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Tuesday 18 November 2008

Mardi 18 novembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 18 November 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 18 novembre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PHOTO CARD ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES CARTES-PHOTO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 6, 2008, on the motion for third reading of Bill 85, An Act to permit the issuance of photo cards to residents of Ontario and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act/ Projet de loi 85, Loi permettant la délivrance de cartes-photo aux résidents de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires au Code de la route.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm surprised the others aren't speaking, but I'll take advantage of the opportunity.

We New Democrats support the creation of a basic identification card for all Ontarians. People need photo ID for a variety of things. They need it to make transactions; they need it to get on a plane; they need it for a wide variety of requirements. One shouldn't need a driver's licence at all times to provide valid identification. There are groups in this society who don't have access to the driver's licence, which is often the fundamental piece of identification that people need. The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians has argued for a decade for this type of card. In response to a deputation made by this group, the NDP moved an amendment in committee that would ensure that a physical feature was inserted on the card to assist the visually impaired in easily locating their photo ID. This is the only amendment to have passed—and that's an issue I'll talk about further on in this speech. Regardless of that, we see this modification of the card as an advance for visually impaired Canadians.

We also put forward an amendment in committee to have the basic photo card implemented by the spring of 2009, which is significantly more rapid than the government's announced 2010 start date. Groups have been waiting at least a decade for the basic photo card, and the province, frankly, should be moving quickly to imple-

ment it so that people have access to that identification. Dr. Andrew Clement, a professor at U of T's faculty of information, said, "Rather than having to wait until 2010, its implementation should be accelerated." Unfortunately, this amendment was rejected by the government majority on the committee.

The government chose to lump the creation of the basic photo card with the creation of two new identifications: the enhanced photo card and the enhanced driver's licence. The purpose of these cards is to provide Ontarians with an alternative to a passport for land travel to the United States. They'll combine identifications with citizen information. These two cards will have embedded within them technology called radio frequency identification technology, or RFID, that will allow the wireless transmission of information up to 10 metres away. This will allow US border agents to view citizenship information far more quickly.

Now, although at first glance that might sound good to some people, this bill, Bill 85, fails the information privacy test. The legislation provides the minister with unprecedented flexibility to share personal information with other organizations, regardless of whether they need it. It doesn't provide for adequate protection against identity theft, particularly the possibility that private information is captured from the wireless transmission function of radio frequency identification technology. According to the RCMP, identity theft is a growing problem that cost everyday Ontarians almost \$10 million in 2006.

Now, I have to say first off that there seems to be this very unthought-through, uncritical sense that governments will actively and capably defend privacy over the long term, and I think the simple reality is that governments in western democracies have had significant failures with breaches of security, breaches of privacy. Britain has been the site of many scandals over the large-scale loss of personal identification information, and we should not think that we here in Ontario would be exempt. We should not think that we here in Ontario would not be in a position where hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people had very detailed identification information leaked, stolen or lost, and thus no longer secure. If we don't recognize that the potential is there for very large-scale information loss or revelation, we're completely wrong, because it happens. If in fact this goes ahead, we will be putting thousands, hundreds of thousands, likely millions, of people at risk of identity theft and revelation of personal details that I'm sure most people would not like to have in the hands of those who aren't authorized to have it.

The bill overrides privacy protection clauses in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Finally, the bill gives the minister significant regulation-making authority for which he or she will not be required to hold public consultations. You have to ask: When you're talking about the privacy of millions, when you're talking about regulations that can set up a situation where identity theft is made easier, should there not be consultations?

The protection of personal information is one of the most important responsibilities of government, particularly during a time of rapid advances in information technology and heightened surveillance stemming from the so-called war on terror. The Information and Privacy Commissioner laid out 20 recommendations to address these responsibilities in an exhaustive submission to the committee reviewing the legislation.

The McGuinty Liberals are pushing Bill 85 through. They've ignored most of the privacy commissioner's recommendations. The government is effectively abdicating its responsibility to citizens to provide adequate privacy protection. For this reason, the New Democratic caucus will be voting against Bill 85. I want to spend some time reviewing the major shortcomings of the bill.

