60 million annually in language training for over 100,000 newcomers. This training program is available in many levels of language ability and all around the province. Since 2003, our government has increased funding to adult English as a second language and French as a second language by 22%. These programs are part of our commitment to enhance economic growth by investing in the skills and training of newcomers.

Mr. Bob Delaney: The unemployment of newcomers continues to be a major issue across Ontario. Newcomers to Ontario tend to be very highly educated, and they're strongly motivated to work in the fields that they were trained in. Our newcomers often find themselves with very senior and well-developed skills in the trades and management and in their professions. Their experience and skills are vital for us, as a province, to address our economic growth. Their skills are in high demand, and Ontario needs those very skills in our labour market. Very often, highly skilled newcomers have some knowledge of English or French, but not enough to ensure employment in their field of training or in their area of expertise. What are we doing as a province to break down barriers for newcomers, so that they can find employment in their field of training or expertise?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member again for the question. Newcomers are vital to our economy. As our population ages, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that by 2011, newcomers will account for 100% of our net labour force growth. Since 2003, our government has invested over \$600 million to deliver services to newcomers: on language training, both English and French training programs; Global Experience Ontario mentorship; partnering with private sectors; and enacted Bill 124 to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials. We are the government. We understand that a strong Canada needs a strong Ontario, and one of our greatest strengths is in these newcomers.

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SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, I've heard from parents in Oxford whose children have develop-

mental disabilities and are concerned that under Bill 77, your application centres will create more red tape and take precious resources away from the people who need them. We have heard reports that, you, Minister, have said that the centres will be funded from existing resources. Parents want to know, how can you take money away from their children to fund red tape?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased to rise today and talk about Bill 77. Bill 77 has been developed under our leadership. This party is going out and asking questions in the House to misinform the people of what is in the bill.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask that you withdraw that comment, please.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I withdraw that, but I still think that that is what is going on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. Please, clearly withdraw.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I withdraw that.

This Bill 77 will help in three special areas—and many more—but I'm going to talk about the three special areas. It will improve service. People will only have to go to one place to apply for service and support. Prior to amending Bill 77, parents had to go to different places to make applications. So this will simplify it for the parents.

Mr. Hardeman: Well, Minister, I wish that you had been happy to get up to answer the question rather than talk about Bill 77, because the people in Oxford wanted to hear the answer. The current system isn't working.

A mother in Oxford said: "A crisis already exists in Oxford county. Young adults are left at home with nothing to do all day but regress in development. There are approximately 45 adults that have applied for Passport funding and only one quarter have received some type of funding, and most not enough for meaningful support. Others have been approved but no funding is available."

Minister, can you tell these people how long it will be that you will keep them waiting before you give them the support that they qualify for and need today?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Passport was initiated by this government in 2005. We are a victim of our success. There is a lot of demand out there, and we have invested millions of dollars in that program, actually \$27 million in this program. And every time we propose improvements in the developmental sector, they vote against it.

What had they done when they were in power? The legacy they left was a 22% decrease in social assistance and all services that help those with developmental services. This government has actually invested \$1.5 billion—every year we are investing. We know that the need is there and we will continue to help that sector. We will continue to support the parents who keep their loved ones at home.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. By the way, congratulations on your new portfolio.

Over the past year, I've worked with the Ontario Federation of Labour and injured workers, demanding that the flawed experience rating program be completely cancelled. The WSIB is slapping the wrists of the companies where a worker has been killed on the job. These companies lose their experience rating for a whole year while families lose their loved ones forever. When will this minister stand up for injured workers and completely abolish the flawed experience rating program? And while the doors to review at the WSIB have been opened, will this minister throw the whole organization wide open and provide the Provincial Auditor and the Ombudsman with the oversight needed to conduct a complete review?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for his question on two fronts: first, on bringing forward this very important issue. Also, the member was actually my critic in my previous role as the Minister of Tourism. I was always anticipating a question, but they never seemed to come.

I look forward to working with the member on this issue and many other matters that affect our Ontario workers and their health and safety and, for sure, to reducing the workplace injuries, as we all in this chamber work towards. I'm also very excited about this new role, continuing with the many successes of my predecessor under the leadership of Premier McGuinty.

One of the things that we have done—as the member knows, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is an arm's-length agency from the Ministry of Labour. They are undergoing an internal review. They've brought in experts to look at experience rating—

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

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

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

“Whereas the current Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

“Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000 people,” and the current population is now well over 170,000 people; and

“Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by ‘Places to Grow,’ an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 in 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

“Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

“Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay.”

I put my name on this petition of well over 1,000 names.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly sent to me from within the Credit Valley Hospital and autographed by a number of recent visitors to the hospital. 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 Paige to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition from the good people of Milton.

“Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people”—more than double—“and is still growing rapidly; and

“Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called ‘Places to Grow’; and

“Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 people in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

“Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and

Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital.”

I’m pleased to add my name to this petition of well over 1,000 names.

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GUN CONTROL

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition I’d like to read on behalf of my colleague from Scarborough Southwest, and it’s signed by a number of people in his riding, especially many from Fir Valley court. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas access to guns is a major cause behind an increase in violent crime;

“Whereas such crime has been steadily increasing over a number of years;

“Whereas current preventive initiatives have been put in place to stem the tide of violent crime but a direct approach targeting gun usage has not been undertaken;

“Whereas signs specifically stating a zero tolerance attitude toward gun use in the commission of gun violence need to be created and erected to demonstrate our collective disdain for this type of activity;

“We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the minister of public safety to implement an initiative to construct a zero tolerance gun usage sign and have these signs placed on all province of Ontario property, such as major roads and buildings.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Imaan to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition here from the good people in Oakville regarding their hospital.

“Whereas the current Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

“Whereas Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000 people and the current population is now 170,000;

“Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by Places to Grow, an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 people in 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

“Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

“Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville’s overflow needs;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay.”

I’m pleased to add my signature to this very worthwhile petition of over 1,000 names.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: I’m pleased to introduce a petition. Although it’s not from my riding of Niagara Falls, it is in support of Bill 33, and it’s from Ajax and Whitby. The petition reads as follows:

“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....

“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’m pleased to sign my signature in support of the bill and give this to page Kritika to present to the House.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people, and is still growing rapidly; and

“Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature, called ‘Places to Grow’; and

“Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

“Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton’s explosive growth and parts of the

hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital.”

And as I am in support, I've affixed my signature and given it to Connor.

VIOLENCE IN ENTERTAINMENT

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have a petition which I would like to read to the House.

“Whereas the movie Righteous Violence marketing tag line, ‘Most people respect the badge; everybody respects the gun,’ condones, encourages and incites violence, in blatant violation of code 14 of the Advertising Standards Canada regulations;

“Whereas we, as concerned citizens and parents, object to exploiting of our youth through this messaging of condoning guns, disrespect of authority and violence, especially in light of the many recent shootings in our communities;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that Alliance Films, the Canadian distributor of the movie, immediately remove all billboards and advertising with the offensive tag line.

“We also invite Al Pacino and Robert De Niro to come to our communities to bring a message of hope to our young people instead of promoting guns.”

I do concur with the petitioners, and I'm happy to affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people, and is still growing rapidly; and

“Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called ‘Places to Grow’; and

“Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

“Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton's explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital.”

Thank you very much for the opportunity to read this petition into the record.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to join with my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora on his petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

It's a pretty good petition and certainly a good cause. I'm pleased to sign it and to ask page Imaan to carry it for me.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further petitions, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise today to address a very dire situation in my riding of Halton. I rise on behalf of the unfortunate sick and their families who are facing inadequate health care in one of Ontario's most prosperous regions. In 2005, the McGuinty government mandated Halton as a “place to grow.” They said it was a comprehensive, long-term economic plan. They promised that the plan would include infrastructure to support growth. Halton is growing; there is no doubt about that. Oakville continues to expand, while Milton is bursting at the seams, and the fastest-growing community in Canada.

When the government approved construction of the new Oakville–Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, the people cheered, but now, before the first shovel hit the ground, the project has been delayed for over a year and the people are worried. Emergency rooms are overcrowded. Families travel long distances to find available services in Hamilton or Mississauga. Health care staff are overworked and tired. If ever, God forbid, there was a health crisis in Halton, I'm not sure if we could cope. Given this government's record on health and their inability to

foresee or deal with C. difficile or listeriosis, we can't rule anything out. We must be prepared.

If the government wants us to grow so rapidly, they have to go all the way. It is in the control of the Minister of Health, the Minister of Infrastructure and the Premier. They tell us that it's a capacity problem; the problem, however, is that Halton is on the bottom of the list after being mandated to grow. The people of Halton deserve much better.

VIOLENCE IN ENTERTAINMENT

Mr. Mario Sergio: Today, I bring to your attention an issue that gives me great concern, and it is regarding the promotion of guns through recent movie advertising. I'm appalled by the actions taken by movie advertisers and marketers regarding the new Al Pacino-Robert De Niro film, for the irresponsible message they are sending in trying to promote their latest film, *Righteous Kill*.

"Most people respect the badge; everybody respects the gun," their message states. This is a terrible way to promote box office success at the expense and detriment of our young people. Mr. Pacino and Mr. De Niro probably did not even reflect on the significance of their message, but this is definitely not a positive message, and most definitely not the right message reaching our youth.

Our young people need mentors who can play a leadership role, from whom they can be taught respect, the value of human life and all the wonderful potential life has to offer, including growing up with the ability to give and receive respect and dignity. I'm sure that Al Pacino and Robert De Niro would agree that while their message is healthy for the box office, it is deadly among our youth.

While I personally admire their acting qualities, I would challenge both Pacino and De Niro to recognize and admit that such a message is wrong and immoral. I would invite them to come to my riding and bring a message of hope to our youth.

LEGION WEEK

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise to acknowledge that this is Legion Week, and ask all members to join me in paying tribute to the men and women who support our veterans and those who are serving our armed forces through legions across the province.

Legion Week gives us all pause to reflect and honour those Canadian men and women who gave and continue to give so much in their service to our country. This week at Legion Halls in Newmarket and Aurora and across the province, there are ample opportunities for us to see and be inspired by the historical reminders of the great conflicts in which our veterans served and in which many of their comrades-in-arms paid the ultimate price to protect the values and freedoms that we hold in common as Canadians.

During Legion Week 2008, we pay special tribute to the fallen Canadian peacekeepers in Afghanistan as we

remember their grieving families with the assurance that they and their sacrifice will always be remembered and deeply cherished by us all. On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I gratefully acknowledge our veterans for all they have done and continue to do to improve our quality of life, while constantly reminding us of the heroism and self-sacrifice of Canada's military heroes in all generations.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Tonight, Hamilton will be out in full force to protest a major restructuring being proposed to our city's hospitals. The proposal calls for closing a hospital emergency department completely to adults. Of the many people I've spoken to, very few want this to happen, but it's being rammed through against the community's wishes. The public must be given an opportunity to be heard on this issue.

Trying to get some accountability is like a game of Ping-Pong. I've written to the Minister of Health, the local health integration network—the LHIN—and the hospital's CEO. The McGuinty government says, "Speak to the hospital." The CEO says, "Speak to the LHIN." The LHIN says, "There's no time to consult. The government's new law forces decisions from a LHIN within 60 days of receiving a proposal."

Both Hamilton Health Sciences Centre and the LHIN are non-elected bodies, yet the government is elected and is hiding behind these unaccountable boards to avoid accountability for a restructuring that very few people support. Hamilton paramedics warned last night that ambulance services will suffer under the proposed plan and costs will rise. Doctors, nurses and other hospital staff continue to express deep concern about the changes. Our city council has demanded hearings. Hamilton and District Labour Council has pledged an all-out battle.

The people of Hamilton aren't going to take this lying down. The loss of a hospital emergency department for adults carries serious consequences: an erosion of access to quality health care. It's hard to believe this is happening under the McGuinty government. It feels more like the Harris government.

REAL PEOPLE CAMPAIGN

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Wilma Arthurs is an amateur photographer with a great talent and a great passion. More importantly, Wilma is the mother of a 17-year-old intellectually challenged daughter. She is a volunteer advocate who sits on our local adult developmental services planning group, as well as being a director with the Community Living Sarnia-Lambton board. She's also a member of the Lifelong Caregivers Support Group of Sarnia-Lambton, some of whom have joined us here today.

Wilma started a grassroots project this spring, called the Real People Campaign. She has taken photographs of 29 families of children and young adults with develop-

mental challenges and has accompanied these photos with the stories of each of these families. Those stories convey the love these families have for their special family member, and it also recounts the hardships facing these families. The photos are amazing in their simplicity and intensity. They portray real families—real people just like our families—but these families have a unique challenge that they face every day.

Wilma's campaign is gaining momentum. Windsor is now documenting their families in the same way, and it is hoped that many other areas will join them in putting a tangible and real face to these families for all of us. I want to extend our thanks and support to people like Wilma and the Lifelong Caregivers Support Group of Sarnia-Lambton for their daily struggle and their loving approach to life.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The Minister of Community and Social Services, when responding to my question yesterday about why individuals with developmental disabilities are not given the same rights as all Ontario citizens, gave an answer that needs to be corrected.

Under Liberal Bill 77, individuals living in group homes will have their right to privacy removed by this government. If you live in a group home in Ontario, you can expect that at any time an inspector may, without warrant and without asking for your consent, enter your home. The minister said we're doing exactly what we're doing in long-term care. It's not true.

I'd like to read into the record the actual section of the Long-Term Care Act that deals with the protection of privacy, for the benefit of the minister: "No program supervisor shall enter a place that is being used as a dwelling, except with the consent of the occupier or under the authority of a warrant issued under section 158 of the Provincial Offences Act."

The minister needs to do the right thing and amend the legislation to remove entry without consent. I would respectfully ask that the minister correct her own record in this House so that Ontarians understand how the McGuinty Liberals are removing the rights of Ontario citizens with developmental disabilities.

CORAL PLACE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I rise today to congratulate everyone at Coral Place, in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South, on the occasion of their 15th anniversary. Coral Place is a non-profit housing complex located at Highway 10 and Eglinton, and features 103 units of affordable housing for the people of Mississauga. But more than that, Coral Place residents connect with each other, socialize and enjoy special events. The residents have not only made Coral Place their home but also their community.

I would like to acknowledge Dawn Langtry and all of the staff for the wonderful work they do in making Coral Place so special for so many people. I would also like to thank everyone at the Federation of Chinese Canadian Professionals for all of the generous support they have provided Coral Place over the past 15 years. Finally, to the tenants' association and to all the residents of Coral Place, happy anniversary.

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BRIDGE CROSSING

Mr. Phil McNeely: On September 4, the primary findings of the interprovincial crossing in the national capital region environmental assessment were released by the National Capital Commission, Ministry of Transportation and the Ministre des Transport de Quebec. The preliminary results are the product of a review of the technical issues and social and environmental impacts of the crossings. The panel chose Kettle Island as the preferred crossing site from among 10 alternative sites proposed.

It is obvious that the truck traffic is best served with a crossing west of Orléans. Yesterday, public consultations were held in Ottawa to provide a forum for discussion and debate on this decision.

I want to take this brief opportunity to clarify my position on this very important issue to my community of Orléans. I've always been clear that I am in favour of a location for the bridge that minimally impacts Orléans or any other residential community. When the study presented the traffic projections for the new bridge, I realized the major impacts that peak hourly traffic of 2,000 vehicles and 1,000 trucks a day would have on our communities. I changed my support from the Kettle Island location to any location west of Orléans. I have not wavered in my resolve to protect our community, and hope that a solution can still be found that will protect the communities from Manor Park south to the Queensway. I will continue to work with my colleagues, with the city councillors and with my community to resolve issues such as the bridge, the split and the Hunt Club extension.

PAN AMERICAN GAMES

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise in the House today to discuss an exciting opportunity for the province of Ontario and the greater Golden Horseshoe area.

It was recently announced that the government of Ontario, in partnership with Ottawa, would be launching a bid to host the 2015 Pan American Games. These games will provide an economic boost for southern Ontario and bring athletes and spectators from all 42 countries across the Americas to our wonderful province.

The games will provide a boost to the Ontario economy, generating over \$2 billion for the local economy. The games will also bring an estimated 250,000 tourists to the region, who will undoubtedly enjoy the wonderful restaurants, outstanding culture, first-class shopping

centres and entertainment in the Golden Horseshoe area. This immediate economic boost will be in addition to the 17,000 skilled jobs created by the games in a wide range of sectors, from construction to the hospitality industry.

These games will not only cement our place as a world-class travel destination, but the strategic investments we make in the training facilities and event facilities will make southern Ontario a premier destination for Canadian athletes and athletic competitions from all over the world.

I want to encourage all Ontarians to learn more about the bid and the wonderful event that is the 2015 Pan American Games. This, again, will not only be good for the athletes, but it will be good for all of the communities in the Golden Horseshoe, from Niagara to Hamilton and St. Catharines, Toronto, Durham—all across southern Ontario. The Pan Am Games are a win-win situation for all Ontarians.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1068080 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2008

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr14, An Act to revive 1068080 Ontario Limited.

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): Pursuant to standing order 85, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

HOME ENERGY RATING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'ÉVALUATION DE L'ÉNERGIE DOMESTIQUE

Mr. McNeely moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act respecting energy rating for specified residential buildings / Projet de loi 101, Loi traitant de l'évaluation de l'énergie pour des bâtiments d'habitation précisés.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: The bill requires the preparation of home energy rating reports with respect to detached and semi-detached homes, and low-rise, multi-unit residential buildings. The requirement to prepare the report applies to persons who sell or lease a building for which a building permit application is made on or after January 1, 2010. For all other buildings, the requirement applies to persons who enter into an agreement for purchase and sale on or after January 1, 2011, and persons who enter into a tenancy agreement on or after January 1, 2012. The report must indicate the energy efficiency of the building in accordance with prescribed methodology and provide any other prescribed information.

SENIORS' OMBUDSMAN ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'OMBUDSMAN DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to establish the Seniors' Ombudsman / Projet de loi 102, Loi créant le poste d'ombudsman des personnes âgées.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: The bill creates the Office of Seniors' Ombudsman to investigate complaints and make recommendations respecting the impact on seniors of the administration of public bodies in Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today, I rise to take this opportunity, and it gives me great pleasure, to commend the efforts of the 137 Ontario Olympic athletes and 43 Ontario Paralympic athletes who represented us so proudly at the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics and Paralympics.

Ontario athletes brought home 11 of the 18 medals captured at the Beijing Summer Olympics and 10 of the 50 medals won at the Beijing Summer Paralympics.

At the Summer Olympics, equestrian Eric Lamaze, from Schomberg, won Canada's first ever Olympic gold in individual show jumping. He also helped secure a silver in team jumping with an all-Ontario team that included nine-time Olympian Ian Millar, from Perth; Jill Henselwood, from Oxford Mills; and Mac Cone, from King City.

Canada's flag-bearers for the opening and closing ceremonies were both from Ontario. Adam van Koeverden, from Oakville, bore the flag for the opening ceremonies. Adam won silver in the men's single kayak 500-metre race. Trampoline gymnast Karen Cockburn carried the flag for the closing ceremonies. Karen is one of four Canadian athletes to have medalled at three consecutive Olympic Games.

At the Paralympics, swimmer Chelsey Gotell brought home Ontario's first medals and finished with an amazing total of five medals. In athletics, Ontario Paralympians captured three bronze medals: Jason Dunkerley, of Ottawa, in the 1,500-metre race; Stephanie Reid, of Thornhill, in the 200-metre race; and Brampton's Kyle Pettey in shot put.

Canada's silver-medal winning men's basketball team included three Ontario athletes: Abdi Fatah Dini, Adam Lancia and Christopher Stoutenburg.

Those are just 13 of the 21 medals won by Ontarians.

I want to personally congratulate each and every one of our talented Ontario athletes who trained so hard, and so proudly represented us in Beijing. Their achievements are an inspiration for our children and youth, and for our future generations.

The McGuinty government's Quest for Gold program has helped over 8,000 athletes since 2006. With this year's investment, it has provided \$32.9 million in direct financial assistance to athletes, as well as enhanced coaching, training and expanded competitive opportunities in Ontario.

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Twenty-nine per cent of our Olympians and 26% of our Paralympians were Quest for Gold recipients. Quest for Gold has also provided funding to athletes and facility upgrades through the Road to Excellence program. This program was designed to help Canada finish as one of the top 16 nations in the medal standings in the 2008 Beijing Summer Games.

Similarly, we are investing \$2.5 million in Ontario athletes over the next three years through Own the Podium. The goal of this program is for Canada to finish first overall in medal counts at the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver.

We are also working hard to bring home more international events. As my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence just stated, our bid for the 2015 Pan American games, if successful, is projected to inject close to \$2 billion into Ontario's economy by attracting 250,000 tourists and creating an estimated 17,000 jobs. The games would pump a \$1-billion capital investment into sport and recreation, providing much-needed world-class facilities where our amateur athletes can train and compete. It would also leave a long-lasting legacy of new and/or improved community facilities.