Bill 85 gives broad information-sharing powers to the minister. Paragraph 11(4)7 allows the minister to share information with any public body or related government if the minister believes it necessary to meet a laundry list of purposes set out in this section. The use of the terms "public body" and "related government" would include provincial, territorial and federal departmental agency in Canada. In other words, the minister has the discretion to share personal and private information without restrictions.

Here's what the Information and Privacy Commissioner had to say about this section: "Bill 85 allows for the possibility that all personal information, including an individual's biometric, driving history, citizenship data, etc., could be shared without restriction in these instances. Individuals do not reasonably expect that when applying for a library card, the provincial government will not disclose their biometric, citizenship information, or other information to the library." That's the privacy commissioner commenting on this bill, commenting on the weaknesses in this bill.

0910

This is a problem replicated in other sections of the bill. For example, another paragraph in section 11 takes no steps to limit the information provided to the Canada Border Services Agency or the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration. Nor does it make any distinction of the different roles they play and the different types of information they require to do their jobs. And again, I quote the Information and Privacy Commissioner: "Clearly, the purposes for collecting and disclosing information for this program are different for these two federal government entities, and Bill 85 does not reflect

these differences or appropriately limit the information flow."

Legislation should set out what type of information the minister can share, and with whom the minister can share different types of information. It should require the ministry to enter into contracts with the organizations that are sharing information so that this process is transparent and accountable. This is a fundamental weakness in the bill.

The government is taking a "trust us" attitude on information privacy. "Trust the minister," the government is saying, "to limit the information shared with other organizations." But ministers and governments come and go, and legislation remains. So whether or not we trust the current minister, how can Ontarians be asked to trust a future minister, a minister unknown, a government unknown? This is about ensuring our laws that protect privacy, not about attributes of individual ministers. This legislation has to be written so that people are protected whether the government they have is one with integrity, or one without. People have to have protection, and they have to have protection that will be sustained and strong over decades, not written for one term of government, not written for one particular minister, but written with the idea that from time to time governments will be in power that will not see protection of privacy or personal information as a priority and may in fact have ministers who would be in a position or disposition to abuse the power that's in their hands. That's why legislation is written: to set in place a framework so that governments act in a way that is not unbridled, that is responsive to the people and that is accountable.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner recommended drastic changes to subsection 11(4). We proposed those amendments in committee, including the requirement that the ministries enter into contracts with the organizations they share information with, outlining the types of information that will be shared. The government members voted against them.

Moving on with concerns about Bill 85, we take serious issue with the way the McGuinty government is ignoring privacy concerns related to radio frequency identification technology itself. This technology is relatively new and powerful and requires careful oversight. The technology will be embedded in the enhanced driver's licences and enhanced photo cards.

Here's what Graeme Norton of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association had to say about the lack of legislative safeguards on radio frequency identification technology: "Border officials may not be the only people capable of accessing the information contained on the EDL's RFID chips. Rather, anyone possessing a relatively cheap and easily obtainable RFID reader may be able to access the number contained on the enhanced driver's licences from as far away as 10 metres."

So the question you have to ask is, if people with a device they can purchase can read your detailed personal information on the card, how secure is that? The answer is it's not secure. You are opening a can of worms. You

are opening up people's detailed private information to casual surveillance by anyone who has an interest, either for commercial gains through identity theft, or for some other purpose that for the moment I can't name, and frankly, the government can't name. People will find all kinds of uses for detailed personal information.

The government has argued that because the information that would be stolen does not include personally identifiable information—it contains a unique number rather than a name—it's safe. But countless stakeholder groups here and in jurisdictions that already have enhanced driver's licences have dismissed that argument completely. This unique number is not meaningless, just like our social insurance numbers are not meaningless. Through the use of an unauthorized reader, an identity thief could determine a cardholder's identity and track the cardholder without their knowledge.

The simple reality is that in this society, heavily wired, a society in which identity theft is a common and growing problem—one that credit card companies and others are constantly working to guard against—one cannot rule out the potential for large-scale identity theft and utilization of information for theft, for fraud and for impersonation.

Here's what the Canadian Civil Liberties Association says: "If, for example, an RFID reader was set up at a specific location, such as a place of work or worship, it could be used to determine when a particular individual comes and goes based on the individual identifier contained on the EDL."

I can't say it any better than Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner: "Even if the data on the card cannot be associated with existing personal information about the cardholder, it may be used to collect personally identifiable information over time."

One way to reduce identity theft from the unauthorized use of the cards is to limit their transmission functions. The province's solution to this problem is a plastic sleeve that the card can be placed in to prevent unauthorized transmission. That puts a disproportionate burden for privacy protection on the individual card holder.

The privacy commissioner recommends that all cards have an on-off switch. It would be the most effective method of preventing identity theft. Several companies have already developed this technology, so it isn't a theoretical option. We moved several amendments on the use of radio frequency information technology to limit the possibility of identity theft, in line with the commissioner's recommendations. It seems reasonable to us that a commissioner who has the jurisdiction of and responsibility for privacy makes recommendations. One would see them as authorities, people whose words should be taken.

One of our amendments would have required the government to have an independent third party undertake a privacy audit of the technology. We wanted this privacy audit to be tabled in the Legislature. This is the transparent and accountable solution. The government members voted against this amendment.

We also proposed an amendment to force the government to follow the radio frequency identification guidelines established by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The government voted against this amendment.

Finally, we proposed an amendment to require any use of radio frequency technology to have an on-off switch. Showing further disregard for advice of stakeholders and the privacy commissioner, the government voted against this amendment too.

The last area I want to draw this House's attention to is about public consultations. Bill 85 leaves a lot to regulation; not surprising, given the government's cavalier "trust us" attitude. The privacy commissioner and virtually every concerned stakeholder called for the government to require public consultations on the regulations before they're enacted. The privacy commissioner points out that this was done when previous governments brought in FIPPA, PFIPPA, the Environmental Bill of Rights and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

If the government is going to leave key decisions to regulations, there should be direct public engagement. For example, subsection 11(7) of the bill allows the government to define, through regulation, the term "public body," in reference to organizations that the minister can share the information with. This decision shouldn't be left to regulation in the first place. At the very least, if the minister wants to have regulation-making authority over this definition and other matters, there should be broad public consultation to determine the impacts of enacting these regulations.

The privacy commissioner thought a public consultation on regulations was so important that she provided in her submission a two-page amendment. The NDP and the official opposition introduced it. It was rejected by the government majority—no surprise.

After the commissioner's detailed remarks outlining her concerns with Bill 85, the member from Timmins—James Bay moved a resolution to have the commissioner return to go over the amendments with the committee members and offer an opinion as to whether they meet her recommendations. There was a blatant display of partisanship over policy, and the government members voted against the resolution. By voting against this initiative and 50 or so amendments put forward by the opposition, the Liberals have shown a complete disregard for the Information and Privacy Commissioner, an independent officer of the Legislature, and her staff's expertise. I hope the commissioner will speak out about this behaviour over the coming weeks and in her annual report.

The Consumers Council of Canada says the following: "The government's proposed enhanced driver's licence under the Photo Card Act, 2008, needs to be seriously reconsidered." We urge the government to stop this bill from proceeding, to rework the legislation to ensure the privacy concerns are dealt with, and then bring it back to this House. We urge the government to accept the privacy commissioner's criticisms and work with her

office to develop better legislation. I hope that's not wishful thinking.

I find it extraordinary that this government would proceed with a bill so fundamentally flawed. I find it extraordinary that they would ignore the advice of an officer of the Legislature, the privacy commissioner, and proceed with this legislation. At some point, something will go wrong with this legislation and people will ask, "How on earth did this get through? How is it that we have this system here in Ontario?" All we'll be able to say is that a majority Liberal government ignored the sound warnings that were given to them about the pitfalls of this bill, did not act properly and did not act responsibly.

0920

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I always like to listen to the debate on this Bill 85. In fact, it looks like the bill will likely pass—and I spoke on it before. I would draw to the members' attention an article in the *Toronto Star* from yesterday. It is entitled, "Province's 'Enhanced' Driver's Licence Could Increase Privacy, Security Risks." I think it's an extremely important article; it's very insightful. My point would be that the collection of the data and this RFID signal on these cards and the security issue—I think we should slow down a bit and get it right. Because personal security and personal information stuff should not be as casually available—not just to the government; it's not the Big Brother issue here. The issue here is getting the legislation right. I think it isn't being drafted properly and they're working too hastily on this bill.