Supporting our high-performance athletes will continue to be a priority for Ontario's government. They inspire pride among us all and have proven that Canada can compete with the world's best. Congratulations to all our Olympians and all our Paralympians. Thank you.

DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me introduce Chris McKillop from Ottawa, who is with us in the audience today.

Chers collègues, il me fait un grand plaisir aujourd'hui de m'adresser à vous à titre de ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, en cette journée spéciale pour les francophones de l'Ontario.

En effet, c'est le 25 septembre 1975 que M. Gaétan Gervais, professeur d'histoire à l'Université Laurentienne, a conçu le projet de créer un symbole pour les francophones. Il était accompagné d'un groupe d'étudiants dont Jacqueline England, qui a cousu le drapeau. Il y avait aussi Michel Dupuis, Yves Tassé et Donald Obonsawin, ce dernier que plusieurs d'entre vous avaient connu par la suite en tant que haut fonctionnaire au gouvernement provincial.

Le drapeau franco-ontarien a donc été officiellement hissé pour la première fois le 25 septembre 1975 à l'Université de Sudbury, à une époque bouleversée par de grands changements sociaux et politiques. Partout au pays, les francophones se faisaient entendre. Et en Ontario aussi, les francophones étaient à la recherche de repères leur permettant de forger leur identité. Ce faisant, c'est une page importante de leur mémoire collective qu'ils étaient en train d'écrire.

Les créateurs du drapeau franco-ontarien ont été des artisans de cette révolution tranquille en Ontario. Ils comprirent que l'engagement individuel était fondamental, mais qu'en s'unissant, l'impact en était multiplié. Ils comprirent que le dynamisme d'un groupe était tributaire de sa vigueur identitaire. Ils comprirent que les francophones avaient besoin d'un symbole rassembleur.

Je remercie ces créateurs qui furent bien plus que des pionniers. Ils furent des visionnaires et ils firent bien plus que teindre l'histoire franco-ontarienne de vert et de blanc; il y a 33 ans, ils ont modelé le présent et ont imaginé l'avenir.

Le vert du drapeau représente nos étés, magnifiques étés avec tant à découvrir. Le blanc symbolise nos majestueux hivers. La fleur de lys traduit notre appartenance à la francophonie mondiale. La fleur de trille nous identifie en même temps comme Ontariens et Ontariennes à part entière.

Le drapeau franco-ontarien manifeste la solidarité entre Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes et leur volonté irrévocable d'occuper en Ontario la place qui leur revient dans les secteurs économique, politique, social et culturel.

Nous pouvons tous, avec fierté, apprécier les grandes réalisations des francophones qui ont mené à la reconnaissance du droit aux services en français dans les années 1970. Depuis, les gouvernements ontariens successifs ont permis que le français devienne la langue de la justice, de l'éducation, et qu'il occupe une place prépondérante dans certaines municipalités et dans différents domaines clés, comme la culture et la santé.

Vous savez, la dernière année a été particulièrement riche en réalisations pour les francophones. Notamment, la création du Commissariat aux services en français permet maintenant d'assurer une plus grande responsabilisation des ministères envers les services en français.

Le gouvernement vient tout juste d'adopter une loi historique qui permet à la chaîne éducative TFO d'être entièrement indépendante.

De plus, la toute récente création de 266 nouvelles places de garderie de langue française s'inscrit dans le plan du gouvernement pour accroître l'accès à des services de garde agréés et abordables.

Enfin, la Stratégie-jeunesse de l'Office des affaires francophones en préparation a pour but de mobiliser la jeunesse franco-ontarienne et d'assurer la relève pour la promotion du fait français en Ontario.

Surtout, depuis cette année, les Franco-Ontariens ont à leur disposition un nouveau moyen de manifester leur

identité. En plus du drapeau que nous célébrons aujourd'hui, existent maintenant des plaques d'immatriculation automobile disponibles en français avec le slogan « Tant à découvrir ». Désormais, les Franco-Ontariens peuvent montrer leur appartenance francophone sur la route.

Ce ne sont là que quelques exemples qui illustrent la diversité, l'ampleur et la portée de l'offre des services en français. Au fil du temps, les grands accomplissements de la communauté francophone ont consolidé leur appartenance à la province et, de ce fait, ont renforcé la signification du drapeau franco-ontarien.

Je remercie tous les députés des trois partis pour avoir soutenu l'adoption du drapeau franco-ontarien à titre de symbole officiel de la province en 2001. Ce geste unanime manifeste notre reconnaissance à la participation historique de la population francophone dans l'épanouissement de notre province.

Depuis l'adoption du drapeau franco-ontarien il y a 33 ans, combien d'institutions francophones, d'événements, de spectacles, de résidences et d'individus ont arboré, et arborent toujours, le drapeau franco-ontarien!

Traversant le temps, il vieillit bien. Sa riche symbolique alimente l'avenir, un avenir prometteur, jeune, dynamique et expressif. Le drapeau franco-ontarien est un rappel de ce que sont les francophones. Il les rallie avec la somme de tous leurs efforts et de toutes leurs réalisations. Ce drapeau est notre porte-étendard culturel et il symbolise cette belle langue francophone et notre ouverture sur le monde. Il flotte fièrement et de plus en plus haut. À l'instar d'un grand messenger, il tend la main.

Aujourd'hui, les francophones poursuivent leur route en brandissant leur drapeau en signe de reconnaissance. Ils vous disent merci pour votre intérêt et votre soutien.

Je vous souhaite une très bonne fête du drapeau franco-ontarien.

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

DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG

M. Peter Shurman: Je me lève aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée et comme Ontarien et comme Canadien fier de répondre au ministre au sujet de l'emblème ou du drapeau de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

À mon avis, le drapeau ontarien est un symbole en commun pour chacun et pour nous tous, pour nous qui avons choisi l'Ontario comme le nôtre. Dans ma propre circonscription nous parlons anglais et nous parlons français et plus de 100 autres langues. Néanmoins, nous sommes tous Ontariens et nous avons un seul drapeau qui est pour le monde.

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We have a single Ontario flag because we are a united Ontario, one people composed of dozens of widely differing cultures. I have spoken in this House previously about the special place in which we hold Franco-Ontarians as one of our founding peoples, and I have

endorsed many services designed specifically for them. I do not see any reason for a special emblem, however, for Franco-Ontarians.

Notre drapeau indique que nous sommes maintenant plus que jamais un peuple très divers mais uni. Notre drapeau crée une fierté spéciale. Un drapeau ou un emblème spécial et différent pour notre communauté francophone est diviseuse. C'est une sorte de barrière entre nos deux cultures fondatrices. À Québec, par exemple, est-ce que les Anglos ont leur propre emblème ou drapeau? Non, tout le monde est fier d'un seul drapeau québécois.

We have been represented by the present Ontario flag for 43 years. The Canadian Red Ensign with the Union Jack in the upper left corner and the armorial bearings of Ontario to the right show the connection between Canada's heritage and Ontario's future. Our future and our past are bound together as a single people with many elements, and Ontarians like it that way. J'y inclus les Ontariens d'origine francophone.

Je voudrais répéter que comme « critique » des Affaires francophones pour notre parti, je suis très fier de notre grande communauté franco-ontarienne, et j'aime montrer mon support aussi souvent que possible dans cette Assemblée ou dans n'importe quel endroit. On n'a pas besoin de conflit ou de division. Un drapeau, un emblème, c'est pour tous.

I'm proud to speak the language and proud to have had a dual-language education, proud to feel comfortable in both English and French communities, and proud to acknowledge, recognize and celebrate our differences, but I will never be party to symbols or actions developed in the name of unity when all they do is really divide.

Au lieu d'essayer de nous diviser dans notre grande communauté d'Ontariens, je demande à notre ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones de faire son emploi, son emploi de servir les gens de l'Ontario, comme elle l'a promis quand elle a été élue.

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to take this opportunity to respond on behalf of the PC caucus to the statement from the Minister of Health Promotion. I would like to start off by congratulating our athletes, their coaches and trainers, their supporters and of course their families, who sacrificed so much on their behalf.

It seems appropriate, in light of this being Legion Week, that the origin of the Paralympic Games began with newly disabled soldiers returning home from the Second World War. In England, Sir Ludwig Guttmann was working on their rehabilitation, and the games of darts, archery ranges and table tennis were just the beginning. As part of his revolutionary rehabilitation tactics, the British neurosurgeon Sir Ludwig Guttmann organized annual Olympic-style events for the disabled, and as a result of his pioneering methods we have a Paralympic team to be proud of.

While Canadians brought home an amazing number of medals, I would like to commend all of our Olympic and Paralympic athletes for their hard work and dedication to their sport. Politicians like to use metaphors and illustrative words like “inspiring,” “moving” and “dedicated,” but our Olympic and Paralympic athletes live by those words. It was once said, “Sports serve society by providing vivid examples of excellence,” and I certainly agree with that sentiment. Our athletes are truly inspiring. They show how hard work, dedication and desire to achieve can move mountains.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I'm very proud to congratulate all of our Canadian athletes but especially those from Ontario. Together we salute the amazing ambassadors for Canada, and we congratulate them for being living and vivid examples of true excellence.

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm honoured to respond to the minister's statement about our Paralympic and Olympic athletes. As a sports enthusiast and a participant in football, baseball and hockey, I have a very slight idea of the energy and commitment it takes to be a successful athlete. I can't imagine how much extra effort it takes for our Paralympians and their coaches, coaches like Tom Thomson of Hamilton, our judo coach.

At the 2008 Paralympics, Canada's medal standing was 19th of 81 countries. We finished with 50 medals, a fine performance by all our athletes. But a special note must be made of Chantal Petitclerc, one of Canada's most decorated Paralympians. She has brought home a total of 21 medals from five Paralympic Games, including 14 gold medals. Ms. Petitclerc is retiring from competition, and I want to thank her for her years of dedication and her successes and wish her the best in her retirement. I want to express the New Democratic Party's congratulations to all our Paralympians for their hard work and excellent results.

My hometown of Hamilton boasts some interesting Olympic history. William “Bill” Sherring was a marathon runner. Born in Hamilton in 1877, he was one of Canada's earliest gold medalists, winning the 1906 marathon in Athens. Another significant local Olympic athlete was Tom Longboat, who was born in Oshweken, Six Nations Reserve, near Brantford, in 1887. Although he did not win a medal at the London Olympics, he came home and became a force in the running field, winning many marathons and turning his considerable skill to being a dispatch runner in World War I.

At the provincial level, we must do everything we can to ensure that athletes have the support they fully need to grow in their sport. We must start at the very beginning, when young athletes are just realizing the path they will have to take. We must ensure the facilities, the programs and the coaches are financially supported so that our young athletes have everything they need for success. We have a short two years before the winter Olympics in

Vancouver. This government must do everything possible to ensure that our Ontario athletes have the support they need to be successful.

Today, we extend our congratulations to all summer Paralympic and Olympic athletes. Thank you so much for your dedication, your hard work and your excellent performances.

FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am pleased to rise on behalf of New Democrats and say a few words on this occasion of Franco-Ontarian flag day and to join Madame Meilleur and others as we celebrate this occasion. Ontario has a rich French-language history. In fact, it has been spoken here by French-speaking Ontarians for 350 years. It is amazing to me how they're able to continue to express themselves in French, able to continue and survive with the French-speaking culture, in light of the incredible influence of English-speaking Canadians. I am proud of that enduring quality that French-speaking Canadians have to be able to express themselves, to be able to continue living French culture.

Je veux dire que le drapeau franco-ontarien manifeste la solidarité des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ainsi que leur volonté de jouer un rôle actif et présent dans le déroulement de leur histoire. Je suis très fier de m'associer à la communauté franco-ontarienne, je suis fier de parler la langue française et je suis aussi fier de célébrer le 33^e anniversaire du drapeau franco-ontarien. Merci à vous tous et bonne célébration aujourd'hui.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

NORTHERN YORK REGION POWER CONSERVATION ACT, 2008 LOI DE 2008 SUR L'ÉCONOMIE D'ÉNERGIE DANS LE SECTEUR NORD DE LA RÉGION DE YORK

Mr. Tabuns moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to promote the conservation of power in Northern York Region and the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury / Projet de loi 79, Loi encourageant l'économie d'énergie dans le secteur nord de la région de York et la ville de Bradford West Gwillimbury.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 97, the member has 10 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Tabuns.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today I rise to ask every member of this House to support my bill, Bill 79. Today we are joined by residents from northern York region, people who have been organizing, who have been challenging

their local councils, people who have come down because they want a 21st-century power system. They don't want to go with the tired old plans of the Ontario Power Authority. They want clean air in their region.

For this Legislature and for this government, now is the time for decision and now is the time to act. Ontario has to renew its electricity system—we all know that. We have to get coal out of this province. We have to create a hydro system that makes sense in the 21st century.

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Our debate today is not only about the gas-fired power plant in this region, it's about the whole direction that we have to take to build a new energy economy in Ontario. Ontario can continue making decisions comparable to buying thousands of typewriters at a time when, worldwide, businesses were transferring their purchases over to personal computers. That transformed the world of business and industry. Ontario can continue to build huge, inefficient, expensive and polluting central power plants, or Ontario can decide that efficiency, conservation, renewable energy and distributed power are the core of its energy strategy. Those are the choices before this province and before this governing party.

A lot has changed since I first introduced this bill in May of this year. At that time, a gas-fired power plant was proposed for this region to deal with constraints on power transmission. A location had not been finalized. Well, just recently, a site has been proposed, announced in Bradford, to the shock of locals, so there's no longer any need here to speculate about where this plant will land. The plant, at about 350 megawatts, will cost in the range of a quarter billion dollars. We have a new Minister of Energy, who made a speech last week committing Ontario to expanding the role of conservation and renewable power in Ontario's power portfolio. Is he serious in his remarks? We will find out. We have a new head of the Ontario Power Authority who may be more open to actually moving power planning into this century. Is he serious? We'll find out.

What better place to find out than here in northern York region, where the alternatives are entirely clear? What better time to find out than this afternoon, when members will be able to vote for or against a bill that sets power planning in this region in the right direction? My bill puts that question. It is very simple. The bill prohibits the operation and construction of simple-cycle generating stations with an electrical generating capacity of greater than 30 megawatts in this region. The bill also requires the Ontario Power Authority to make every reasonable effort to implement conservation measures in those municipalities in order to reduce electricity consumption to meet the overall peak demand for electricity.

When you provide power for those days and those hours at particular times in the year and you have a quarter-billion-dollar investment sitting idle for 90% of the time, you know that you are spending money on something that is extraordinarily expensive per kilowatt hour. This is a very expensive investment. What it means is that the opportunity for cost-effectiveness, efficiency,

conservation and renewable power is very large. We're not talking about competing with hydro power at 1.5 cents a kilowatt hour; we're talking about power that will cost more in the 10-, 12-, 14-cents-a-kilowatt-hour range.

We've had this debate in the past. In fact, this debate has gone out in the general public. Those who are here from northern York region will remember that in 2005, the Ontario Power Authority made statements about power needs in this region. They consulted with residents, they talked about problems with transmission towers. Residents said what they wanted was heavy investment in efficiency and conservation. So in 2005, the OPA said they saw York region as "a leader, a proving ground for energy efficiency, demand management, an opportunity to prove the effectiveness of a conservation-centred approach." That was then.

I have to say, when you listen to those words, when you read that press release from that time, you think, "Okay, they're talking about using the money that ratepayers and taxpayers are going to pony up to actually build a future." So when the members of the Liberal Party in this House rise to speak, and they will, when they talk about keeping the lights on, which I'm almost sure they will, I will ask them if from the notes they were provided with they can tell us how much the Ontario Power Authority spent on energy efficiency, conservation and demand management in this area. How much to date, to September 25, 2008? I don't want to know about what's coming in the next few years, I don't want to hear what would be a really nice shopping list; I want to know what's been spent up to today.

Three years ago, the OPA said that this region would be a proving ground for their colleagues in the Conservation Bureau. What has been proved? I believe, from looking at the reports that have come out from the OPA, that you've spent very little. You're planning to spend a quarter of a billion dollars on this peaker plant and make minor, almost pixie-dust kinds of investments in green power, clean power and efficiency. That is not using this area as a proving ground. It's hard to call it a leader.

You have a new minister who made statements recently in Niagara Falls about his electrical strategy. I think he should be supporting this bill. He should be using this region to demonstrate that his commitment to renewable power and conservation is not simply empty words, that they reflect a real commitment to take a different path. When he spoke to the Ontario Energy Association, he said that he had been touring around the world, learning from energy efficiency leaders more familiar with cutting-edge technologies, exploring more fully the economic opportunities of the green economy. This much was clear to him, he said: "In 2008, nowhere is leadership and innovation more critical than in Ontario's energy sector." Amen, I say. He went on: "The energy sector is central to our vision for a greener Ontario, one where our environment and our economy work in harmony; where we don't have to choose between our health and our prosperity." So the question I have for the government is whether the minister and his ministry have taken a look at northern York region.

You are in a perfect position to do it right now: to decide to act, to turn past decisions on their heads and invest your money in the things you say you want to invest it in. You have local municipal councils that are ready to work with you, that have seen the disruption that would come from this plant, talked to their citizens and heard their citizens in a large number of public meetings. You have mobilized, active citizens right here who will work with this government if it is willing to actually move on the agenda it says it has.

This minister, the Minister of Energy, George Smitherman, has personally gone around and seen the potential of 21st-century power to transform electricity systems and to transform economies. He has the opportunity to take the OPA's hollow words of 2005 and make them real. He is a new minister. He has a new head of the Ontario Power Authority. He can make a break with the last century and embrace this one.

The residents who are mobilizing across this region and who have come here today have many objections to this plan. Their objections reflect their concerns about health. They know this plant will kick in on the hottest, smoggiest days of the summer. They already deal with smog. You can go to Kingston, you can go north of Kingston, and that smog hits you. They already experience it; they don't want it intensified. They want their local economy boosted—the boost that comes from permanently reducing demand for electricity so that people have more money in their pockets and more money is kept in circulation locally. They've seen what other countries are doing, and they want to see that happen here. In Germany, 200,000 people work in the renewable energy industry. There are people projecting that within a decade, the renewable energy industry in that country will be bigger than their auto industry. That is a goal worth shooting for. That is a goal worth trying to attain.

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The minister, in his speech in Niagara Falls, said, "In terms of our long-term energy plan, we must be absolutely sure we capitalize on every single viable opportunity"—every single viable opportunity—"and technology available in the rapidly developing green energy sector. The rewards for early adapters are clear." So said the minister.

I call on all members of this House to take action to stop a misuse of public funds, an investment in a plant that will drag us off course from building a new energy economy, that will deepen air quality problems in this region, that will undermine opportunity for local economic development.

I call on the members in this House who are members of the Liberal Party to listen to what your minister had to say and take him at his word. Take him at his word and vote in favour of a bill that will redirect electricity investment strategy, that will redirect towards clean power and new economic opportunities.

We spend \$100 million a day on energy in Ontario—\$40 billion a year. We import our natural gas from

Alberta. We export tens of billions of dollars a year out of this province for energy. We have an opportunity to reverse that export of money, keep it here and keep us prosperous. I ask for your support for this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the opportunity to rise this afternoon and provide just a few minutes of comment in respect to Bill 79. Let me begin by saying that the elements of the bill that deal with a redoubling of all our efforts in respect to conservation are something that I can support.

I want, though, to acknowledge the member from Markham—I've lost track of the names of the ridings as they keep changing on us—from Oak Ridges–Markham for her question as recently as today to the minister in respect to this matter because she's one who lives in and understands the community, being a representative in a riding that runs from Markham to King City and the swath across there.

York region—the population probably is close to approaching a million, if it's not quite there yet—is a fast, rapidly growing region—if not the fastest-growing, probably one of the two or three fastest-growing regions in total population within the province and the country. It is an area that is going to need to have a reliable source of energy on a go-forward basis.

I come from a community, having served municipally as well as provincially, that understands, by virtue of proximity and the impacts, the need for reliable sources of energy in communities. Because of the existence of a nuclear facility, we hear on a daily basis in my community, and listen to it carefully throughout the province, about the potential for brownouts, about the potential for losses of power. Although the blackout that we had in 2003 was not directly caused by any means by our system, it certainly drove home the need in this province to ensure that we have reliable sources of energy to supply this province on an ongoing basis.

The proposed plant is a result of stakeholder consultations with a multi-pronged approach, including the establishment of a new transformer station to be able to make use of power and disseminate power in an effective fashion, capacitors which allow high power to come down to usable proportions. More importantly, it includes the two parts: the single-cycle peak-performing facility to meet those very high demand times, when they do come along, in the most effective way possible, as well as a continued emphasis on conservation within the region and in co-operation with the province.

York region generally, through PowerStream and their other organizations, have proved themselves to be leaders to date in the conservation initiatives within this province, and one would expect that to continue.

The government has a comprehensive plan for energy, a 20-year plan—not another one-year plan, not a five-year plan, but a province-wide 20-year plan—that focuses on issues such as energy conservation, reliability,

production of power, capacity within the system that we have available to us.

Members of this Legislature have been active individually within their communities encouraging conservation in particular and educating people about their energy systems.

During my first mandate, I had the opportunity to serve on the conservation action team under the leadership of the now Minister of Natural Resources—then the PA and subsequently the Minister of Energy, for a period of time—to help drive that agenda. It's something that can and should continue and is continuing at this point in time.

Although I said at the beginning that I support the intent of the motion as it respects redoubling of conservation measures, I don't support the bill that would stop the building of this particular plant. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: As the representative for the riding of Newmarket–Aurora, I am compelled to express my strong opposition to Bill 79.

I do support the member's intent with regard to his emphasis on conservation and alternative energy sources, as set out in section 3 of the bill. But had the member consulted with me, who represents some 50% of the population of the targeted municipalities referenced in the bill, I would have had some questions for the honourable member.

First, what does the honourable member know about York region's growth plan and the resulting future demands on electricity supply and distribution in the region?

Second, is the member aware that the issue of northern York region's electricity supply has been a matter of extensive debate, and the Northern York Region Working Group identified the construction of a peaking plant as the preferred solution over enhanced transmission?

Third, given that the supply of electricity during high-cost, high-demand periods is northern York region's most urgent need, on what technical advice does the honourable member base the 30-megawatt restriction as set out in section 2 of his proposed bill, and on the basis of what expertise does he presume to prescribe these technical specifications?

Fourth, is the honourable member aware of the minister's order that directs the OPA to in fact proceed with the procurement of 350 megawatts of new gas-fired electricity generation, and has he informed himself of the reasons given by the minister for the size of the plant?

Fifth, why would the honourable member take it upon himself to restrict by legislation the very scope within which highly professional and specialized individuals in the energy sector have been asked to deliver and implement a plan that will ensure a secure and reliable supply of electricity for northern York region?

Finally, I would ask the honourable member: Would he impose similar legislation on his Toronto constitu-

ency, knowing that it would impose unrealistic restrictions on a process intended to secure a reliable supply of electricity and potentially destabilize the local economy and threaten his constituents' quality of life?

I want to address these questions for the purpose of clarifying the issue for Mr. Tabuns and honourable members. Most importantly, I trust that constituents who are following this debate will get a better understanding of the facts as they relate to this issue, and the reason for my opposition to the bill.

Let me clarify, first of all, another bit of misinformation that Mr. Tabuns has given the House today. There is no identification of a site. No such decision has been made. In fact, there are three sites in King that are still in play, one in Aurora and one in East Gwillimbury. I don't know where Mr. Tabuns is getting his information.

In 2005, the Northern York Region Working Group, consisting of representatives from the Ontario Power Authority, municipal officials, local electric utility representatives and concerned citizens, confirmed that there was an urgent need to find both a short- and long-term solution. The working group endorsed the following three-pronged strategy: first, the aggressive promotion of energy conservation and demand management; second, the installation of a new transformer station at Holland Junction; and third, a new gas-fired power plant in northern York region.

I supported the working group's conclusions at the time and, on a number of occasions in this House, encouraged and urged the Minister of Energy to get on with the implementation. I can report today that construction started on the new transformer station at Holland Junction in King this past spring, and that an energy conservation and demand management program is being implemented with some success. In fact, the OPA has contracted for up to 30 megawatts of demand response in northern York region, and a number of conservation programs are being delivered by the local distributors.

I fully support placing more emphasis on conservation and demand management, but it must be recognized that while these measures can reduce the overall demand, they cannot guarantee that adequate supply will be available to meet the reliability criteria. That's why the construction of a new peaking plant is imperative to ensure a reliable and secure source of energy for northern York region.

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There's some debate about the reliability of the 3% per annum load growth rate that has been used to determine demand. Whether it's 2% or 3%, the reality is that York region is one of the fastest-growing regions in this country, and we know that we need a reliable supply of electricity. Of significance, however, is the fact that the accuracy of those projections became considerably less important with the Minister of Energy's order of January 31 this year. That order expressly states—and I want to quote for the record: “In addition to relieving local supply inadequacy, it is also expected that the new facility be capable of contributing to the province's overall need for gas-fired peaking capacity....”

Mr. Tabuns knows full well that Ontario will have to refurbish or replace 25,000 megawatts of generating capacity over the next 20 years. That represents more than 80% of Ontario's current capacity of approximately 35,000 megawatts. To say we face a major challenge on the security of energy supply is an understatement, and there is not a community in this province that can afford to ignore it or refuse to be part of the solution. And while the generating facility proposed for northern York region is first and foremost required for our needs, the excess capacity ordered by the minister is necessary to support the broader provincial need for peaking capacity. Not only do I support this plan, I am convinced that my constituents, when they get the full context of the information, will support it as well.

I will once again say what I said to the Minister of Energy in May this year. I support the construction of the peaking plant, but the residents must be consulted and properly informed of the process and the rationale for determining the size, type and location of the plant. That is why I call on the minister yet one more time to reconstitute the working group, include all municipalities in that process, and direct the OPA to ensure that the appropriate information, full disclosure, is given to the people of York region so they can understand it and we can get on with this project in full confidence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I would remind members that it is customary to refer to private members by their riding names and not by their given names.

Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy, in the few moments that I have, to support my colleague from Toronto–Danforth, support the bill, and support the direction in which this bill is taking us. And I want to refer myself to some of the comments he made about mon ami George Smitherman and, in general, the government, because they often talk about conservation and energy efficiency and make it appear that that is their central focus while moving at the same time in a different direction.

I believe one of the reasons Mr. Smitherman has been put in this position is that he is able to promote that image of a man and a minister who is going to deal with energy efficiency and conservation in a way that perhaps some other ministers have not been able to. George is a very convincing kind of guy, and it's quite possible that a whole lot of people might just believe him more than others, including possibly the leader of the Liberal Party, and that is what I believe the Minister of the Environment is dedicated to.

If you look at the numbers—and I was desperately trying to get the attention of Peter Tabuns while he was listening to the other member, because I read an interesting statistic about how little we spend on conservation versus the Liberal commitment, supported strongly by Conservatives, to move on nuclear power. Liberals—make no mistake about it—are committed to nuclear power in a big way, and they are going to be spending

close to \$40 billion and/or more by the time this is all over. That's the commitment. That's where all of their money—our money, taxpayers' money—is going. That's the direction we're moving in, including gas-powered stations—and big ones, yes, not small ones. That's the direction of the government. We are not spending adequate time and money on energy efficiency and conservation. We're not doing that.

It's good that Mr. Smitherman, the Minister of the Environment, has travelled across the world, and I support that. I like the idea that members travel and learn from those experiences. Because if you go to Germany, you realize—and I'm not the environment critic—that they produce 14,000 megawatts of power from wind alone. We, at peak, use 25,000 megawatts of power, and Germany uses 14,000 megawatts of power from wind alone. So it's good that George, the Minister of the Environment, is able to travel and learn from that experience.

The question is, in reality, in truth and in fact, what money and what attention is he going to devote to the issue of conservation? Because that can only be shown not in words, but in fact. At the moment, the commitment to those things is not very strong, except in language, and as I say, the minister is very good at that. He'll create this image that the Liberals are committed to it and they're moving there in a big way. No, they're moving to nuclear in a big way. That's your commitment: expensive, and potentially dangerous.

People say it's clean. It's clean only if nothing happens, and most governments haven't figured out what to do with the nuclear waste. They have not figured out what to do with that waste. It's stored at the moment. How safe is that, when it's radioactive for 10,000 years? When you look at the incredible, expensive amounts of dollars we put out to create it and the incredible amount of money it takes to revamp those plants and how much that money would do if we were able to talk about energy efficiency and conservation—if you think about it, we could do a lot, but the investments are not there.

So I wanted to simply say those few words in support of my colleague and in support of the direction in which he's moving with this bill. And I wanted to offer him much of my time because I know, in looking at the notes, there is so much to say. So I leave the remaining time to my colleague to finish his comments.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm really very pleased to enter into this debate this afternoon. Like my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, I represent the citizens of the township of King, at least south of Highway 9. They have been talking to me about this issue for the last several months.

I would like to commend the member for Toronto–Danforth in terms of his commitment to conservation. Clearly our government also shares that commitment, as was so ably expressed by the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure during question period this morning.

I do concur with my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora. Once one understands the full implications of this particular situation in northern York region, one

comes inevitably to the conclusion that in fact the restrictions, as set out in section 2 of Bill 79, are not sustainable.

The township of King, the area that I represent, is predominantly rural. It is a beautiful area of rolling hills where, in fact, the majority of the residents are firmly committed to the greenbelt plan, the Places to Grow Act. Their mayor is also very much in support. They know that their particular corner of York region certainly is not growing to the extent that other areas are. So, as is only human nature, they are questioning very strongly why perhaps their municipality might need to be a host. Those are understandable emotions, and I think my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora has expressed the frustration of individuals in terms of the communication by the Ontario Power Authority to date. There was an excellent relationship with the working group prior to its being disbanded, and subsequent to that, somehow communication has not been as good as it might have been.

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I did ask the minister during question period whether such a plant was needed. He categorically said yes; that was today, after his several months of studying a number of issues related to his portfolio. Of course, he emphasized the fact that a reliable supply is job one. Many businesses in my community have emphasized this with me as well. Not only is it the growth across the region of York, it is also the fact that the working group did reject transmission as an alternate solution.

I think most telling is the reliance that we have on this peaker plant in terms of the grid. Currently, northern York region is not meeting the standards of the North American Electric Reliability Council or the Independent Electricity System Operator. This means that our power supply across a far broader area is potentially at risk. So what this peaker plant will do in York region will not only supply the high-growth areas when they need that extra surge of power, but it also will safeguard our entire system through this part of Ontario.

Having looked at this issue with some specificity, I would again like to say to the member for Toronto–Danforth that I think this was an ideal opportunity for us all to examine the issue in more detail, get some answers and be able to explain to our communities with greater clarity the need for this plant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Today I would like to speak to this House about the Ontario Liberal government's plan to build a gas-fired power plant in my riding of York–Simcoe. In addressing this issue, I also want to let my constituents know that Bill 79 is not the way to fight the plant. In fact, it would have a very negative effect on our communities.

In January of this year, the Ontario Liberal government ordered the Ontario Power Authority to find a private company to construct a gas-fired power plant in northern York region. We are getting reports that Bradford is now part of this search area. This directive

was issued after a consultation process which time does not allow me to comment on beyond saying that, to say the least, many felt that it did not properly take into account the views of people in northern York region. My colleague Frank Klees, MPP for Newmarket–Aurora, and I wrote to the Minister of Energy asking for a better consultation process. Unfortunately, the government is sticking to its order to build the plant, and I hold out little hope that the government will consult them again.

In May, I asked the Minister of Energy to guarantee that this project would be subject to a full environmental assessment. My constituents want to know and deserve to know why the government thinks the plant is necessary. We must ensure that all possible options are considered before any plant is built in one of our local communities. Of the five municipalities in my riding, four are on the government's list for the plant. No municipality is a willing host, and all my local councils are concerned. I do not argue with the power needs of our communities, but we cannot sacrifice our local environment or put the health of local residents at risk.

Two of the proposed sites are each within a few short miles of the Holland Marsh, a place where farmers grow most of Ontario's vegetables. What effect will a gas-fired plant have on this vital agricultural industry? It is time for the government to start providing answers to my constituents. We deserve a full individual environmental assessment for this project.

Bill 79 is not a responsible way to deal with this issue; in fact, it would create more problems than it solves. Bill 79 would ban a peaker plant in the seven local municipalities, but any new demand for power would have to be matched by a cut in use within these same seven municipalities. This is, frankly, unworkable. This is a threat to jobs and prosperity in a fast-growing area.

The government appears to be indifferent to the environmental and health concerns of my constituents. The NDP would ban the plant, but at the cost of our local economy. Both of these are not answers to the concerns of my constituents.

I will continue to stand up for the communities in York–Simcoe. We must support protecting the environment and creating jobs and prosperity, neither one at the expense of the other.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I find the comments from the members interesting. I'm not surprised by their comments. What I find extraordinary is a lack of understanding that there are a variety of routes that one can take, a variety of methods one can employ, to provide power. In fact, those jurisdictions that are using those methods are the ones that are moving ahead. Those are the ones that are developing the renewable energy industries of the 21st century. And jurisdictions like ours, which seem to believe that 40-, 50-, 60-year-old technology is the wave of the future, are endangering not only their environment but their long-term manufacturing capability.

So when we talk about this, I want you to recognize that right now, in this city of Toronto, deep lake water

cooling, which is taking cold water from deep in Lake Ontario, is cooling major buildings in this city. You didn't have to build a power plant for cooling; you utilized the resources that were there. In the city of Windsor, they have ice storage underground that cools a million square feet of office space every day. They make the ice overnight; they use the cooling during the day.

There is more than one route to provide people with adequate power. If you continue to follow the route that feeds global warming and undermines public finance, you are making a huge error. What is extraordinary to me is that the Conservative Party in this chamber argues for the most expensive option. I think of them as being financially conservative, interested in cost-effective and low-cost solutions to problems to maximize the economic activity.

Look at the alternatives that you have in York region, that you have in Toronto, that you have across this province. If this government were to invest a quarter billion dollars in that region to make sure that every factory in that region had the most effective, efficient, state-of-the-art electric motors operating on assembly lines, that government would be doing industry a favour. If this government made low-interest loans available to homeowners to install geothermal heat pumps so they could reduce their electricity demand by 50% to 70% for heating and cooling, they would have used those dollars wisely. If this government would take every public building—every city hall, every provincially owned building, every hospital, every school—and retrofit them to bring in the most effective lighting, to dramatically cut the heating and cooling bills, to make sure that hot water was generated by solar power, then that quarter of a billion dollars would be used effectively and it would generate industrial jobs.

Pennsylvania is a state south of this province. It is a rustbelt state. It has had hard times. They're implementing a program of installation of wind turbines. Intelligently, they told wind turbine companies that if they wanted to put wind turbines in that state, they had to build factories to provide the components; 1,400 people work in an industry in that state that doesn't exist in this province. We are caught in an old paradigm, an old way of thinking that says the only way to provide power is to burn something. No, that's not right—95% of what we have to do is burn something, and the rest of the time, we'll sprinkle green dust on it to show that we're actually concerned about the environment and about the future.

1420

We are turning our backs on the industries of the 21st century, and that is a major error. We are continuing to degrade air quality in that region, and that is an error. Every year, thousands of people in this province die from air pollution. We have non-polluting options. We have options that are far less polluting than this peaker plant, and yet the government is not taking that direction, and the official opposition does not support a change in direction. So not only are we driving up our health care costs, we are ignoring the major industrial development of this century.

In the last century, those countries that stuck with coal and slowly went to oil were at a huge disadvantage. Those countries that did not automate, that did not bring on IT, were at a huge disadvantage. I remember in the 1980s talking to people who were trying to decide: "Should we buy new typewriters or should we go to these computers?" Computers are pretty expensive but, boy, they did a whole lot of things that hadn't been done before.

It's a question of what kind of energy strategy, industrial strategy, health strategy, environmental strategy you have, what kind of vision you have for the world ahead. When an opportunity is before you to make a decision as to which direction to go in, that is when you have to say, "We've decided to go with the 21st century. We've decided to make the big change that has to happen. We've decided to follow jurisdictions like Germany, Denmark and Portugal." Quebec is starting down this line of requiring wind turbine manufacturers to build in Quebec, to build their factories and make their products there. If we stick with old technologies, we will have nothing to sell the world, we will have nothing to offer the world. They will be selling us those technologies.

There are days when you know you just don't have the votes, and I can see that. I've brought forward things before and from time to time, whether it was fighting for public health initiatives or environmental initiatives, I've recognized I haven't had the votes. But I've also seen that, years later, very often people have said, "Yes, based on what I understand now, that was the direction to go in."

The citizens who are here today have taken a look at what's coming, in both the short term and the long term, and they've made the right decision politically to fight this plant. I hope I'm wrong, and I hope people will vote for this bill.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I remind our guests in the gallery that you are welcome to join us for the debates but not to participate in any manner.

Further debate? The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craiton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be part of today's debate. As you said, I'm the member who represents the riding of Niagara Falls, and we affectionately call it "the home of electricity."

I want to share a couple of things with you. I've heard over and over again that the government has no plan, that we have nothing in place. I will share with the House that before I became a provincial member of Parliament I sat on city council for 10 years. I was there when there were two other governments in power before I was elected as an MPP, so I had a chance to watch their plans, or lack of plans, when it came to electricity.

One of the first things I have to share with the House is that our government immediately took the initiative to look at one of the most valuable resources we have in this province in terms of producing electricity—one of the cheapest ways, one of the most efficient ways, and one of the most renewable ways of producing electricity, and

that is the use of Niagara Falls. That had been on the books for a number of years, but no government took any initiative, and I'm pleased to share with the House that this government almost immediately made the decision to build a second tunnel in Niagara Falls to make use of that water that we have and to produce affordable, clean and cheap—one of the cheapest ways of producing electricity.

I've heard that we have no plan. I've heard that over and over today, and I've heard it outside of this House. I happen to be the parliamentary assistant for the former Minister of Energy and currently am with the present minister. So I just want to quickly share, while I have about two minutes left of my time, some of the things that we have in our plan to go forward for the next 20 years. As I said, under the previous governments, there were no plans. Coal-fired plants continued to pollute. Supply went down while demand went up. Coal emissions were up under both the NDP and the Conservative governments. We've put in place a 20-year plan to keep the lights on and we are investing—I gave you an example in Niagara Falls—in clean, reliable and affordable energy.

The 20-year plan involves aggressive conservation and renewables. The plan is based on five priorities: reduce peak demand through conservation; increase renewable power; phase out coal-fired generations by 2014; maintain—only maintain—our nuclear capacity at 14,000 megawatts; and use natural gas for efficient and effective peak periods, which is what we're talking about today.

We're leading the pack worldwide in getting rid of dirty coal, we're closing our coal plants by the end of 2014 and we have already reduced the use of coal by one third. The previous government left behind 10 wind turbines; we now will have over 300. In my riding, in Ridgeway, there is a company, DMI, that is building wind turbines. That is taking place—very successful. We brought it here. The Minister of Energy made the point of personally coming out and being there when we opened the plant.

We're helping to reduce energy consumption through a range of conservation initiatives. The more we reduce the demand, the less we'll need to spend on increasing supply. For the first time ever, we have a long-term plan incorporating critical roles of conservation. This year, we have well over 26 conservation programs in place.

I'm extremely pleased to say that this government has taken a leadership role far and above any other government and continues to do so in the way of conservation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Just a brief word on a couple of things: first of all, to congratulate my colleagues Mr. Klees and Mrs. Munro, who have a particular interest in the plant that's prospectively being built in that area of York region, but also to mention that my colleague from the third party, Mr. Tabuns, has fixed on a couple of things that mix one thing with another.

I congratulate him on looking at the concepts that he wants to explore, for example, the manufacturer of wind

turbines in Ontario for use by Ontario. That's a good idea. I congratulate him for recognizing a Conservative idea that had to do with water exchange, cold to hot water being brought out of the lakes. Those are good ideas, but they don't have anything much to do with this bill. Let's remember that as we go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Member for Toronto—Danforth, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks to all my colleagues who spoke. I want to say that over a century ago, in Ontario, in Toronto, we relied on coal as a primary mode of power. It was the Homestead Strike in Pennsylvania and the great coal famine at the beginning of the 20th century that led Sir Adam Beck and a variety of industrialists to say, "Do you know what? In this province, we need our own power. We need renewable power that is generated here and we need to take a big technological and financial leap into the future," so that the member from Niagara Falls could today stand up and say, "We have this incredibly cheap power because someone understood that coal power was not the future for this province in those decades and laid the basis for our modern industrial society." They made the right choice. They broke with that tradition.

In fact, what Ontarians and Canadians learned from developing Niagara Falls, they applied to hydro power in a variety of countries around the world. Brascan, Brazilian Traction, Light and Power: Those were Canadians who had learned how to do hydro—and not just the technology, but the financing—who went out into the world, took Canadian expertise and developed new power.

What we're doing today is a disservice to the vision of those of us who, over a century ago, understood that we had to reshape our energy infrastructure. When I talk about building wind turbines, when I talk about deep lake water, I'm talking about the whole range of renewable energy technologies that we can utilize, the broader range that I've set out. But if we stay stuck in the mud with old technology, then we're cooked.

1430

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Ms. Laurie Scott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, should immediately make the necessary regulatory changes to accommodate the construction and manufacturing trades so that the ratio of journeyman tradespeople to apprentices be 1 to 1.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Ms. Scott has moved private member's resolution number 25. Pursuant to standing order 97, member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, you have 12 minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the motion before us today, and I would like to welcome the many would-be apprentices from various trades and their employers who are supportive of this

motion and have come down into the gallery today. I welcome them to the Legislature.