I don't think it's going to solve the problem. I think photo ID for persons who don't have a licence is a good option, but we can get a passport. Do you understand? But this does nothing to resolve the tourism issue for Americans coming into Canada. They're not going to be using our card. So the photo ID intent is to deal with the 9/11 issue at the borders. I don't think it's going to solve the issue; it's going to create further issues. This isn't me speaking; this is Ann Cavoukian. It's saying here, "The third issue is by far the most important—the privacy implications associated with the use of biometric screening and embedding RFID tags in the licences."

That's the problem. It's a technical issue I'm bringing up. I'm cautioning the ministry as well as the government to go easy on this thing. You're going to win the bill and we're going to support it, but the problem is the security issue. Slow it down. Get it right. Otherwise, we're going to have an additional problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? I'll return to the member for Toronto–Danforth, who has two minutes to reply if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's interesting to me that the government has no commentary on this. They are pushing through a bill that opens a huge field of risk for the citizens of this province. I was talking to my son last night about this. He hadn't heard about this legislation.

He, in fact, then went and looked at the paper, and as the member from the opposition party said, there was an article in the *Star*, in the business pages, I think page 3. Very few people are aware that we are embarked on a project and a process that can put the privacy and personal information of large numbers of citizens at risk. They are unaware that we are in a situation where they will be carrying an identity card that can be read remotely at a range of—what?—10 metres, where their information can be picked up and utilized by people who would use it for commercial purposes. If there's anyone in this Legislature who has had the experience of their credit card or their ATM card being pirated, they'll know that we already have a problem with PIN numbers and cards, with people taking advantage of breaks into their security systems to get money out of their accounts.

What we have now is a system that will make it far easier for someone to impersonate a person electronically, something that will allow those who have malevolent intent to dig in to our personal information, utilize it against us, use it for ill-gotten gain. This is a government that is not just simply sleepwalking towards this goal; it's running towards this goal. This is irresponsible on your part. It doesn't show the integrity and the responsibility that a government should be showing.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I suspect I may well be the last participant in this debate this morning. I suspect this bill is going to go to a vote today. I suspect as well that the bill is going to pass, notwithstanding that the New Democrats have opposed it throughout the course of its process through committee and now into third reading.

One question is, first of all, what's the hurry? Number two, the question is how does this type of policy development occur?

I will suggest—thank you kindly. I will suggest that—the note's for you, Mr. Tabuns.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll take the note, thanks.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I think it's a membership application.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Then give me more. Don't hold back.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The public might be interested in how these sorts of policy developments occur.

Mr. Mike Colle: That was a privacy violation.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's not a—wait a minute. I'll read it to you if you want me to. It says, "Peter Tabuns, please provide Hansard with the notes and quotes that you made during the course of your comments." I'll take care of that for Mr. Tabuns, certainly.

Look, the question that's probably asked by many members of the public is, "How does this sort of policy development take place?" I have the greatest regard for the Minister of Transportation, but I can tell you this wasn't a matter of Jim Bradley sitting down with a couple of senior policy advisers, scratching their heads and saying, "What can we do? What can we come up

with to make life easier for Ontarians? What can we come up with to facilitate passage across the border? What can we come up with to assist seniors who want to have proof of age, for instance, when they're seeking discounts at Sears or the Bay on seniors' day? What can we come up with to assist young people who want proof of age so that they can do the things that require them to be of the age of majority?"

This reminds me very much of photo radar, and I'll tell you why. Just like photo radar wasn't a matter of Gilles Pouliot sitting down, scratching his head and saying, "I've got an idea. We'll go shopping around for somebody who manufactures cameras that work on highways," what happens is, the people who develop this technology market it to governments. They wine and dine deputy ministers. They wine and dine ministers. They ignore backbenchers because they realize that backbenchers have no influence, no impact and no role to play whatsoever in policy development. But the manufacturers of this kind of technology sell their product, and they sell it to governments. They not only sell it to governments with wining and dining and all sorts of accommodation, but they actually provide the government with the spin lines. They provide the government with the angles. They provide the government with the style to be utilized.