Ontario's unfair apprenticeship ratios, which are generally at three journeymen to one apprenticeship, have put Ontario at the back of the pack in Canada. I've been encouraged by the positive responses from the various sectors who have helped to lead the charge for fairness on this matter. We're all very well aware of the numerous challenges facing the economy, which include the serious loss of manufacturing jobs along with the small and medium-sized businesses in this province that are closing down. I just want to say that small businesses in this province account for 98% of all Ontario businesses.

This is a motion about people. It's about young people, it's about skilled workers, it's about our economy, and it's about our future. The apprentices have been told there are well-paying jobs available. They've invested time, money and resources. But the folks in the gallery today know this because they've experienced it: They can't get access to those jobs because of the Liberal government's ratio of three journeymen to one apprenticeship. Along with this, the Liberals are punishing the employers who are willing to train and provide the job opportunities.

Our caucus has continued to press for consideration on a number of tangible things that the government could do in order to help deal with these tough economic challenges. This includes bringing forward the sensible apprenticeship ratios in a proper skills training strategy. The hardworking business owners and operators should be given the tools so they can focus on what they do best, and that's providing jobs.

In Ontario, a company in the electrical trade, plumbing trade or sheet metal trade is required to have three journeymen for every apprentice. So a company employing electricians, for example, must hire three full-time electricians for every apprentice they wish to take on. This is far in excess of what is required in other provinces where they focused on creating real opportunity at a 1-to-1 ratio. In responding to my question this morning in the Legislature, the Minister of Training, Colleges and University said that large businesses are subject to the 3-to-1 ratio but small businesses are only subject to a 1-to-1 ratio. The problem with that inaccurate spin by the minister is the minute a business grows and needs more staff, they can't hire an apprentice without first hiring three more journeymen. The reality is, Minister Milloy is penalizing a business for growing. Why on earth would the Minister of Small Business not stand up and tell the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities how unfair and unrealistic this is?

The Premier and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities are constantly talking about the number of apprenticeship students at various colleges. What they won't address is the fact that many of these young people aren't able to find a place to get their experience. Colleges in Ontario are well-positioned to get people ready for the trade work that they are choosing to do. The fact of the matter is that the minister refuses to address the

bottleneck that's caused by outdated ratios. These young, eager, educated people need the hands-on experience, the training with the licensed tradesperson, to complete that apprenticeship.

In the gallery today, we have a number of those eager committed young apprentices from the electrical and plumbing trades, and they can't find work because they're victims of the Dalton McGuinty restrictive trade ratios. I would like to tell these people this afternoon what the minister himself said in Ontario's Workforce Shortage Coalition report: "One thing I can tell you about our future direction is that it will focus very much on the individual—and removing obstacles that stand between them and obtaining the skills they need to get meaningful employment."

That sounds profound and moving, but the folks in the gallery are here today because the major barrier that keeps them from finding meaningful employment is the restrictive and outdated ratio. Other provinces and jurisdictions have seen the importance of less restrictive ratios.

The minister and the Premier have tried to use the issue of safety as a smokescreen. That's not what this is about, unless they're both accusing the Liberal Premiers in BC and New Brunswick of not caring about the safety of their workers. Also on the issue of safety, young people in the Ontario youth apprenticeship program are not subject to ratios when they are in high school. But once they graduate from high school, they're subject to these ratios and can't find spots. Again, they're unable to complete their apprenticeship program.

We've heard the minister and the Premier, and no doubt we'll hear Liberal members today, refer to the Armstrong report, commissioned by the minister with respect to apprentices. For one thing, as usual, we're waiting for the McGuinty Liberals to respond to the report—good luck on that one, for those waiting for it. But I will tell you this, which comes directly from Mr. Armstrong himself: Factors related to ratios aren't part of what the minister asked Mr. Armstrong to report on. How convenient is that? So Mr. Milloy is actually hiding behind a report, which the taxpayers all paid for, that doesn't even have the mandate to consider these important factors.

I want to give you some recent examples. A poll taken by the Daily Commercial News asked the question, "Should the journeyman/apprentice ratios be changed to allow more apprentices to be trained?" The results were not even close: 94% in favour of changing the ratios.

Mr. William Bell, who operates Bill Bell Plumbing in Brighton—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Hear, hear! In Oxford.

Ms. Laurie Scott: In the riding of Oxford—my colleague beside me. He has been unable to employ these students because of the restrictions placed on the apprenticeship program in Ontario. "I find the ratios ridiculous," he says. Mr. Bell also points out that there is a shortage of journeymen as well. The only way for him to get more staff is to hire an apprentice, and unless the ratios are changed, he can't.

In my own riding, there are many examples. In Minden, I have a second-generation family in the electrical business, operated by Steve Stewart, who says, "We have wanted this change for years. It's time."

Another comment from Dial One Wolfedale Electric—they've brought some folks here in the gallery today for us: "The sooner we get this situation resolved, the faster we can start training our new young workforce.... We will hire 10-15 new apprentices right away." Ten to 15 new apprentices are in the gallery today that they could hire right away. The problem is that the minister doesn't want to provide that opportunity.

The Open Shop Contractors Association: "The current apprenticeship ratio of three to one is too restrictive and unfair to future construction employees. It is great to put money into training, but if the apprentice can't find a job to work in their chosen trade, the funds have been wasted."

I want to quote my colleague Mr. Leal, from Peterborough, in the Peterborough Examiner from July 3 this year. He says, "I see a real advantage to getting to the 1-to-1 ratio that will allow many more apprentices." He goes on to say, "It's really disconcerting when they graduate and find out they can't start the official apprenticeship program because of the ratios." I'd like to thank the member from Peterborough, and look forward to him being consistent in his position and rising to support this motion today, because I believe he is a fair and reasonable MPP.

Another member of the Legislature, the member from Northumberland-Quinte West, also supports ratio changes. I quote from a June 2 letter: "Your colleague, then Minister of Energy, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, in his address clearly indicated that a change must be made to these ratios. This is a matter that very seriously needs addressing." I say to that member: I hope you're consistent and that we'll see you support this motion today; you've already done so in writing. We'll be watching all the Liberal members and how they vote on this.

Minister Dwight Duncan also supports this. Let me quote from a publication called Dialogue from the summer of 2007. "During the question period an OEL"—Ontario Electrical League—"member asked Mr. Duncan: 'Will you help convince the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to change the ratios to allow the hiring of more apprentices?' Mr. Duncan's response was a firm 'yes.' The OEL and its member deeply appreciated the minister's support." I also appreciate Mr. Duncan's support, and I will be keeping a close eye on how he votes on this matter.

1440

We will make sure to let the public know as well whether the Liberals support this motion, believe in fairness and opportunities for our young Ontarians, or if the Liberals feel they owe some sort of obligation to the unions who provided them so much campaign funding and want to keep the ratios high.

I also want to bring up a past member of the Legislature. Mr. Alvin Curling, when he was Minister of Skills

Development in 1989, recognized the increasing demand in the construction and electrical trades and the need to consider the impact of the ratios.

This motion is also strongly supported by a number of major organizations in Ontario who represent the worker apprentice aspect as well as the business operator side of the coin: The Canadian Federation of Independent Business did a report, Apprenticeship Training: Lessons not Learned, and released another report today, How Many is too Many?; the Ontario Electrical League; President John Tibbets of Conestoga College, who works directly with so many young apprentices; and I want to quote the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, from a recent resolution, "The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the government of Ontario to realign ratios in restricted trades to allow for 1-to-1 ratios between apprenticeships and journeypersons."

I have a quote from the home builders' association: "To be committed to providing apprenticeship opportunities to train the future generation of renovators, contractors and tradespeople needed to support the industry, however, the current apprenticeship system does not provide the flexibility they need to fully incorporate apprenticeship opportunities in their small business models."

There is no doubt that in this province we are facing a severe and critical labour shortage, often referred to as "crippling" in the media articles as early as yesterday. I've heard too often the story of a young person giving all they have to their education only to find out that they're being held back by ratios that put Ontario in the back of the pack in Canada. What choice do these young people have? They can go to BC, Alberta or Manitoba. Ontario loses them; we lose them. It's time to give their dream a chance.

They can do what many people here in the gallery are doing. They're not letting Dalton McGuinty's policies force them to give up. They're down here. They're actively supporting the change that we're proposing today. They're not letting the non-active Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities away with hiding behind his reports that he really does nothing with.

Mr. Speaker, I know I'm running out of time. I look forward to hearing the debates and comments from other members. I'm hoping that they're prepared to support these young people, to fight for the changes to these outdated ratios, to have the courage to say so and tell the young people across Ontario that you believe in them and what they can offer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I'll again remind members that you should refer to another member by his or her riding and not by his or her name.

Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I rise not in support of this bill but to oppose it, and I'll do my best to give a rationale.

I understand why the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is presenting this bill and obviously believes that by dealing with the ratio somehow we solve the apprenticeship problem. I want in my best

way to present an argument against that, because I believe that is a fallacious argument. I do not believe that that is the way to solve the shortage of apprentices in the province.

There's a lot we need to do; there's no doubt about it. I think all governments have done this job poorly. Yes, the government has increased apprenticeship programs in the last couple of years, to give them a little credit in that regard, but there's so much more that we could do better.

I believe that countries like Germany are examples of what we should be doing around apprenticeship programs. We should be sending people like George Smitherman across the world to learn about what other countries are doing and how to solve some of our problems in this specific regard. I have to tell you that one of the better ways to solve this problem is to get employers, unions and governments together to talk about how to deal with the shortages of skilled labour.

I'm telling you, the ratio's not the problem, in my humble submission, as lawyers would say.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: But it is the problem.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't believe it to be the problem. It's presented as if that is the only problem that exists. I don't believe for a moment that that is even a significant big part, or a small big part, of the solution. It is not at all.

I know that we have to help small businesses; that is for sure. There are small businesses that simply can't do this very well without adequate support. There's no doubt that we've got to deal with that. But I look to places like Quebec.

We don't have to travel far. All we have to do is go to Quebec, most of the time, and pick up some good ideas, rather than travel to Germany and such places. In Quebec they impose a 1% fee on corporations to invest in apprenticeship programs. If they do not, we take some of their money and make sure that money then gets invested in apprenticeship programs. That's one of the ways that we make it possible and certain that money gets invested, because at the moment a lot of corporations spend money to train, and those workers get stolen by other corporations that don't invest. Something is wrong with that kind of system, where some invest, others do not, and those who invest end up losing their workers to corporations that do not put money into apprenticeship programs.

That is a serious, serious problem we face throughout all our provinces in our Canadian system. We should be talking about that. How do we help to deal with that problem? We can't help unless we get the three players—government, employers and unions—together to solve that particular problem. We can't deal with this problem unless we force corporations to invest in apprenticeship programs, because I'm telling you, we invest so very little. This is an opportunity for ministers to travel a little bit. I'm saying, don't go to Germany; go to Quebec as a small, little start and see what you can pick up. It doesn't cost as much, and you can go by train to Quebec—environmentally more friendly than going by car or plane.

These are some of the serious questions that I believe governments need to look at.

Look at some of the comments by T.E. Armstrong Consulting. Mr. Armstrong did a report for the minister on a compulsory certification project in April 2008. He was a prominent labour arbitrator, formerly the chair of the labour relations board, deputy minister of labour and deputy minister of economic development and trade, among other appointments. That's a report we should all be reading. I haven't had a chance to look at that report; I only have snippets of some of the comments he made. But he reminds us that the rationale for a ratio policy, which was set out in the Dymond report in 1973, was for the following purpose: to prevent employers from using apprentices primarily as a source of cheap labour. That was the point of having a ratio, and that was built into what we did in 1973. I remind us of that because it's as relevant today as it was then.

There are a whole lot of people who don't mind using cheap labour, a whole lot of employers who don't mind using cheap labour as helpers, as unauthorized licensees, in order to, yes, make some money out of them. But many of those workers do not end up completing the program. Many of them stay for a little bit and then move on to start another apprenticeship program with other people who move on, but many do not complete their apprenticeship programs. That ought to be a concern to some people.

You want to be certain that when they apprentice, they complete the program and at the end of it are certified, and you as an employer or as homeowners who hire these people know you're getting the best workers that you can, who are trained and have been trained for all the requirements necessary. But many of you know that some of these folks use cheap labour, and they're really helpers under the guise of apprentices, and under the guise of getting money from governments because they're apprentices. We should be looking at that, and we should be listening to Mr. Armstrong when he proposes—let me read to you what he suggests: "In my recommendations, I have proposed the establishment of a college of trades, one of whose functions would be to augment the existing practice by establishing a standing independent advisory panel to comment on ratios not only in light of demands/supply forecasting but also having regard to the need to ensure that training standards are met and that ratios are not being abused by employers to employ cheap labour. It is recommended that the panel should include one or more prominent labour market economists with expertise in workplace forecasting."

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We should be listening to people like him. We shouldn't hastily move to adopt a motion presented by the member of Haliburton-Kawartha as a potential saviour of our apprenticeship programs, because that's not the problem. So when the member says, "Ah, the problem is that the ratio is 3 to 1," we know that in some industries that is not the case. When you look at a report

prepared by a friendly member whom we know as John Grimshaw, the business manager, financial secretary, for IBEW union Local 105—he reminds us that the number of journeypersons in his field to the number of apprentices allowed with the total workforce creates a different kind of ratio, and it's not always 3 to 1, that in some cases, depending on the workforce, it's 1 to 1, in some other cases it's 2 to 1, and, yes, in some cases it's 3 to 1. But if you listen to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha—and there's another part connected to that riding—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Brock.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —Brock, you would think that the ratio is always 3 to 1. It is not the case. So it suggests something that is in fact not true.

We need to look at why this system of ratios was put into effect and how we keep the integrity of apprenticeship training: Does it potentially weaken the health and safety performance of the workforce, and does it subvert in some ways the goals of the apprenticeship tax credit introduced by this government? These are the elements that need to be looked at, as we review this particular bill.

I remind you, as well, that in the construction trades we know that it is a cyclical kind of pattern where you have growth, and all of a sudden you have less growth. Therefore, the demands on that sector vary from time to time. So you cannot prepare a report or introduce a bill based on an economy that's growing this way versus what we have now in reality, and that's a slowing economy. So the ratios are going to change, the workforce is going to change, and the demands are going to change. In fact, this friend of ours, Mr. Grimshaw, suggests that if you look at his sector, the electrical trades, in terms of the people who complete the apprenticeship program, it's 870, or at least it was in 2005. In 2005, 870 people completed the apprenticeship program. When you look at the Construction Sector Council analysis of requirements for the construction electricians, the annual apprentice completions in 2007 to 2016 required to maintain the current balance is 675. They are already getting, as of 2005, 870 apprentices, meaning they are already training above what is required to fill the demand in this sector. It is true that it may not be the case in all sectors, but in this sector they're training more than they actually need.

You've got to look at this system in a much more comprehensive way. You have to listen to Mr. Armstrong, who proposes that the Ontario College of Teachers look at this in a rational way with people who have a lot of expertise to be able to advise governments about how to do this best.

The ratios work. That is not the problem. We should be looking at many other problems that we have vis-à-vis apprenticeship, but this is the weakest link, in my view, on how we reform apprenticeships and how we can do a better job in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure today to join in this discussion on apprenticeship ratios. I thought

it might be helpful to just start with some definitions to give us all some common ground, not only those of us here in the chamber, but those watching at home.

I wanted to start out by saying that as an educator I have seen first-hand the difference that this has made to the lives of our youth and to adults who are retraining. I'm just going to give you the definition straight up: An apprenticeship is an on-the-job training program for people who want to work in a skilled trade, learning from certified journeypersons. An apprentice is an individual currently training under a registered training agreement or a contract of apprenticeship. A journeyperson is an individual certified to practise in a particular trade who has completed all of the requirements and has acquired the certificate of qualification or certificate of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship ratios establish the number of certified journeypersons an employer must have for every apprentice it wants to train. Originally—and this is an interesting point that we should all acknowledge—ratios were established for reasons of safety, quality workmanship and effective training. About safety, there is absolutely no way we can rush a process with such significant impact.

With respect to the motion under consideration today, it's important to note that the provincial advisory and industry committees, comprised of employees and employers, regularly review ratios established for each of their trades. The advisory committees provide advice to the government about various aspects of their trade, including ratios. It's not the role of politicians to make decisions on industry-specific matters like ratios.

I have many construction companies in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga as well as in all three of my townships of Woolwich, Wilmot, and Wellesley. I have come across various opinions and ideas from my constituents, who share a vast array of opinions. I met a student recently, one of my students—I was his vice-principal. He went through school for business co-op. He did construction co-op. He then went on to apprentice and is now working in the industry. He shared with me very keen insights on this issue. I mean, this is his business, this is his livelihood. He went through the process and he works in the industry. It illustrates why this needs to be with the industry and why on September 16 Minister Milloy announced the government's intent to create the new Ontario College of Trades, a professional body that would put skilled trades on a similar footing with teachers, doctors and nurses. This is the result of sound advice that we received.

I wanted to clarify. Last year the government asked Tim Armstrong, an industry expert, to examine a number of aspects of the apprenticeship system. Mr. Armstrong delivered his report to Minister Milloy on April 28 of this year, and it's posted on the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities website. The Armstrong report provides a number of recommendations on how to make our apprenticeship system even better, and it does mention the issue of apprenticeship ratios. One key recommendation of Mr. Armstrong's report was the

creation of a new Ontario College of Trades, and as I said, Minister Milloy announced the government's intent to create this.

I wanted to follow up on the same train of thought as my colleague from Trinity–Spadina when he mentioned John Grimshaw, the president of the IBEW, who today is quoted as saying, “The decision to establish a college of trades is a good decision and one we support. By having Kevin Whitaker, chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, as implementation adviser, we have someone who has the knowledge and expertise to deal with this file. Any decisions on ratios must be based on good public policy and not on politics.”

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to join in the debate today on the resolution put forward by the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock to do with changing the apprenticeship ratio from what we have in Ontario—three journeymen to one apprentice—which is very different from most of the country—one to one—which would provide much more opportunity for apprentices to have places to be able to learn a skilled trade.

We have a great skills shortage in this province and it's getting worse, so this is a simple change that really doesn't cost the province much at all and it provides a great opportunity for more young people to develop a trade.

We had an economic summit run by the PC Party here at Queen's Park just two weeks ago. I was sitting at our table, where there was an electrical contractor, and he told me about how, in his business, they hire community college students. They'll have them working for them one day, and when they go to start their apprenticeship the next day, they can no longer work for them. That's the crazy situation we have.

We have small businesses—the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses points out that 98% of all businesses are small businesses, and 43% of qualified labour shortages in Ontario are in jobs that require apprenticeship training or a college education. So there's obviously a great need.

I think of a small business from when I used to be in the resort business. Our plumber, Ron Mann, was a one-person business; basically, he did work on his own. Well, how the heck does he get somebody to succeed him if he needs three plumbers to train one to succeed him? That's ridiculous, and that's the situation we have in Ontario. The government says it's because they're getting advice from their provincial apprenticeship committees etc. In my opinion, those are just union-controlled committees that are looking after their own interests.

From my perspective as the aboriginal affairs critic, I was meeting with a councillor for Shawanaga First Nation, in the riding in Parry Sound–Muskoka. In chatting with the councillor, I said, “Well, what are your kids doing?” His son wants to be an electrician. There's

only one problem: He can't find any business to sponsor him. Why not? Because of this rule that we have here in the province of Ontario.

So the question is, why would we not change that rule? As I was suggesting, it's because this is a union-influenced government. There are union-controlled committees that are making the decision recommendations to the minister. “And why is that?” you might ask. If you look back to the 2003 election, there was an organization called the Working Families group, which funded a lot of third party advertising. There was that nice campaign, “Not this time, Ernie, not this time,” that was very effective. In fact, our leader has written to the elections commissioner to ask about whether that in fact should be allowed under our elections laws.

That advertisement was very effective. It was financed mainly by unions under the cover of this Working Families group, and now the big payoff comes after the election: The government has brought in rules like Bill 144, where we've gone back to the archaic, card-based system for signing up new members to unions. I've just met with some construction companies in my riding that are being scammed into forming a union, based on that legislation. It's creating a lot of problems out there.

That's why we aren't having a very simple change to this rule that we have in the province of Ontario, fairly unique in Canada, that would provide so much more opportunity for our young people, including First Nations, and all across the country would help solve the skilled labour situation we have in this province.

If you look at the chart for the country, in British Columbia there are no ratios whatsoever. The great majority of the provinces have one to one. That makes all the sense in the world. That's what we should be doing in this province to provide opportunity for our young people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My colleague from Trinity–Spadina set out a very cogent argument to oppose this motion. If we're going to have safety on the job site, if we're going to have proper training, we need to maintain the current ratio. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Very succinct. Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: As a former educator, let me begin by saying that I am very, very proud of our government's record on apprenticeship. The McGuinty government has done far more than any government in the history of this province to support apprenticeship and to strengthen the apprenticeship system.

We are the first government to make apprenticeship a priority. In the last four years, 50,000 new apprentices have registered in Ontario's training system. That's an increase of 25% and we're on track to create the number of registered apprentices by another 25%.

To compare our record to that of our predecessors on the Conservative side of the House, the McGuinty government has basically doubled the investments and

doubled the number of apprentices. Our government knows there is more work to do and we are committed to taking the steps necessary to build a strong and competitive skilled trades sector. That's why we had Tim Armstrong, a highly respected labour expert, take a look at the skilled trades industry earlier this year and tell us how to improve it.

We have heard a lot of discussion today about apprenticeship ratios, specifically about the ratio for electricians. First, I want to make sure this House has its facts straight. Roughly 60% of Ontario's electrical businesses are governed by a ratio of 1 to 1. The majority of electric companies are small businesses and the current ratio structure recognizes that fact. It's only when you get into bigger companies that the ratio increases, first to 2 to 1 for mid-sized companies, and then to 3 to 1 for large firms. So it's a bit misleading to say the electrical ratio is 3 to 1.

What's important to keep in mind when we are talking about apprenticeship ratios, and what Mr. Armstrong clearly tells us in his report, is that ratio is just one area of the skilled trades sector that needs to be modernized. Mr. Armstrong tells us about apprenticeship completion rates, attracting youth to the trade, up-to-date training. These are equally important matters that need to be addressed in order to continue to build a strong skilled trades sector that can contribute meaningfully to Ontario's economy. That is exactly what we are doing.

Last week the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Honourable John Milloy, announced the government's intent to create a new college of trades. Legislation will be introduced in the spring, and if the legislation is passed, the government will create an arm's-length oversight body that will deal with issues like the ones I've just mentioned. Over the summer alone, we created about 4,500 new apprenticeship spaces with that investment.

The Premier, the minister and this government will continue to work hard to build a strong, modern skilled trades system that works for industry, that works for apprentices and that will help move Ontario's economy forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise today in support of Ms. Scott's private member's resolution. I think it's far overdue and it's about time the House started to listen to this.

The other day—I think I was yesterday—the Premier stood up and talked about fairness, fairness about how we're being treated by the federal government year after year. This is about fairness as well. It's not about the quality of workmanship or about safety. It's about fairness for our young people in the province of Ontario.

Why should a construction apprentice in Mississauga be treated any differently than one in Vancouver or Montreal or Moncton? Why are we different? The rest of the country has a 1-to-1 ratio. This isn't rocket science. This is an agenda that the government does not want to

cave in on. That's why the college of trades was created all of a sudden. It's nothing more than a delay tactic. It's another level of bureaucracy. Who is going to sit on the college of trades? We know that it will be slanted in favour of what the government wants, which is the support of the construction trade unions—not the construction workers, the construction trade unions. Quite frankly, I'm disgusted that I hear members of the government stand up here and actually oppose Ms. Scott's resolution. The reality is, it's about fairness to young people in the province of Ontario. They deserve the same rights to apprenticeship training as any other young men or women across our country.

I can tell you of many examples of people who just could not get on as apprentices. Where are they today? They're in Alberta or Vancouver. They're in these provinces, getting their trades out there. Why should that happen? I hear these excuses, "Well, it's all about safety." Are you telling us, then, that all the other apprentices in the other provinces are working in unsafe positions? I don't think that's the case at all. We have the Ministry of Labour and they have safe working conditions. It should not apply for one second to our skilled trades people and particularly to apprentices.

1510

I'm disappointed that it's taken this long to get to the floor. This can be corrected with just a regulatory change. Put it out for some comment if you have to, but the minister can change this like that. It doesn't have to go on year after year, bringing in legislation on a college of trades. That's garbage and hogwash, as far as I'm concerned.

Let's start supporting these people who are in the audience today. Let's start supporting all of our construction and trade unions. We need these people. In the construction industry and the manufacturing industry the average age is increasing every year. We're not getting enough young people into these trades and we need to make sure we get more, plain and simple, or, as we try to build this strong economy and we try to build this strong country and province, we're not going to have the construction people here. We'll have to bring them in from Vancouver or Alberta; bring them in from other countries, because we will not have them right here in this province.

So I urge everybody in this House to support this resolution. I think it's a positive thing. When I see the construction unions putting out negative press releases against Ms. Scott, I can tell you right now we're on the right track; she's on the right track. Congratulations on a job well done. I can tell you that I fully support what she's doing, and we will continue this fight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to stand and speak on the resolution posed by the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I wish I had more time. This is clearly a very serious issue.

The resolution we have before us here today is because the construction and manufacturing sector want

us to consider and change regulations in advance of the work being done by Kevin Whitaker.

They aren't the only group that want special consideration. Another group that approached Tim Armstrong some months ago was the Sprinkler Fitters of Ontario. They worked with the sprinkler and fire protection industries and came forward, after working with their provincial advisory committee, and asked for compulsory certification status. Everybody, I think, in this House knows how I feel about residential sprinklers. So I support the work that they do.

I understand that it's important to accept the work that Kevin Whitaker has been given the responsibility to undertake. It's clear that ratios and compulsory certification are issues that require serious and thoughtful attention. Frankly, I think it's really important not to circumvent the work of Mr. Whitaker. It's a very slippery slope when politicians make decisions about industry-specific matters like ratios without consultation with all the affected stakeholders.

When the Sprinkler Fitters approached Tim Armstrong, they stated in a letter that, "Taking a national perspective, the Ontario sprinkler industry and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities have been leaders with regard to the apprenticeship program. This includes the development of the national occupational analysis, training, standards, common core curriculum and inter-provincial (red seal) examination. In light of other provinces recently expanding compulsory status to this industry, doing so in Ontario would truly enhance worker mobility while ensuring a qualified labour pool."

I certainly support the work and the advocacy of the Sprinkler Fitters of Ontario. I think that having a trained and qualified individual installing sprinklers is only right, because they provide safety in our homes. But today I'm here to speak about this particular motion. I have confidence that the work being carried out by Mr. Whitaker will serve as a really sound basis and a core for how we make apprenticeship and skills training a priority in this province.

Mr. Armstrong concluded in his report, "There is substantial potential to improve" It's important that we give the time necessary to "enhance the standing and effectiveness of the apprenticeable trades and their continued, strengthened contribution to the growth of the Ontario economy."

It's really hard to wait when we know that there is the ability to improve our apprenticeships and we know there are young people out there who want to get on with the task. We're going to have to be patient a little longer, I think. The report and all the thoughtful recommendations that we've received are in Mr. Whitaker's hands. I have confidence that once he's had an ability to consult with all the stakeholders, he's going to bring forward some recommendations and suggestions that we will undertake to bring forward, because apprenticeships are really the backbone of Ontario and are going to bring prosperity and safety to our construction and building trades.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to stand and fully support my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock in her motion today in support of our youth and our apprentices. I also want to welcome the many apprentices and electricians, members of the Ontario Electrical League in the audience today.

I have a little bit of a different perspective on this, I guess, from others. I've heard many members read political spin, and I've seen them read from news clippings and magazines. My perspective is a little bit different, for it's first-hand. I have completed my electrical apprenticeship. I did complete my electrical licence, and I was an electrical contractor. Contrary to the other statements, it is indeed factual that small and medium businesses in the electrical trade, and others, are required to work with this imposed 3-to-1 ratio—contrary to those other statements.

I'm not going to get into all the details and all the exceptions and exclusions, but it is indeed a fact. But as the colleague from Trinity-Spadina mentioned, when this ratio was first introduced, it was introduced not as a safety measure but as a measure to limit supply of skilled labour. That's what its intention was and that is, indeed, what the intention remains today. It has nothing to do with safety. It's to limit supply of skilled workers.

When I was in the trade, this ratio was never a problem. It didn't cause anybody any concern. Nobody paid any attention to it because we didn't have any enforcement officers to enforce the ratio, up until a few years ago. A few years ago, we hired jobs protection officers in this province. I think we now have about 200 of them who can go in and inspect people's licences, inspect the number of apprentices and journeymen on every work site, and that is where the problem is coming.

I'll just refer to one. A gentleman I know in my area hires many electricians and apprentices. In the last 10 months he has been visited three times on his jobs by jobs protection officers. They have come into his job sites—taken all their people off work, made them produce their identification, resulting in unproductive time for these people. Why did these jobs protection officers come on? Because of an anonymous phone call, often by union representatives, trying to limit competition. Here, three times they've had these jobs protection officers on enforcing apprenticeship ratios. Never once did they find a problem with this fellow, but they continue to go in and disrupt his job sites.

Let me just read a little bit. This contractor then had to convince his customers that he wasn't doing anything wrong. This elevated concerns, raised concerns. A customer said, "I'm not sure that we should be using your company any more." Once again, I found myself in a terrible position," the contractor said, "defending my company's reputation without having committed any offence whatsoever."

This motion must go through—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Thank you. Member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, you have two minutes to reply.

1520

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank my colleagues who spoke today in the Legislature. I especially want to thank my colleague from Simcoe North, who originated the resolution, the motion we have here today. He has been a very strong advocate for apprenticeship, the ratio change, and I really appreciate his support in speaking to this.

It's not a partisan issue coming from us. The journey-men tradespeople to apprenticeship ratio of 3 to 1 is outdated. It's unfair for small and medium-sized business. It's time to move forward. It's time to help our young people in Ontario looking to apply and to get their ticket for a skilled trade.

The minister and the Premier are hiding behind reports. They're hiding behind the Armstrong report which says, "The 'public interest' does not appear to be one of the criteria for the committees' recommendations made to the ministry." And there is another from the Ontario Home Builders' Association in response to these PACs, the provincial advisory committees, that says, "As an industry, we do not believe the PACs have served to reflect the nature of employment and apprenticeship opportunities created by the residential construction industry." This is huge when the minister's own PACs are seen as a barrier to progress in the trades.

It's time that the Liberal government listened. The industry is screaming to change these outdated ratios. The folks up in the gallery are the future of the industries. They've made it clear to the Premier and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to stop ignoring them.

The Liberals across the way are holding back on the livelihood of these young, skilled workers because of their inaction on tackling the unfair ratios. The minister has the ability, with the stroke of a pen, to change the ratios today, and I encourage him to do that.

TOWING INDUSTRY ACT, 2008
LOI DE 2008 SUR L'INDUSTRIE
DU REMORQUAGE

Mr. Zimmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to regulate the motor vehicle towing industry in Ontario / Projet de loi 87, Loi réglementant l'industrie du remorquage de véhicules automobiles en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Pursuant to standing order 97, the member for Willowdale has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very proud to have brought this private member's bill forward. What I propose to do is to speak for a couple of minutes on the purpose, why I brought the bill forward; a couple of minutes outlining

the structure of the bill, how the bill will operate legislatively; and thirdly, a few comments on the support that this bill has developed throughout the province.

First of all, why have I brought this private member's bill forward? In my constituency, my discussions with constituents, my discussions with friends, my discussions with colleagues and over the years my discussions with members of this Legislature, I have heard innumerable personal stories about what happens when they are towing experience. I have heard many, many stories. I dare say, each member here has probably had their own towing experience. If you haven't had your own towing experience, you've heard about it from friends and colleagues.

What has happened is that that towing experience, be it as a result of a collision, a broken-down vehicle, your car is towed away for a parking violation or whatever, when that tow truck arrives and takes your vehicle away, you have a very, very good chance of having a good experience with a responsible tower. You get a fair tow for a fair price, and the experience, while nobody wants to get towed, is not an unpleasant experience.

On the other hand, you've got an equal chance when that tow arrives that it turns into a nightmare experience. I just ask all my colleagues in the House to reflect on that and think about some of the horror stories that you have heard about a bad towing experience, either your own, your friend's, your colleague's or your constituent's. We've heard stories about excessive charges, cars ending up in pounds, excessive charges in the pounds and nasty experiences with the tower. We've heard estimates of people paying anywhere from \$50 or \$100 for a tow to \$600, \$700, \$800. I have documented pieces in my office from reputable sources of bills exceeding \$1,500, \$1,600, \$1,800—in some cases over \$2,000.

As I say, if you have a good experience with a tow, you'll get a competent operator, a trained operator, a fair operator. But then again, you might have the nightmare experience. This legislation is designed to eliminate that nightmare experience, to bring some order to the process so that when members of the public have a towing experience, they can take comfort that they're going to get a fair price for a competent tow and reasonable storage charges. This, in effect, is a piece of consumer protection legislation.

I have heard, as I've said, from individuals; I've heard from the insurance industry. The insurance industry is a big player in this piece of legislation because, more often than not, the costs of the towing experience get charged back to the insurance company. When that's all added up throughout the province, that in turn reflects negatively on your insurance rates; it drives the price of insurance up. I've heard from the Ontario Provincial Police and other police forces about the difficulties they have in managing, supervising and regulating the towing industry. Essentially, it comes back to this point: There are no common standards, there is no common fee structure and there is no common expectation of what a good towing experience might entail. This legislation is designed to deal with that.

Let me speak just for a couple of minutes on outlining how the legislation works. First of all, it's self-regulation. We're asking the towing industry to regulate itself. How are we going to do that? What the act contemplates is the Towing Industry Council of Ontario. Everybody who's in the tow truck business and has a tow truck has to register with the council. There will be a licensing regime in place. The council itself will have a board of directors of up to 20 people. Forty per cent, or about four members of that board of directors, will be members of the public who have no connection whatsoever with the towing industry and who will be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to in effect represent the public interest, to represent the consumer. The other 16 appointees on the board of directors will be from the towing industry, broadly speaking: There will be representatives from the independent towers, the sole operators; there will be representatives from the larger and mid-sized towing companies; there will be representatives from the insurance industry; there will be representatives perhaps from law enforcement, to bring their views to bear; there may be representatives from some municipalities to bring their points of view.

That towing council plus the board of directors will be charged with the responsibility of coming up with a regime which will contemplate essentially four things: how a licensing regime should work, how a complaints process regime should work, how a discipline process regime should work, and how a standards regime should work: What should be the standards, what should a consumer reasonably be able to expect to have a good towing experience?

That council and board of directors from the towing industry, broadly speaking, together with the four members representing the public interest, will present to the government, the Minister of Consumer Affairs, probably, a recommendation on how that regime should work, that is, the discipline, the complaints, the licensing and the standards: What are the standards of a good towing experience? The government will look at that recommendation and ensure that those regulations are passed and take effect. That's the broad outline of how the bill will operate. The council and the board of directors will set registration fees and the like. There will be rules on how they can discipline a member or take a licence away and so on.

1530

Now let me just say a couple of words about the support that the bill has developed since it was introduced at first reading in June. Earlier this afternoon, at 1 o'clock, in the media studio downstairs, I had a press conference. I was joined at the table by the deputy superintendent of traffic services for the OPP. I was also joined by the vice-president, Ontario, Insurance Bureau of Canada; and the executive director of the Ontario Recovery Group and the Provincial Towing Association of Ontario. I made essentially the same remarks that I have made thus far in this chamber. The OPP spoke, the Insurance Bureau of Canada spoke and the Provincial Towing Association

executive director spoke. They all—to a person—endorsed the legislation.

Let me just tell you what some of them have said. This is a quote from Mr. Don Forgeron, the vice-president, Ontario, Insurance Bureau of Canada, that this bill “will protect Ontarians from unreasonable costs and practices of vehicle towing and storage operations. This legislation is a huge first step in protecting consumers through higher standards and reasonable pricing.”

This is what Mr. Doug Nelson, who is the chief executive officer of the Ontario Recovery Group and the Provincial Towing Association of Ontario, said: “This legislation will eliminate barriers imposed by costly municipal licences. It will also promote a higher standard of training, and provide better monitoring of prices charged to customers.” Mr. Nelson also went on to say, “This bill will be of huge benefit to the general public. It will ensure a higher industry standard of employee training and conduct, improve overall customer service and eliminate price gouging. In addition, it gives our industry an opportunity to become more involved in highway traffic incident management”—that's the accident where the highways are blocked and the tow trucks are swirling around, all trying to get a piece of the business—“and work towards improving highway safety and resolving gridlock issues facing Ontario motorists.”

The deputy superintendent from the OPP made similar remarks endorsing the bill.

Let me say something about the licensing regime, because right now what the bill contemplates is that everybody will have to join the Ontario towing council and get a licence and be registered and subject to the rules and standards and disciplinary procedures and so on. Right now in Ontario, some municipalities issue a licence and some municipalities don't. Tow truck operators often find themselves in a situation where they've got to have multiple licences, or no licences. None of those licensing regimes have standards or an oversight or a disciplinary procedure. It's merely, if you pay the fee, you get a licence and you can have a tow truck and operate in that jurisdiction. This bill is not about generating fees for the province. It's not about taking away fees from those municipalities that do have licensing regimes. This bill is about consumer protection. Again, think of your own experience. Think of your friends' experiences. Think of the stories that you've heard. That's why this bill has tremendous support throughout the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to rise today to support Bill 87, An Act to regulate the motor vehicle towing industry in Ontario.

I'll start out by saying I know this bill originated with a connection to my riding, and that is that Doug Nelson, who is currently serving as the executive director of the Ontario Recovery Group and the Provincial Towing Association, is actually from my hometown of Bracebridge. Doug was involved in his own towing business

for many years—a lot of experience in the towing business. This is an issue that he's been working on for many years, so I'm pleased that this private member's bill has come to the Legislature. I know that behind the scenes Doug and his association have spent a lot of time and effort working toward this day.

Why do we need this legislation? Why we need it is because there are a lot of problems out there, particularly on our major highways—on Highway 400, on Highway 401—and I think consumer satisfaction and the industry's reputation are at an all-time low. We have problems with chasers, exorbitant bills, vehicles going into body shops where they are basically held captive and are not released until significant bills are paid. I have a copy of one here. The bill for all of a seven-kilometre tow, a bit of storage and a bit of teardown is \$2,925, and that's before any actual work is done. That's one example, but not an isolated case. So there are problems out there that need to be dealt with.

There are problems in the insurance industry. I note the Insurance Bureau of Canada says, "Every day hundreds of Ontarians are at the mercy of the 'first-come, first-serve' tow truck operator who shows up at the scene of a vehicle accident waiting to make his next dollar... They often take advantage of the situation by taking custody of an automobile and using that custody as leverage to increase costs, accumulate exorbitant storage fees and attempt to influence the choice of repair service."

Actually, just as I was stepping outside of the chamber, my brother happened to call me. Larry happens to own a body shop and a Ford dealership. I said, "I've got to go. I'm speaking on a towing bill," and his only comment to me was, "Well, you've got to do something about the exorbitant storage charges that occur." I'm sure he's had first-hand experience with it through his involvement in the business.

We have real problems with gridlock on our major highways, and this bill can help come up with some of the solutions, some incident management to help clean up the effects of an accident more quickly. There are all kinds of benefits to that happening in terms of the time police officers spend, and of course the huge economic cost to a highway being closed.

So I think this proposal to self-regulate and to bring some standards in makes a lot of sense. They're going to create a multi-tier licensing system for the towing industry through this bill that would implement a classification/certification system for the tow trucks, for the tow truck drivers, for the tow truck companies. The objective, of course, is to regain public and private confidence in the towing and recovery industry.

Some of the benefits that we'll see from this legislation being brought into effect: for the towing industry, fewer complaints and issues, improved industry reputation, improved public image, improved morale among employees, making the business more attractive to hire more people; for the Ministry of Transportation, quicker clearance and reduction of gridlock issues, reduction of many service complaints; for the police, a drastic re-

duction in operating costs, and of course communication would improve with the towing industry; for the insurance industry, we'd see an end to the insurance price abuse issues, we'd have complaints to a complaint review board, and we'd have a drastic reduction in operating costs; and most importantly, for the public we'd have improved industry service through a qualification and licensing process, we'd end the price abuse issues, and we'd have complaints going through a complaint review board.

So I think there are many benefits to come from this. If this bill passes today, I hope it would be referred to a committee for further improvement; it might not have all the answers. I know my colleague the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is going to get up and probably question the way this bill is solving some problems and representing some of the independent towing operators. But I think even the independent towing operators recognize that there are some problems out there.

I hope this bill passes today. I hope it then goes to a committee where the public and all those involved who have a stake, including the police, the government, the Ministry of Transportation and cities, will have an effect. I think that we should be doing away with all this municipal licensing that's a patchwork quilt across the province and putting in this type of regulation, which is going to have some real improvement to the conditions under which our towing operators do business, for all the benefits that I've outlined.

1540

I will be supporting this bill when, I hope, it comes to a vote after this hour of debate.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have a few things to say. I know the member from Niagara Centre wants to contribute to this debate, so I'm going to leave some time for the members, including, maybe, for the member for Toronto-Danforth. I'm not quite sure, but we'll see how it unfolds.