It happened with casino gaming. There wasn't a brain trust sitting in the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, saying, "We need casinos in Ontario." It was the manufacturers of casino equipment, the people who run casinos—many of them with historic mob connections—who came to government and said, "We've got a solution to your fiscal woes, and we'll help you market it." The casino slot machine manufacturers go to governments and say, "Not only will we help you generate new revenues, pick the pockets of your residents and visitors, we'll give you the marketing angles; we'll help you convince your community that casino gaming is entertainment, that it's fun for the whole family."

Well, clearly, in this instance, the private interests that stand to make a great deal of money from the marketing of this type of technology, came to government and said, "We've got a deal for you." They not only convinced the government that this was a good deal for them, they convinced the government that the private sector had to play an integral role in it, notwithstanding all the risks that that entails, but they've also given the government the spin lines.

0930

I suppose the bill would be inoffensive if it weren't for, effectively, sections 3 and 4, because the one observation is that acquiring one of these cards is purely voluntary, just as acquiring a credit card is voluntary. I agree with Mr. Tabuns. I don't know how people can dispute what Mr. Tabuns says about the risks in the sort of technology that is contained in credit cards and bank access cards. The identity theft that occurs through the use of that technology is rampant and, indeed, probably far greater than the general public is advised of.

All of us in our constituency offices alone hear horror story after horror story from constituents who have had

their bank account emptied, who have had charges racked up on their credit card everywhere from Nigeria to Tasmania. I had one constituent who came in and her credit card had been used to buy 400 Skil saws at a Home Depot down in Oklahoma, and it was only at that event that the credit card company called her and said, "This is a mighty peculiar purchase for a person with your buying patterns."

So I don't think people should treat lightly the concerns about the risks of the invasion of privacy and the risks of identity theft that are inherent in this technology.

As I say, it's voluntary. And a wise consumer would say to this government, "We don't want your high-tech ID card, especially your enhanced one." The problem is, it isn't entirely voluntary, because a person who wants the basic ID card that may not entail all of the risks of the high-tech, enhanced ID card can acquire one only if she or he does not hold a valid driver's licence. A person can acquire an enhanced card only if she or he doesn't hold a valid driver's licence, but if a person holds a valid driver's licence, then they are obliged to get the enhanced card should they wish an identity card.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: No, they're not.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Read the legislation. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin hasn't read the bill, once again. For Pete's sake, how long has he been here? And he's still not reading legislation? One of the problems I've learned around here is that people vote on stuff—they're whipped—without ever having read the legislation, never mind the policy implications.

For the life of me, I can't understand why the member for Algoma-Manitoulin would insist that that's not the case. Read section 4, and it says very plainly and clearly there that if you hold a driver's licence and you want an identity card, you have to get an enhanced driver's licence card—end of story. You can't get the unenhanced identity card, the one that may well entail less risk.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Do you understand what I'm saying, Speaker? We've got nattering here. You know, there was a time when I sent over colouring books and crayons to people like the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and let his constituents know that he was assigned to the task of trying to stay inside the lines. And that he wasn't to eat the crayons.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You see, the problem, Mr. Watson, is that you're heckling me. You're supposed to be making me look stupid rather than yourself. So I find it very strange that the Liberal—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would just ask the member for Welland to address the Speaker, because when you turn to the gallery, I can't hear you. So I would just ask you to address me so that I can hear what you're saying.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate the presence of the folks in the gallery, and I'm pleased that the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You're turning away from me right now, member for Welland, and I can't hear what you're saying.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The morning's activities, among them—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Your microphone should be off. Now your microphone is on. Would the member take his seat for a moment please? Would the member please take his seat for just one second? Thank you very much.

I would just say to the member for Welland, I can't hear you when you're turning to speak to the gallery. I'd ask you to address your comments to the Chair.

I return to the member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I confess I was speaking to the people in the visitors' gallery, just like I'm talking to folks at home, and I do it through you. I speak in the third person because, you see, addressing the Speaker doesn't mean that you have to look at the Speaker. It means that you address the Speaker. Sir, I appreciate your guidance and I appreciate your assistance and your counsel.