New Democrats support measures that provide added protections for consumers using tow truck services, and it's for that reason that we generally support the direction of this bill proposed by the member from Willowdale. Except, there are some concerns, and I want to speak to them.

There are times when, yes, many people self-regulate, such as nurses, doctors, lawyers, teachers and others. We allow that; we think it's good. And then there are times when we face problems, such as the explosion in north Toronto just about a month and a half ago or so, where we know the Technical Standards and Safety Authority failed us in so many ways. Only after the explosion did that so-called safety authority begin to crack down on its members. So we support self-regulation because it's better than no regulation, but there are instances where self-regulation in and of itself could be a problem. And I'm thinking of the financial services in the US, where

the subprime problemo in the US—and you think, my God, who's minding our finances over there?

Who is worried about how we regulate those markets? When everyone says that the markets are king, the markets can do no wrong, the markets can make no mistakes, and all of a sudden, we are facing one of the worst financial disasters we have ever seen, and Mr. Bush and buddies are there to bail them out. People who make loads of money by barrels, day in and day out, who failed those individuals who invest their few dollars, and then we have a disaster of this sort—you have to ask yourself: Who is regulating those people? Who is regulating the markets?

Sometimes, I argue, self-regulation is not that great, that somebody should be supervising those who are hired to supervise on a voluntary basis. I wonder whether this is one instance where we might agree with the CAA that perhaps the government should regulate and have a superintendent who keeps an eye on the whole tow truck industry. But it's a good question that is raised by the CAA.

It is also important for me, if I were to support self-regulation as proposed by the member from Willowdale, that the towing industry council must be represented—at least 60% of it—by consumers. You cannot have an association that's represented largely by the tow truck operators. It just cannot be. Yes, they should be represented, but it cannot be the majority; the majority must be consumers. This way, I know that I, as a consumer, am going to be protected. At the very least, if we're going to support this bill as it goes into committee, unless we change those numbers such that consumers are over-represented rather than the tow truck operators, then I don't know if I can support this bill.

I'm quite interested in debating the bill, quite interested in making sure it goes to committee and, yes, interested in listening to consumer groups out there. We don't have a strong consumer protection authority in this country; we just don't. I wish we did, and I wish it could be financed in a way that we could have a consumer authority that actually protects us from everyone, including, sometimes, governments. That would be good by me. But we don't have such a strong authority, such a strong consumer protection agency in this country that's well-financed, that is able to hire people—lawyers and others—to dig out problems and lobby to solve them with governments and with industry. We don't have that, and it's most unfortunate.

In instances of this sort, I really do believe we need greater protection of consumers, for consumers, on this board. So that, at the very least, is a change that I recommend. But it's an important initiative, because at the moment there are no protections. The industry has been able to do whatever it has wanted, governments have done nada, and there is nobody regulating them—not themselves and not the government. So this is a good initiative by the member from Willowdale. I'm assuming that many of the members are going to support the direction of the bill, but I am hoping that they will listen

to folks like me who are proposing some suggestions to make it stronger. If you're not going to have the government regulate them, directly connected to the minister—the Minister of Transportation in this case—then I think you've got to make this bill much stronger.

I know it's going to get to committee—I have no doubt about this—because I've got a feeling that a lot of Liberal backbenchers are going to support it. It's just a feeling I've got.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Prescient.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Prescient, omnipotent, omniscient. Prescient would be better, because omnipotent is too strong.

As it goes into committee, I am looking forward to the debate, I'm looking forward to some of the groups coming before to us comment on it, including tow truck industry folk coming to give their comment on this. It's quite possible that they themselves want to regulate the industry because it doesn't, quite frankly, have a great name for itself—it doesn't. So I'm assuming they too are very eager to say, “We've got to get this under control. We've got to regulate it in a way that gives us some credibility.” So they themselves might want to come and give their views, and I'm looking forward to hearing them as well.

Madam Speaker, that's all for my contribution. I'm looking forward to the member from Niagara Centre making his.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, the member from Trinity–Spadina mentioned that this certainly is a very important consumer issue. I concur with him and I certainly applaud the member from Willowdale for bringing this bill forward, because this is really about helping people who are sometimes in a very traumatic state when an accident occurs. You can imagine the nervousness that exists when you're in a horrible accident, and then you're trying to make decisions, and it's very difficult.

As you know, usually the first people who arrive at an accident scene are the tow truck operators. That's one of the good things they do. I know there are a lot of stories about misbehaviour amongst tow truck operators, but certainly they do help people out of very difficult situations, many times even before the police come, so we must put that on the record too.

I was a bit involved with the industry when I was dealing with the auto insurance reform from a few years ago. I became somewhat familiar with some of the challenges. As you know, a lot of people put the cost of the rogue operators out there out of mind, because the cost is really borne by a third party through insurance rates. So people say, “What do I care who the tow truck company is bringing my car to? The insurance company is paying. So what if it costs me another \$2,000? Big deal. I'm not paying for it.” But, as you know, eventually it all comes out of our pockets in higher insurance rates. Certainly the insurance company certainly doesn't pick up the cost; the consumer does.

1550

As you know, what happens quite regularly is that you'll have one of these rogue tow truck operators sweet-talk some person who is in a traumatic situation, pick up a car and hold that car hostage. Then you go to your local auto repair shop and say, "By the way, here's where my car was taken by this company." When they try to get your car back, they say, "They want another 1,000 bucks before we can get your car out of storage somewhere, out of hostage, and bring it to your local body shop."

That type of action does occur, and that gives all tow truck operators a bad name. That's the type of thing that I think would be helped by this bill. In essence, the consumer has no idea who the rogue operators are and who the established ones are. They all look the same. They're big, huge trucks that come out of nowhere—they're there faster than you can say Jack Robinson—but you don't know who you're dealing with, whether they're good, reputable operators or not.

By having some kind of self-regulation, you're giving the consumer some idea of who the reputable ones are; there are some mechanisms where they can improve their best practices, ensure that there are some safeguards for the consumer and that the good, honest tow truck operators are able to be identified and dominate the industry, and not the rogue operators who just look upon this as a fast buck and take advantage of people when they're most vulnerable.

It's a complex issue. That's why I think this will take a lot of discussion and a lot of input from all the stakeholders. You're dealing with municipal inter-boundary complications—as you know, Hamilton has a different system than Peel region and Toronto; there are different standards and different practices. The police are also a critical component of this, because they are on the scene. There is all kinds of input that should come from the insurance industry. In many cases, the auto repair industry is very closely allied with the tow truck industry.

I think it is sometimes a neglected part of consumer protection because, as I said, usually people think, "Well, the insurance company is paying." But basically, as I've said before, we are all paying if we let rogue operators take advantage of a system which, in many ways, doesn't work too badly considering it's really a free-for-all. It's like George W's Wall Street right now: everybody for himself.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's called capitalism.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, pure, unfettered capitalism at its best.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Unbridled capitalism.

Mr. Mike Colle: Unbridled capitalism.

If we can get the member from Willowdale to bridle this a bit, I think the industry and all the good operators—as I said, the majority are good operators—will be able to provide good service for the consumer. I think it's something that will help a lot of people who, as I said, find themselves in a very traumatic situation on the highway, sometimes at night by themselves, who have never even opened the hood of their car since they've had

it. I know the member from Hamilton says she has never lifted the hood of her car in all the time she has driven. That's not unusual these days; it's not like the old days.

But we have to take a serious look at this, and I hope everybody will support this good piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I will be opposing this bill for a number of reasons, and I'd like to speak to those reasons today. I guess the first thing I should say is that I'm glad I don't live down in Toronto, because of all these horror stories and nightmares of tow truck operators. I will tell you that I believe I know every tow truck operator in the county of Lanark and I get along really well with them and so does everybody else. They're fine, upstanding, respected members of the community, and they don't cause anybody nightmares. I'm really glad I drive up in Lanark and Frontenac counties and not in Willowdale or Trinity–Spadina.

There are a few things; the next one is the support. This bill does have support of those who will benefit from it, those who will receive a privilege from it. It is not supported, of course, by those who will carry the burden of it. Today, in the members' gallery, we have members from the Ontario Federation of Independent Towers, who do not support this bill. There are other groups out there that do not support this bill in its present form and actually have quite differing views on how the towing industry can be improved, such as trade certification instead of this regulatory bill.

There are those that do support it, though. One of them is the insurance bureau. I wonder if the insurance bureau would like it if the tow truck operator sat in judgement on their fees and could rule on their fees that they were allowed to put on tow truck operators. We're getting into a bit of a conflict here when we have those who will benefit imposing those burdens on others.

It's just not, as a few others members here call it, unfettered capitalism. Capitalism is a good thing. It allows us to be here today. But when we start having consumer groups or interest groups determining what the fee schedules are going to be for somebody else, that is really a corruption of what legislation is about. It would be like Colonel Sanders telling the chicken farmers what they must sell their chickens for. It's just not right.

But also going back, I'm hearing all this hearsay. There may be a problem in parts of this province; I don't deny it. But it is not everywhere. This bill, however, will be applied everywhere. Those jurisdictions and those areas where things are functioning well will face the same imposition. Just think for a minute. The tow truck business in Trinity–Spadina may have a business volume this high, and up in Carleton Place or Perth, their business volume is going to be this low, but they are going to pay the same provincial fees. What's going to happen to those guys up in rural Ontario when they have to pay these high provincial fees? They're going to be out of business. When people from Toronto want to go up to the hunting camp or the fishing camp and get pulled out off

the gravel road, guess what, guys? There will be no tow trucks, because they can't afford the fees of this bill.

We have to think a little bit more before we bring legislation in. We have to think of the consequences of that legislation. We can't just believe that striking some legislation will create utopia. I've also heard that this bill will give us consistency: consistent standards, consistent fees and consistent everything. I'd like to remind everybody here, I believe it was Oscar Wilde who said consistency is, of course, the last refuge for ignorance. We don't need everything to be consistent in this world.

Anyway, there are things that can be done. I would like this House to consider those positions of other interested stakeholders and parties like the federation of independent towers who want to see some trade certification to elevate the standards in their business and in their industry and not just have their competitors or interest groups sit in judgement of them with this regulation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I was eager to speak to this bill. Its author is a prolific drafter of legislation. He's been stiffed more than once by the Premier's office.

Interjection.

1600

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, he has—most unfairly. Most recently, you'll recall he introduced a very popular bill that regulated roadside zoos, the private zoos. He was exploited; he was propped up during the election campaign, used last October by his Premier's office—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, he was—to campaign with the Liberals, because it was very popular legislation, and then he got stiffed. The bill disappeared and it was nowhere to be seen in the new animal welfare legislation.

Look, I am a fan of this member and I want to see this bill go to committee. I say to the Premier's office, you've bullied Mr. Zimmer enough. He's not going to take it anymore; his colleagues aren't going to take it anymore. If Mr. McGuinty wants to promote a backbench revolution, he can take on Mr. Zimmer on this one. I caution him not to.

Let's talk about tow truck operators. These are some of the hardest-working women and men in our communities—they are. It's dangerous work. They're out there on busy highways extracting cars from entanglements, from ditches, working along the roadside. They're out there at 3 in the morning on blizzardy, cold winter days, rescuing people who have slid off the road and have gone into ditches. I have a great deal of regard for their tremendous hard work, and they are very much the chivalrous cruisers of the highways. These are the guys and gals who will phone in an incident to the OPP or to the police when they see something untoward. They're a special breed of people.

Down where I come from, a family like the James brothers for decades were operating tow services. And Mr. Hillier is right: Small towns do it far differently.

They probably do it far better. But what we've got to understand is that there are some issues here of public safety. We look at the circumstance of a person out in the dark, early hours of the morning, alone with a disabled vehicle or with a vehicle that's got a dead battery or that's been in a small fender-bender. That person is very vulnerable. We want to make sure that the tow truck operator who attends to his or her vehicle scene can be trusted not to exploit the vulnerability of that person, even in terms of their own physical safety.

We've heard—and they could well be apocryphal stories—and the newspapers have carried stories about, from time to time, organized crime infiltrating parts of the tow truck industry. I think the legitimate tow truck industry has an interest in preventing that from happening. There are some obvious motives: accessing VIN numbers, amongst other things. I say to people, if you really want to protect yourself against rip-offs, you do what we do down in Welland. You get your cars repaired at a unionized shop like David Chev-Olds; unionized mechanics, no rip-offs. Or you find somebody like young Jimmy Dolan on Burgar Street, Jimmy D's Automotive Repair. "Good work at working man's prices": That's his slogan. A class-A auto mechanic, young Jimmy Dolan, Jimmy D's on Burgar Street. You're not going to get ripped off.

I think this bill should go to committee. I think this bill should be supported in principle. I think Mr. Hillier should take an active role in that committee, articulating the interests of the small-town operators he speaks for out in eastern Ontario, but I think that Mr. Zimmer should be given the opportunity to flesh this out. I think it's in the interest of public safety, it's in the interest of consumer protection. Mr. Marchese talks about the inappropriateness of having an overwhelming number of industry participants. He also talks about the failure of the TSSA. The public safety risks that it has created are as much the failure of the TSSA as they are the result of an incompetent boob of a minister who showed no interest whatsoever in what the TSSA in fact wasn't doing in terms of inspecting, regulating and performing its role.

I support the legislation; I support in it principle. I look forward to it being refined, I look forward to public hearings and I look forward to Mr. Zimmer getting the credit he deserves from this Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: In looking at the bill from the member for Willowdale, I am reminded of some of my experiences with a former neighbour I had on my street a few houses ago. He was a tow truck driver. He and his wife were regular folks. I met a lot of the guys who do pretty much the same job, and we'd sit down and they'd start chatting after a drink or so. That's when it would come out who the bad actors were in that industry and when all the bad practices within that industry came out. Like everybody else, they liked to complain about what they didn't like in the thing that they did. In recalling some of those discussions and looking at the bill brought

forth by the member for Willowdale, this is a bill that's about time.

I can recall one of the neighbours on the street that I live on now talking about being in a very, very minor bumper thumper—no significant damage to either of the cars. While the two people were exchanging licences, in the description I got, he said that at least three tow trucks had converged within moments. They were putting a fair amount of pressure on both drivers to winch them up and tow them, and both drivers told the tow truck drivers, "Thanks, but no thanks. We don't need it. We're quite capable of driving these two vehicles off to the shop to get repaired."

So what this points to is that there really are few, if any, standards. There are no procedures worthy of mention, no effective means of redress for consumers. The member for Willowdale brings forward a bill whose time has come. I have to note that the member for Willowdale is the same member whose persistence and diligence regulated private zoos and also served to protect animals. He's turning his very formidable legal training and expertise to protecting motorists and to making an entire industry not only better, but more competitive.

How better? For the first time a bill, if passed, would implement a registration committee, a complaints committee and a discipline committee, so finally we'd be able to know who is and who isn't in the industry. There would be, as the member has pointed out, no more multiple licences. I live in a jurisdiction, Peel region, where both the region of Peel and the city of Mississauga license tow trucks. The city of Mississauga is entirely contained within the region of Peel. I'm not sure if the city of Brampton also has an overlapping licence, but it strikes me at the very least as duplicative to have both the region and one of the cities contained in it effectively license the same thing.

The measures proposed by the member for Willowdale also have one thing that's very important: teeth. The member is proposing a \$15,000 maximum fine for a first offence. It's enough to give the bad operators cause to stop and think and say, "Should I do this or should I not?" For subsequent offences, fines can range as high as \$30,000 under the measures proposed by the member for Willowdale.

I'd just like to go down some of the very reasonable, common sense regulations proposed in the bill. The member proposes actually defining towing services. So what is and what is not a towing service? Where can you or can you not legally jack up a car and haul it away? The member proposes measures respecting eligibility for registration. In other words, what is a tow truck? How do you go about registering it? What determines who is or isn't in the industry, and therefore who can and can't provide the services?

He talks about different classes of registration and imposing terms and conditions and limitations on any particular class, so that if you're engaged in one particular class, whether it is, for example, towing a heavier vehicle with a much larger tow truck—does that allow

you to attend or preclude you from attending at the scene of a minor motor vehicle accident to haul away somebody's car? Without getting into the details, this is one of the common sense things that the member for Willowdale would propose that we resolve so both those who operate tow trucks and consumers would be better protected.

One of the things I like that the member is proposing is prescribing circumstances in which a person is not eligible to be registered. In other words, if you've proven that you can't respect the laws and regulations proposed in the act, if passed, the member says you will never be able to be registered. I think, personally, that that's something that should give many operators pause for thought.

1610

The member has had an awful lot of reaction on this, and most of it has been positive. In fact, the overwhelming majority is positive. He has a very long list of tow truck operators here who have supported him. Let me quote by reading just one endorsement from the Associated Canadian Car Rental Operators that says that they "appreciate Mr. Zimmer's efforts in supporting this important legislation." This bill "is a significant step forward in protecting all Ontarians from the predatory practices of some vehicle towing and storage operators. We strongly support" the bill "and request that you too support its passing into law."

I couldn't say it any better. That's why I'll vote for it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate? The member from Willowdale, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. David Zimmer: I thank my colleagues from all sides of the Legislature for their remarks and their support, and indeed, the member from Lanark for his constructive criticism.

Fundamentally, this bill is about consumer protection. This bill is good for the consumer, but it's also good for the towers themselves, because, it takes the reputable towers, the competent towers, the capable towers, and puts them in positions on the towing council and on the board of directors so that those responsible, hard-working, honest, reliable towers can give the government the best advice on how to self-regulate their industry.

The governing regime that's contemplated is a very simple regime. It's efficient; it cuts right to the quick. It essentially provides three things. It provides a method of licensing towers. The second thing—it goes on—is that it then will provide standards: work standards, towing standards. Thirdly, it'll provide a disciplined regime so that those independent, honest, hard-working towers can, if necessary, weed out a rogue tower who's not up to standard.

In my submission, this legislation is good for the consumer; it's good for the hard-working, reliable, honest towers; it's good for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

NORTHERN YORK REGION POWER
CONSERVATION ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'ÉCONOMIE
D'ÉNERGIE DANS LE SECTEUR NORD
DE LA RÉGION DE YORK

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Mr. Tabuns has moved second reading of Bill 79. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. Motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Ms. Scott has moved private members' notice of motion number 45. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

We'll do that one more time. Is that possible?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. We'll deal with this vote at the end.

TOWING INDUSTRY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'INDUSTRIE
DU REMORQUAGE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Mr. Zimmer has moved second reading of Bill 87. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): The bill is ordered to the committee of the whole House.

Mr. David Zimmer: The Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): It has been referred to the general government committee. Is that agreed? Carried.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1615 to 1620.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Ms. Scott has moved private member's notice of motion 45. All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy

Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

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

Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldeep
Kwinter, Monte
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
McNeely, Phil
Moridi, Reza
Phillips, Gerry

Qaadri, Shafiq
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 28.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL
FISCAL POLICIES

POLITIQUES FISCALES
FÉDÉRALES-PROVINCIALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 24, 2008, on the motion relating to calling upon all federal party leaders and Ontario candidates in the upcoming federal election to outline their plan to ensure fair treatment for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I am honoured to speak on this motion calling on fair treatment of Ontario by the federal government.

Our economy is being challenged by a slowing US economy, the high Canadian dollar, and high oil prices as well. It's also the major challenges that the US economy is facing in terms of the financial sector and also the housing sector. Our government has worked hard to bring in various initiatives to promote and create the right environment for the economy, like cutting taxes, the business taxes, and we are also focusing on the green economy. We have also invested in infrastructure like never before in Ontario. We also have introduced some retraining programs.

But we could do more. That's why we are calling on fairness for Ontario to help our families and businesses get through these challenging times and help us to overcome them and emerge stronger.

Ontario residents send more money to the federal government in personal income taxes, corporate income taxes and sales taxes than they receive back. That is about \$20 billion, according to various estimates of economists. What that really says is that we have about \$20 billion of Ontario taxes that pay for services in other provinces. This is actually our money that could be spent in our province to provide better services, or for that matter, to cut some of the business taxes so that our businesses can become more competitive. What we are really looking for is to keep more of our own money so we can invest in things that can make Ontario a stronger province and a stronger economy going forward.

Over the last 50 years, Ontarians have sent over \$100 billion to other parts of Canada through what we call equalization payments at the federal level. Because of the growing wealth of some other provinces, Ontario may soon qualify for equalization. What we are really saying, and what the Premier made a case for yesterday, is that we need to keep some of that money right in our own province so we can provide some of those services to our own residents.

I want to talk a little bit about what happened in Peel region the other day. The Peel region councillors actually called all the federal candidates that are running right now from various parties, and they basically talked about some of the issues the region of Peel is facing. In Peel alone, we have about 27,000 new immigrants that settle every year. That creates a demand for new infrastructure in Peel: a demand for housing, a demand for long-term health care. The region also needs money to invest in regional roads and the maintenance and operation of those roads.

In addition to that, we also need money for waste management in the region. Peel is the home of 1.2 million people, but they're estimating they need billions of dollars in terms of infrastructure needs. Their estimate is about \$122 billion over the next decade. Our government can't really meet these kinds of demands unless we can keep a lot more money right here in Ontario and provide this to some of the municipalities to meet some of their needs.

Among the issues that our Premier raised yesterday was, for example, that unemployed Ontarians get about \$4,600 less than in most of the other provinces. Why do people who are unemployed in Ontario get \$4,600 less a year than in any other province? In our health care system alone, we get about \$700 million less a year from Canada health transfer payments. We have to ask ourselves, why are laid-off workers in Ontario entitled to less money than in other provinces? That is really not fair. These are just a few ways in which Ontario is not getting fair treatment from the federal government.

The other provinces that are getting money that comes from Ontario are spending on services at a higher rate than we are in Ontario. You can talk about spending on higher education. Some of these provinces are actually spending more money on higher education than we do in Ontario. That is being done with money that is being

transferred from Ontario to other provinces. Is that fair? Absolutely not. I think our students are entitled to the same kind of treatment as students in other provinces.

In Peel, the politicians are asking that Ottawa give an additional 1% for every dollar collected in federal taxes to municipalities. If that happens, then they can meet some of the needs they have in Peel region, like social housing needs, long-term-care needs and maintenance of regional roads. This would help them meet some of their needs. These are important services at the local level that all residents need, because the population constantly keeps increasing year after year.

1630

As Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services, I'm proud of many other programs that we have introduced and funded for small businesses. But small businesses at this point are facing a lot of challenges and they need a lot of help. What we really need to do is make sure that, of the money we are sending to Ottawa, we can keep some here. It's not that we are asking them for any extra monies. We are asking to retain some of our own money so that we can meet some of these challenges as we move forward.

That's what this fairness motion is all about. It is to ask the federal government to treat our unemployed workers on the same level as the other provinces so that they can have the same kind of treatment. That will help us to provide some of the services that we need to provide, moving forward in this province. It will also help local municipal governments such as the region of Peel to address some of the issues they have been raising. It is impossible for them to have \$122 billion to meet infrastructure needs without some good programs coming from the federal government to assist them.

I am very supportive of this motion for the fair treatment of Ontario. I hope the federal government is listening somewhere and that we can have some of the same treatment as other provinces have, to help us do some of the things the residents of Ontario need.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: My kids, when they were little, used to engage me in conversation. They'd often say, "Daddy, it's not fair. It's not fair." That's what I called whining. So here we are, discussing a Premier saying to a province and to a country, "It's not fair." But he's the Premier; he's not my son.

I, like a few other members of this House, am approaching my first anniversary of being elected an MPP, and in that time the truth I have come to know is that this government bears a very startling resemblance to a baby's alimentary canal, with a happy appetite for taxpayers' money on one end and no responsibility on the other. In fact, I would argue that this government turns taxpayers' money into a similar byproduct. I will leave it to all members to figure out who the original author of that quote was. I'll tell on you a private basis.

This whole fairness motion is the product of two factors: Dalton McGuinty's fear, and his sense of entitlement to taxpayers' money—not his money; taxpayers'

money. You see, for a while now the McGuinty Liberals have been looking around and trying to find some scapegoat for the economic crisis and financial lows that Ontario is now experiencing. They've tried numerous tactics. They've tried excuses. We've heard them all in this House time and time again, on a daily basis—parity of the dollar, or close to it; globalization; international economic instability—and nobody has any quarrel with any of those things, but none of them are convincing in this context. Finally they've decided to saddle the federal government with their problem. Poor Ontario; the “poor me” syndrome. But you make your bed, Premier, and you lie in it.

The McGuinty approach reminds me of an interview I was watching recently on a program I think we've all seen, *Inside the Actors Studio*. James Lipton was interviewing Hugh Laurie, the lead actor in the popular series *House*. Laurie said self-deprecatingly that he's the jerk of the cast. He admitted that. He explained that, to paraphrase, every group has its dynamic, and when you walk into a room, if you can't spot the jerk, that's probably because the jerk is you. I couldn't help but think that this little bit of modern wisdom really applied to the McGuinty Liberals, and if this anecdote sparked even a minimal amount of self-reflection, I would consider its telling a great success.

Years after they started looking for a scapegoat on which to pin the economic crisis that has now befallen Ontario, they finally spotted opportunity and pointed their finger at equalization payments. Guess what? You've been blaming everyone and everything around you for years, and yet nothing has been resolved. Maybe that's because the problem is you. Not them, you.

It's clear that Premier McGuinty very badly needs someone to blame for his lack of vision and his incompetence in managing our economy in Ontario. Lack of foresight and strategic planning is, in an average person or organization, considered a shortcoming. In a Premier, in a government, this is a fatal flaw that will bring on the demise not only of that government itself, but will also contribute to the downfall of an entire province.

We are experiencing that downfall today, and Premier McGuinty is afraid that this is the beginning of his end, because his back is now to the wall and the stuff is hitting the economic fan. He finally understands that he may actually have to be held accountable for his own incompetence and economic mismanagement and so he decided to dabble in federal politics. Fairness? We all believe in fairness. The Premier just seems to have demonstrated time and again that fairness means, to him, that things have to go his way. Sorry, it doesn't fly this time. It doesn't fly this time. We call this clear, unadulterated opportunism, motivated by fear. Premier McGuinty is now afraid that he might have to answer to Ontarians for his absence, his cavalier attitude and his lack of planning.

He knows that this time, there is no PR stunt in the world that will be able to save him, no matter how many petitions he puts up on a website. I am thinking, when I

discuss websites, just how many websites does this government have to address one shortcoming or the other? It's because the consequences of the Premier's mismanagement are witnessed by the people of Ontario every day that there is nothing left to turn to but this. They see it when they see the brightest and most talented Ontarians, sometimes their own children—and, in fact, my own children—leave this province to seek opportunity elsewhere, other provinces, other countries; when we hear of job losses on a regular basis; when those who are still here are taxed to the limit without adequate services in exchange for their hard-earned money.

Now that the cake baked by previous governments has been sliced up and eaten, the McGuinty Liberals have run out of steam. There's no recipe for a new one. Rather than looking for a back door and holding out his hands for more money from the federal government, the Premier should admit that he, his finance minister and his economic minister—in whatever incarnation she happens to be today—let Ontarians down. They let Ontarians down.

First, they started by telling us that there was no crisis. One of the nice things about being in my first year is I got to witness this. I got to be our caucus representative at the Premier's media availabilities and I watched and heard him say, “There's no crisis.” Then it became, “Well, you know, there's a minor bump in the road. We'll get by it.” Then there was “an economic slowdown,” he called it. Then the Premier started suggesting that we could hold hands—my words, not his—and get through this together because he said “This, too, shall pass.” Remember that oldie but goody? Now he realizes that singing Kumbaya is not going to cut it.

Since his ministers haven't got a clue on what to do and don't want to listen, he's blaming the federal-provincial monetary arrangement that we have. Maybe it has much more to do with his spending proclivities, you think? Clearly, the McGuinty Liberals thought that if they were to just bury their heads in the sand, it would all go away like a bad dream and they could spend their way into prosperity. Winston Churchill likened a plan like that to a man standing in a bucket, trying to lift himself up by the handles. To a rational person, that is an exercise in futility, but the Liberals, it seems, are bent on proving that it can be done.

1640

What they are slowly recognizing is that at some point you will be called upon to answer for your actions. For Premier Dalton McGuinty, that time is now. He has conveniently forgotten that it is his job to make sure that Ontario doesn't need equalization payments, and it's a job he has failed at. Instead of streamlining operations, creating efficiencies and restraining their spending habits, the McGuinty Liberals decided to blame Ontario's arrangements with Ottawa.

What a curious time to decide to talk about finances, when we've been asking them to open the books for months now. It's a shame that this sudden onslaught of transparency doesn't extend to being transparent about their own fiscal situation.

The McGuinty Liberals have neglected to tell Ontarians exactly what is waiting for us around the bend and how they managed to get us into this mess in the first place. We see the storm clouds; Ontarians see the storm clouds. It's time that Mr. McGuinty consults the weatherman and realizes what is upon us. We don't know what the implications are for future investments. We don't know if we're in a recession. We don't know if we are in a deficit situation. We don't know, and the government is not willing to tell us.

In the United States, presidential candidates not much more than a month away from their election have temporarily suspended their campaigns to discuss solutions to the economic crisis that their country now faces. That's what they've done. But we are told to hang in there, the finance minister will provide an update at the end of October—not open the books, just provide us an update. So we can call this policy what? “Don't ask, don't tell”? If we don't ask, you won't tell. We're going to keep asking.

That government is putting political ambition ahead of laying the facts on the table. That would be leadership. The McGuinty Liberals refuse to follow this example. They haven't told us exactly where we are now, nor have they told us how they will get this province back to its place of prominence as Canada's economic engine. So far, they have only pointed the finger of blame.

Since we haven't seen what's in the books, we don't know how any federal money would be used and/or to what extent the McGuinty Liberals have put Ontario into an ever-widening hole. However, let's talk a little bit about what we do know. We know that federal spending on health care in Ontario is up half a billion dollars and growing at 6% per year. We know that the province has just signed the biggest infrastructure investment agreement with the federal government since World War II, and it's worth \$6.2 billion. We know that the McGuinty Liberals collect \$4.1 billion in gas tax revenues, which they do not fully use to invest in roads and highways and infrastructure while our cities cry out to address on a sustaining basis their crumbling bridges and their pothole-filled roadways.

We know that the McGuinty Liberals have imposed on Ontarians the biggest tax increase in the history of this province, introducing the health premium—we like to call it the health tax, because we like calling a spade a spade—and raking in \$2.7 billion a year for the last four years. There's no end in sight and none, as far as we can see, earmarked for health care—that for which it was supposedly intended—in any specific way. Where's the go-forward on another medical school? We talk, in other debates, about international medical graduates. Where's the money for a medical school? We know that some of the colleges want to open one, but we don't see any allocation. Where's the master planning approval for a hospital that would serve, in part, my own riding of Thornhill, because part of it sits in Vaughan? There's a Vaughan hospital that needs \$3 million to \$5 million in seed money, and this in the face of a shortchanged 905,

shortchanged across the board in terms of the per capita spending on health care.

We know that government spending is up 31%. That's far higher than the rate of population growth and it's far higher than the rate of inflation. Sadly, government spending is probably the only statistic that Ontario scores highly in. We're right up there. I have to ask, does any of that 31% consist of investments in rehabilitation programs for government ministers addicted to spending taxpayers' money? With this kind of record, it's small wonder that they are looking for someone or something to blame, and they figure it's prime time to make demands of the feds.

If their Liberal cousins at the federal level were to take over in Ottawa, so much the easier to get some cash to quietly patch up the holes that their spending habits have created in their budget. If the fairness lobby campaign doesn't work—and thankfully, it won't, if the polls are right—then Premier McGuinty, faced with the prospect of having to table a made-in-Ontario solution, will get in front of a camera, he'll put on his best Caspar Milquetoast face, he will clasp his hands in his classic speaking pose and he will make up some excuse as to why this, yet again, is not his fault and really, all in all, he has nothing to do with it.

Let's get back to this very misguided notion of entitlement, and let's not confuse it with standing up for Ontario. I'm standing up for Ontario now. I want the truth. Long before I contemplated becoming an MPP, I saw Dalton McGuinty as a politician who considered taxpayers' money as his own. That's one of the reasons that I was motivated to run. Now, as an elected MPP for the riding of Thornhill, I know that nothing irks Dalton McGuinty more than a tax dollar he can't get his hands on. That is at the core of his so-called fairness campaign. What he really means is that it's not fair that he can't spend that money. That's at the core of his fairness campaign: He can't spend that money.

Premier McGuinty, here's the message: This is not your money. And I'm going to say it again: This is not your money. We in the opposition benches understand that the money transferred to Ottawa is an arrangement between the people of Ontario and the federal government, and, if anything, it should be given back to the people of Ontario and not to Dalton McGuinty, because it's not his money.

In closing, I'd like to move a motion. I'd like to move that the government motion be amended by adding the following point at the end of it: “fairness in Ontario's taxation policies so that people already overburdened by taxes in this province are not subjected to the proposed carbon tax.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Shurman moves that government motion 84 be amended by adding the following point at the end: “fairness in Ontario's taxation policies so that people already overburdened by taxes in this province are not subjected to the proposed carbon tax.”

Further debate?

1650

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have a couple of things to say, and I just want to provide a little bit of a history. I'll speak to the amendment as well as we go.

I recall 1990 to 1995, the then-Premier Bob Rae—a New Democrat for many, many years, 30 at least, and then he turned Liberal. I recall those difficult days that we faced economically, and we used to think about what it is that we had to do to help ourselves to deal with the economy. When we were looking to the federal government for support, they pulled the rug from under us.

Some of you who were here in 1990, city councillors and others and MPPs who might have been here, will recall that we used to have a national plan called the Canada assistance plan. We used to cost-share welfare between the federal government and the provinces. It was 50-50. Mulroney decided to change the rules, and change the rules at a time when we desperately needed their support. In that recession in 1990, 1991, 1992—it lasted, it seemed, for a long, long time—we were pleading, begging, like the Liberals are doing now, to Mulroney to please not change the rules. That recession then caused so much unemployment that many of them ended up on the welfare rolls. It's not happening here today—yet. But many ended up on welfare, and our welfare bill went from \$1 billion to \$6 billion in no time. So we were saying to Mulroney, “You can't do that. You can't change the rules like that, especially at a time when we need federal support.” I recall so many Tories, alas Liberals, saying—Stockwell in particular. You will remember him sitting just about here—no, no, actually, it was over there—and he would shout out. “You don't have a revenue problem, you have a spending problem,” he used to say, and he wasn't the only one. There were many others who said the same thing. Gary Carr, who's now a Liberal, used to say the same thing.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know. He used to say the same thing. So many Liberals used to say the same thing. They had no sympathy for Bob Rae and his caucus. Do you understand? I think you're getting a sense of what I'm getting at because there's a history lesson here, and it does come around.

So the support that we desperately needed wasn't coming and the money that we desperately needed wasn't coming. We were totally blamed for that economic recession. Liberals blamed us; Tories blamed us. They said, “Oh, no, it's got nothing do with other universal circumstances, world circumstances. It's about being a New Democrat. It's about New Democratic policies that have caused this recession, bringing everything down. I listen with some humour as Mr. Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance, says, “It's the high dollar; yes, the manufacturing sector caused by the high dollar.” Sometimes he talks about high hydro rates, which he says he's solved, but hasn't.

Interjection: Oil.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oil prices skyrocketing. You've got the Minister of Finance trying to list a whole

number of things to say, “No, it's not us. It's the world, other economic forces beyond our control.” Where was Duncan when we needed him? Was he a city councillor then? Because we could have used Duncan on our side in 1990, defending New Democrats, using those arguments then to say, “It's got nothing to do with poor Bob Rae and his party. It's world forces.” And now Duncan, the Minister of Finance, so many years later is saying—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're quite welcome, Speaker.

He's saying, “It's not us. We're not the authors of this problem. It's beyond our control. Do you know what the problem is? It's the federal government. That's the problem.”

See, you've got to follow this with some humour, right? Because when Harris was there, you will recall, the former Premier, he used to whine in the same way. So it's comical to hear the member from Thornhill saying, “You Liberals are whining,” because his leader whined too, like the best of them, and he was a big guy, a big boy. He whined like a child, saying, “Where is the federal government when we need them?”

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Chrétien was at the time nowhere to be found. In fact, when Chrétien came in 1993, we couldn't find him either. Chrétien and the other—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Martin.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Martin. Thank you very much. Speaker, we need your help from time to time. That was very good. Mr. Martin created a housing policy in 1990 and he said, “When we form government, we're going to have a national housing strategy.”

Mr. Jeff Leal: He did.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Liberals say he did. You know nothing. I'm sorry. That policy was abandoned. No sooner did Monsieur Chrétien get into office with Paul Martin than that policy was abandoned. It's as if it never existed, as if Paul Martin never said anything, as if that report had never been produced. But it was there, and when they get into government, what do they do? They slash, they cut, they become good Conservative managers.

They cut, and do you know where they cut, Speaker? Take a guess. They cut on the backs of the unemployed, using the benefits that they paid for—unemployment insurance benefits—using that money against them and using that whole pile of money to pay down the deficit. Some 40% of the deficit was cut by using unemployment insurance dollars: the very same Liberals who now say the Tories are shortchanging them on the unemployment front, that we pay into that and it doesn't come back to Ontario.

Liberals, when they were there with Messieurs Chrétien and Martin—your friends, your federal colleagues—used that money that came from Ontario to make cuts to slash the deficit, and made it impossible for people to have the benefits by making eligibility more complex, by requiring longer hours to be able to apply.

Liberals did that—except some of you don't know and are quite happy not to know. You're quite happy to be blissfully ignorant of these things. I understand that. But you did all that too.

So the little history lesson has to do with how all governments whine, but I have to admit and tell you that whining is not a political strategy and it's certainly a bad economic strategy. It just doesn't work. I know you're trying and you've got to do your best. I know that. You have to divert attention from yourselves and attack another enemy; that's clear, and I understand that. That is the purpose of your resolution: how to deflect attention away from you and attach it to the Conservatives, which the Tories did with Chrétien before you and as New Democrats desperately tried to get help from the federal Tories and Liberals before Mike Harris—except in our time, nobody listened at all. At least you guys have the Toronto Star. God bless. At least you have the Toronto Star editorials on a daily basis giving you a little boost, a little help, a little ideological assistance. It's a big help, I've got to tell you. It's not every day that you've got a national newspaper that delivers 400,000 newspapers to every door—not every door, but 400,000 homes and other places. It's not often that you get a paper like that saying how good the Liberals are. Would that New Democrats were so lucky as to have a little newspaper that delivers a couple of hundred newsletters or newspapers to some homes to give us a little bit of a boost. Would that we were so lucky, but we're not. So we do our best on our own, with 20-minute speeches at Queen's Park and travelling here and there from time to time. That's what we've got.

1700

So is your strategy of whining a good one? I don't think it's working, by the way. I really don't. I know you're trying, and all of you are taking your 10 minutes, because you need to talk to the public, right? You can't let New Democrats and Tories do this debate for you. You've got to take your time to defend yourselves against those federal Tories and how they're undermining you in the province. I understand. You have no fiscal capacity whatsoever. You're utterly useless as a province. I understand that. Isn't that the argument you're making? The argument you're making is, "We provincial Liberals"—meaning you, not me—"are utterly helpless, unable to do anything. We have no fiscal capacity whatsoever, so we have to plead and genuflect on a regular basis to the federal Tories, saying 'Please, we need your help. We need some extra money.'"

You understand that you do have the fiscal capacity if you wanted to. I know that you have raised, and are raising every year, \$2.4 billion from the health tax. I know, and you got beaten up for that; I understand. But in that instance, you had to break your promise to be able to raise revenues. So, clearly it suggests that you know how to do it. You did it and, yes, you got beaten up for it, but you could use the fiscal tools again. But you are unwilling to do so because you're afraid to do so, so your best political and economic strategy is, "Let's whine with

the federal government. Let's blame them for everything."

It's not a bad strategy with 20% to 25% of the people. They'll believe you, because 25% to 30% of the public will always hate Conservatives, and that's not a bad beginning. But the question is, what do you do now for the other 10%, 15% or 20% in terms of a political strategy? That's where you, my friends, are failing Ontarians.

I know the strategy: Download to the city as much as you can. The city of Toronto, at least, has obliged, because they're now taxing. They're broke. You understand that Toronto gives the province 40% of their money and they get less back. The province gives Canada 40% of its revenue and gets less back. You understand that. You're quite happy for the discrepancy to happen with the cities, but you're unhappy for the discrepancy to happen vis-à-vis the federal government. The city is saying, "It's unfair that you don't give us what we give you in return," as you are arguing, "It's unfair that we give the federal government 40% or 42% of our revenues and we get less in return." It's okay to punish the city, but it's not okay for the federal government to punish the provincial government. Do you understand the contradiction? You don't, because why would you?

You're either unable to follow the argument or you are able to follow the argument but you cannot accept the argument, because to do so would be to say, "I am an intelligent human being. I hear what you're saying, and if I admit it, then I am caught in the contradiction." So you have to pretend that you don't understand what I'm saying. I hear you; I do. But I have to say to the citizens of Ontario that we are moving in a direction that many of you will be unhappy with in the next 10, 15 years. We are moving in a user-fee system. We are moving away from an income tax system because provincial governments are afraid to tax, especially those who could afford to give a little more.

How often do I stand in this place and say, "You could tax me a little more"? We now earn over \$100,000. We could afford to pay a few thousand dollars more in income tax. We can. And unlike the Conservative members who moved an amendment talking about taxation policy and how overtaxed we are, I disagree with the Tories in this regard. I disagree with them, because that philosophy and ideology leads us into a world where moving into a user fee system suggests and says in fact that people who have less money to pay will end up bearing the greater cost for every service they require. That's what we're moving into.

I guarantee that tolls will come in this province after the next government comes into power; not before, because McGuinty can't have it before. You understand that. There's no way that McGuinty could support tolls on roads before the election. He's too politically wise for that. But after the next election, should he be so lucky to be re-elected, tolls will come in Ontario.

And what's wrong with tolls? It's a tax on everyone, and that tax will be disproportionate to people who need

a car but don't have as much money as those who have a lot of money and it doesn't matter how much you charge them for that toll for the use of that road. So that is the problem.

I'm just talking about tolls as one example of a user fee system which I see happening everywhere—everywhere. For provincial services as well as municipal services, more and more comes out of our pocket. We are taking over the swimming pools in Toronto. It's given over to an agency of which we know little, where we can't get into their meetings. It's all in private, run by David Crombie, a man I respect, but it's all private stuff. So they've been given \$4 million by the Liberal government to run these pools free for one year. Starting the following year, there will be a user fee on that pool.

User fees are the name of the game in this political and social life. That's what we are moving to, from now until the next 10, 15 years, and those who are middle class, with incomes that are not so very high, are going to get whacked.

So I say to myself, "How could left-leaning Liberals"—because there are a few—"think that's an acceptable system? How do they live with that? What are they doing in their caucus to fight that temptation that is so alluring?" It's alluring because they have no other way to get money, because they're afraid to tax. And they're afraid to tax because if they do, the Tories are going to blame them for being a tax-and-spend party like, of course, the image the New Democrats have. Can't have that; no, we can't have that: "Liberals are fiscal conservatives. That is what we must inculcate in the minds of most citizens. We are fiscal conservatives"—i.e., Liberals—"and we compete very strongly with Tories in that regard."

Yes, you have to stick to the image that you're left-leaning in social stuff, in social services and blah blah blah. But I don't know where the left-leaning Liberals are in this regard. I don't hear them; I don't see them. They appear to be invisible. They don't make any public statements. They don't appear to have any influence with the Liberal government. I don't hear their voices in the community. I don't see it in newspapers. They're simply going along, and going along means accepting that the Liberal Party has become so very conservative that often they are so indistinguishable that they could merge, literally, from time to time. You could merge quite easily, actually, and I suspect 50% of them would come to your ranks, no problemo, and we would probably pick up 20% because some of them are left-leaning. But they would stay with the Conservative Party because they would estimate that if they came with us, they might not win, because that's what Liberals are, opportunists in this regard. Some of them would come for the ideology of New Democrats, but I'm not sure how many.

But look, it's a cowardly strategy to beg for money and to divert attention from your obligations of government, and trying to blame the federal government for not helping you out. You're abdicating your responsibility and your power. You're abdicating your fiscal potential

to solve some of the social and economic issues. I hope you use that power and stop whining.

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

1710

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Apparently, the member for Trinity–Spadina is not going to hear how the Liberal left feels about this bill. We're not going to hear about how the Liberal right feels about it either. As with so many bills in this House in the last four or five years, the debate does not include the Liberal Party. I find that very, very strange, a government that doesn't participate in the bills before the House. Surely their members have something to say on this issue, and yet they sit in their seats and look perplexed perhaps, but they don't seem to rise and speak to the issues of the day.

The member for Trinity–Spadina makes a compelling argument when he talks about, "It's not us, it's them." Of course, this is a tried and true political tactic. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. Certainly in the United States, I think Mr. Bush has tried to blame others for the things that he's being criticized for, and of course he's being criticized for many, many issues. He always seems to find that there's a nice scapegoat around. It's like the politician who's making a speech and says, "If I say anything wrong, I have the names of five people in my pocket that I can blame for anything I say," so he feels absolved of any responsibility. That's not the way the system is supposed to work. We're supposed to be taking a much more hands-on approach to the way these things work.

I think people in Ontario generally understand that within an economy, within a jurisdiction, within a province, within a riding or a city, there are wheels within wheels that turn and feed upon each other. When there are terrible conditions, as there were in the early 1990s and as there are perhaps in the days ahead that we're looking at—this economic meltdown in the United States is a true, worrisome situation. It will be a meltdown in the world, I think. It looks like the US Congress is not very enthusiastic about anteing up \$700 billion or \$800 billion—that's almost \$1 trillion—to bail out people who were not very cautious in the way that they handled their finances. One chap on the news the other night was talking eloquently about how un-American it was to bail out someone who had abused their powers. That may be true, and I think that kind of thought might carry the day in the States, and that's when the second shoe is going to drop.

We're going to see the world economies hit again if the Americans don't come through with their \$700-billion or \$800-billion bailout. There will be only one solution to it, and I'm afraid that's inflation and high interest rates, so get ready. I don't think we'll see 22% again this time, but we'll certainly see interest rates in excess of 10% and inflation two or three points above that. I'm not sure it's a fact, but it certainly is hanging in the balance. This is recorded, so someone will be able to point to you and say, "This is what you said." I'm not saying that is the way it is going to be, but I think there is

a very good possibility that that might happen if saner heads don't prevail.

I began talking about the wheels within wheels. I think most people understand that there isn't one villain; there are wheels within wheels that affect an economy, affect a city and affect political processes. When that happens, it isn't necessarily—the world is operating on this level, on this day, at this snapshot in time. It is up to Ontario to operate just a little bit better than the other jurisdictions around. We don't have to aspire, in these difficult times, to 6% and 7% growth. We have to aspire to growth that is at least average in Canada, and we can do that. We can do that in Ontario with Ontario-based policies and by making our jurisdiction just a little bit more competitive. We don't have to solve the problems of the world. We have to find our place within those problems and make Ontario as economically viable as we possibly can.

Of course businesses, over time, move to low-cost jurisdictions, and unfortunately the lag time when businesses begin moving is very, very long. You can begin to see it happen—after about a year and a half, it will show up in some of the statistics. That's what's so criminal about the lack of action this government has taken over the term of the last five years. They haven't done enough to make Ontario as competitive as they could to attract new businesses to move in.

The reasons they haven't done that are many, but we saw one in the House this afternoon. There was a bill debated about apprenticeship ratios. Ontario has an apprenticeship ratio of three to one, the highest in Canada. Most other Canadian provinces have a one-to-one ratio; if you have one electrician, you can have one apprentice. That way, you get new apprentices, expanded businesses and efficiencies in scale and everything else that goes along with good growth and good business sense.

There were apprentices in the gallery who wanted a one-to-one ratio so that they could get a job and go to work. There were also electricians in the gallery who didn't want this, because they see this as a dilution of their trade. They see this as a threat to their future. Now, in an expanding economy it would not be a threat to their future, but they see it as that. They've been told by their union bosses that this is a threat to their future. Then we see in this House the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, who is supposed to be creating the environment in Ontario that will help small businesses expand and grow, vote against lowering this ratio. He voted for the unions and against small business.

This is just one very small example of how this government doesn't tend to make Ontario the most competitive it can be in every sense of the word. We have to be the most competitive jurisdiction certainly in the Great Lakes basin. In some industries we have to compete with Texas or California, particularly in the aircraft industry. We have a number of aircraft assemblers or builders in Ontario, more than most people would think. We have Diamond Aircraft in London; de Havilland, which is Bombardier; and I believe Fleet Aircraft is still in Fort

Erie manufacturing parts for the aircraft industry. Those are three large suppliers, and there are a lot of companies that will supply them with parts and partially manufactured pieces. All of that goes together to create quite an industry, and we have to compete where that industry exists.

Today, California, Washington and St. Louis are the primary areas in the United States that are building large aircraft. Of course that's a worldwide industry, and we have to compete with the Europeans and the Brazilians, when we're talking about the water bombers that Bombardier makes—one of the world's best manufacturers of water bombers.

All of that comes around to the fact that, as a government, you support the things that help business succeed. Why would a government want to help business succeed? Of course, most people who have a private sector job work for a business. If you work for a business and businesses succeed, we have more jobs. Of course, more jobs are a good thing, and that comes from helping people succeed in those kinds of elements.

Today, we're debating the fairness motion. As the member for Trinity-Spadina pointed out, fairness is not actually what this is all about; this is about blaming somebody else for the problems we find ourselves in and that we can't extricate ourselves from or that we're not willing to make the effort to extricate ourselves from.

1720

So what have the results of this been? Well, in the last three or four months the results have been huge. The results have been a loss of a further 21,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost from companies such as Quebecor, a printing company in Etobicoke; it closed its doors, one of the largest printers in Canada, 450 people out of work; Plastech from Leamington, Essex-Kent, they laid off 150 people; General Motors, 1,400 people on May 9, 2008. Some time later, General Motors laid off another thousand people in June, less than a month later. That's 2,400 people from General Motors that have been laid off. Advantech telecommunications in Cornwall laid off 75 people, all over the course of the last four months. Ford automobile in Windsor laid off 430 people. The government has given them a large grant, and hopefully Ford will reopen an engine plant and hire some new people; they laid off 900 people a year ago when they shut that engine plant down. Canac Kitchens, in Thornhill, closed their doors, and that's a thousand people laid off, a thousand good-paying manufacturing jobs gone from Ontario. Affina Group, an automotive parts manufacturer in the very heart of all of Ontario, in that wonderful, beautiful town of Milton, they closed their plant and there's 200-plus jobs that have gone from Milton; 200 people who are living in one of the finest communities you will find anywhere in the world, Milton, Ontario, and here this plant has closed down and they'll have to look for jobs elsewhere. Lafarge Cement has laid off 19 people in Oxford. Hallmark cards, the greeting cards people—I wonder if they've produced a card for Dalton McGuinty. They've closed their

Willowdale plant, and there are 200 people out of work. Even Magna International, a large automotive manufacturer in St. Thomas, laid off 400 people from their manufacturing plant. Progressive Molded Products in Willowdale closed, with 2,000 people out of work.

These closures and these job layoffs all happened within the last four months. This is an absolute disaster for the province of Ontario. This government is not doing anything about it. They're sticking to their plan, their five-point plan they're so proud of, and yet that five-point plan continues to see this kind of disappearance of jobs week after week, month after month, and season after season. Ford cancelled a shift at their paint plant in Oakville, which borders on Milton. There's another 500 jobs gone for Ford. Owens-Illinois glass, the people that make CorningWare; they had a plant in Toronto and there were 430 employees in that plant until it closed down on July 29. John Deere tractor in Welland: 800 people. That plant started in, I believe, 1911. They were one of the principal manufacturers of farm equipment in North America at one time, and today they are closed. They're moving to Mexico, and they are moving to Mexico because Ontario is too high-cost a jurisdiction to continue to do business in. The Toyota assembly plant in Woodstock: This plant isn't even open yet. They haven't finished construction. It doesn't open, I believe, until later this year or early next, and yet they've already announced that they will not have two shifts at the plant, they will only have one, and that means 800 jobs that will not be opening up in Woodstock. Linamar auto parts in Guelph: 800 jobs. That's an auto parts manufacturer that's closed its doors—800 jobs; they have laid off 800 people in that fair city of Guelph, and that's 800 families that are going to have to find a new way to get by day to day and week to week.

Henniges Automotive, an automotive plant in Welland, has also cut 235 jobs from its payroll. Those job cuts are very, very hurtful for those communities; they created a great deal of unhappiness in the area. What has the government done? The government has given out major grants to many of these companies to try to attract them to come to Ontario, or they've given them grants in order to compensate for the non-competitive nature of Ontario and help them to stay in Ontario.

And who have they given this money to? They've given \$90 million to the Ford motor car company of Canada. What do we get for that \$90 million? We got 930 jobs that were laid off at Ford motor car company. So although we paid them \$90 million to stay in Ontario, they still cut 930 jobs. We didn't get increased jobs; usually, when you pay somebody, you get something back for it. In this case, we paid them \$90 million and they cut 930 jobs.

Linamar Corp. in Guelph: We paid them \$13 million. What did we get for our \$13 million? We got 800 jobs cut—not 800 jobs hired; not 800 more jobs; we got 800 jobs cut. They laid off 800 people for \$13 million. It's a good thing we didn't give them \$20 million—they would've laid off 1,000 people. This whole process is so wrong-headed.

General Motors—here's the big one. We gave them \$117,551,004. I don't know where the \$4 came from, but there it is: \$117 million that we gave to General Motors, and, as you would expect—it's the largest grant that this government handed out, and that's taxpayers' money, all the taxpayers who used to have a job and used to pay taxes; that's their money, \$117 million. Of course, that's the largest grant that we handed out, and General Motors had the largest cut in their payroll. They cut 2,400 workers from their payroll in Ontario. The entire program is very, very difficult.

I have a real philosophical problem with the grant system. You've got a grant system: You pay a company within a sector or region and you give them a grant to do something. But what about their competition? They have to now compete with a company that got a government grant. The whole system is so wrong-headed. It would be far better, in my opinion and in the opinion of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario—we would be far further ahead if we, instead of handing out grants, lowered the cost of doing business. Lowering the cost of doing business not only affects the winning company that got the grant—in this case, they wouldn't get the grant anymore—but we'd take that money and spread it across all businesses in Ontario so that everyone in Ontario would win. And our competition in other jurisdictions would look around and say, "Ontario is a low-cost jurisdiction. That's a place where we have to be if we're going to be expanding. If we're going to be looking for a new place to do business, Ontario is where we'd better be, because it's low-cost, it understands business, and it understands what business needs to operate and expand."

But that's not happening today. That happened during our eight years in government; that happened when we created well over a million new jobs in Ontario, because companies were coming from all over the world to Ontario. When they moved to Ontario and opened up plants and created new jobs, every one—every single one of those new jobs—was a new taxpayer. And there being a new taxpayer, we could afford to pay for the education, the health care, the environmental regulations, looking after the things that people in Ontario expect their government to look after. That's not happening today in Ontario, and from what I can see, it's not going to happen in the future. This province is going to be in very deep difficulty when the next shoe drops in the financial communities of the world.

1730

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to join the debate on what the Premier referred to as, I believe, "fairness." In fact, I'm going of quote from the Premier's motion. I found it most interesting to hear the Premier articulate very clearly. I'm certain he was very sincere about this motion as well. I quote the pertinent part of the motion that I want to focus on as follows: all "candidates in the upcoming federal election to outline their plan to ensure Ontario is treated fairly so that our province has the same opportunities to succeed as the rest of Canada."

Among the specific points on which the Premier in his motion states that he would like to see fairness achieved is Ontario's public health care system. To this part of the motion, I have some good news and I have some bad news that I want to share with my colleagues and people who are watching this debate. The good news is that I myself would like to see a fair and equitable distribution of health care funding in the province of Ontario. No question, in all regions of this province regardless of whether it is northern Ontario, southwestern Ontario, the city of Toronto, wherever we are in the province of Ontario, we should all have a fair and equitable distribution of funding, and so I am on the Premier's side when he argues for that.

The bad news is that the only member in Ottawa who can implement these principles of fairness and equity and health care funding in Ontario is the member for Ottawa South himself, and that's Premier. When it came to assigning health care dollars in the province of Ontario, it wasn't the Harper government that decided to discriminate against my riding of Newmarket–Aurora or York region; it was the provincial government, headed by the member for Ottawa South and his government, who were responsible for discriminating against York region and specifically my riding.

So I want to bring to the Premier's attention that, in the spirit with which he brought this motion to the House, I want him to consider very carefully what he and his government are doing to bring unfairness of health care funding into this province—he and his government. The Premier and his government are responsible for what is happening in my riding. I want to share with the House what that fairness according to the Premier looks like and ask members of this House to consider whether in fact the Premier, when he calls on the federal government to be fair in distributing funding, is being consistent with what he himself as the Premier and his government are doing in the province of Ontario.

The Premier and his new health minister will know that the Newmarket–Aurora area is within one of the fastest-growing regions in the country. Over the next three years, our region will account for some 18% of the annual population growth in this province. That means that our hospitals in York region—there are three of them—will have to provide treatment to, on average, about 30,000 new people every single year. Despite that compelling fact and these compelling demographics, York region receives much less funding per capita for hospital and health care services compared to the average of the rest of the province. I ask, "Where is the fairness in that, and who is responsible for that?" It's not Stephen Harper, it's not the federal members of Parliament, it's not the federal candidates who are involved in this federal election to whom the Premier is appealing; it is the Premier who sits in this House, his health minister and the members of this government who make those allocations. They are responsible for that, and on behalf of my constituents, I want to hold them accountable.

I am looking forward to the Premier's taking his own message of fairness to heart, and that they would look

very carefully at the disparity of funding that is happening in this province, allocated by the Ontario Ministry of Health, that he and his health minister would take this to heart, and would implement whatever changes are necessary to ensure that we bring fairness in health care funding into the province of Ontario, which is the jurisdiction of this Legislature.

Specifically, we in York region receive \$232 less per resident for hospital funding alone, with the result that our local hospitals are underfunded by more than \$290 million each year compared to other regions in this province. How does the Premier, who argues from his position as Premier of this province that there should be fairness in funding, square these numbers? And how does he justify, knowing full well that this disparity exists? I'm asking on behalf of my constituents, who no doubt have listened to the Premier's motion and no doubt, as I, support that in principle because there should be fairness in funding, and there should be no reason why one region of this country is treated any differently from any other region; and likewise, there should be no reason why any region in this province is treated any differently from any other region.

But it's not just our hospitals that are underfunded. When compared to the other 14 designated health regions in the province, we in York region are fourth-lowest funded for home care services, we are the fourth-lowest funded for mental health services, we are the lowest funded for addiction services in the province, and the third-lowest funded for long-term residential care for our seniors. For total health care funding, we're the second-lowest funded for all health care services in the province of Ontario.

These are numbers that are not new. I have been a member of this Legislature since 1995. It continues to be an issue, particularly for high-growth areas in this province, that funding keep pace with population growth. I was pleased to hear the Premier speak so passionately about the need to bring fairness into funding of health care services, and that's why I'm hopeful today that, by once again bringing the facts to the attention of the Premier and his new Minister of Health regarding the underfunding of health care for York region, he and his health minister will do what is necessary to stop the unfairness and to ensure that York region is brought into the same level of funding as every other region in the province.

We need real action now; we don't need motions. I know how cabinet works, and actually it's a very straightforward process the Premier has to engage in to end the unfairness against which he railed here, and it's very simple. At the next cabinet meeting, the Premier simply needs to look at his health minister, who probably sits to his right, and say, "Minister, I would like you to bring to the next cabinet meeting the information necessary to ensure that we have fair funding of all regions in this province because I don't want to be found to be representing fairness on one side and then be found wanting on the other and not doing what I'm preaching." I'm

sure the Premier would not want to be caught in that position.

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Members of the provincial Parliament, not the federal government, have the responsibility to ensure fairness in funding for health care in this province. You know that. You also know that it is the McGuinty government alone that can achieve real fairness and equity in health care funding in Ontario, and I trust that in the spirit of this debate perhaps we can at the end of this debate have an agreement from this government that they will act on their own motion and apply that principle that they so effectively articulated and that they want the federal government to exercise—that they will bring those same principles to bear on their own work here in province of Ontario. But I'm not optimistic. The current policy of this government and the member for Ottawa South, by track record, consists of politically expedient crisis funding announcements that only serve to widen the funding gap and cause underfunded regions like York region to fall further behind the rest of Ontario. I'm sure the member for Ottawa South will respond by once again laying the blame at the feet of the federal government, as he regularly does in other cases when the government's funding of critical public services comes up short.

I'll give it one more try. I'll force myself to be optimistic. Having listened to the Premier as he tabled his resolution, perhaps there's been an awakening, perhaps there's been a realization that all Ontarians should be treated fairly and equally, and perhaps we'll see a change of policy. I'll remain hopeful for my constituents.

The fact is that if the Premier doesn't move decisively—and he's the man who can—then who will?

It's one thing for the Premier of Ontario to say to the Prime Minister of the country, "Treat all of your citizens fairly," but the only way that is actually going to have traction with the Prime Minister is if the Prime Minister can see that that same principle is being applied in the administration of the Premier's own policies. If not, then it is mere political rhetoric; it's simply more perception than reality.

I'm sure the Premier will agree with me that this is not a new debate we're having. He's heard it. I heard the Premier when he was not the Premier, when he was in opposition, speak often on this whole issue himself. So I know that in his heart he feels it is the right thing to do, to ensure that there's fairness. What the Premier now has to find is a way to actually implement that. You see, it's easy to create public policy. It's difficult to implement it.

In closing, what I would ask the Premier to do is to direct his Minister of Health to bring forward a population-based funding formula for health care in this province that will once and for all remove the politics from funding of health care and allow health care funding to be based on actual needs within our communities. When that happens, it will be an important first step to ensuring the kind of fairness that the Premier himself is calling for.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member and all honourable members.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It being 5:45 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. Have a great weekend.

The House adjourned at 1745.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
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Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldeep (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
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Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
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		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
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Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Second reading negatived	2865
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