I appreciate that people in this province are concerned about this government's abdication of its role as a safeguard, as being responsible to safeguard what has become incredibly high-risk information. That's the sort of information that's going to be encoded in these enhanced identity cards. We're talking about the ability now to use your little four-number PIN to access your bank account or to use it to access your credit card and rack up incredible charges, to use it to access your identity and put you at great risk. This government just went through an exercise of having to address the issue of identity theft and the loss of homes, the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of property: people's own personal homes, their residences. Now they proceed in such a foolhardy, high-risk way. I don't think that's responsible behaviour, do you, Speaker? I don't think it's responsible at all, especially when there's no urgency, when I haven't heard a single constituent come to my office and say, "We want some sort of post-Orwellian high-tech identity card." I tell you, this is well beyond 1984—well, well beyond 1984.

We've got a privacy commissioner who admonished this government around its carelessness when it came to the adoption act and whose position was upheld by the courts. Once again, we have the same privacy commissioner who admonishes this government and tells it to be very, very cautious about proceeding with this legislation when the technology to provide real safeguards simply doesn't exist. This could be a huge amount of money made in the provision of this card by the private sector, by the corporate sponsors of this sort of exercise, and also putting people at risk because that corporate sector, that private sector—these are the same people who sell your names to mailing lists, for instance, or sell your e-mail address, increasingly, to marketers who create profiles of a community that can pinpoint and understand the behaviour and habits and purchasing habits of any given individual. Understand that in the casinos, when they invite you to acquire a casino card because you earn points every time you play the slots, it's not about attracting customers or keeping them or giving them points and

awards. It's about collecting information. That casino knows exactly who you are, how much you're going to spend; to wit, how much you're going to lose. It knows whether you want olives or lemon twists in your martini. It knows how long you're inclined to stay at that casino and it knows who the biggest losers are so it can then offer them free rooms, free meals or free show packages and increasingly victimize people—when we have government like this, a province like this where the real addition to gambling and gambling proceeds is that of the government, more so than of individuals whose lives are destroyed by casino gaming.

0940

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has expressed concern about this legislation and the recklessness of this government in proceeding with such haste. I am going to make reference, very specifically, to the concerns expressed by the privacy commissioner and the efforts by the opposition to effect amendments to this legislation that would address the concerns raised by the privacy commissioner. But this government's refusal to adopt those amendments—in fact, they voted them down and made sure they didn't become part of this legislation.

For the life of me, I think this careless exercise on the part of this government will earn condemnation across this province. I say to people that, once this bill passes, they should absolutely, 100%, reject any invitation to get this government's enhanced photo ID card. Doing so will, one, save them money because undoubtedly there are going to be huge fees earned by the government and by the private sector partners in the issuing of these cards; two, there's going to be huge interest in the information that's being acquired that is very much at risk of being marketed—where the insurance industry has access to the Ministry of Transportation records on a regular basis. You knew that, didn't you? Private records? I think not. The insurance industry—those who wish to, scan them frequently and obtain all sorts of information from them, some which is relevant to the insurance industry and its role, other information which is relevant only to enhancing profits.

New Democrats are clear that we understand the increased risk that people's privacy is placed in in this high-tech computerized era when homes are wired, when wireless is even more pervasive. Any 10-year-old kid is capable of telling this government and its—I say ironically—brain trust, that you can hack bank accounts, you can hack government records, you can hack department store records, you can hack insurance company records, you can hack health records. How many cases do we have to witness before we understand that that's commonplace? And 10-, 11-, 12-year-old kids are doing it on a regular basis, just for fun. The evidence was clear at the committee—was it 10 feet?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ten metres.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ten metres.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That's a fair distance.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's a good chunk of distance—about from me to the members' gallery up there,

where those good folks are sitting in and watching this morning's parliamentary proceedings, waiting, I hope, for question period.

That means that you could be walking down the street—and we're not talking about big satellite dishes so that they're apparent and obvious—you could be walking into your supermarket, you could be walking into your department store, you could be walking into your city hall and be, oh, so unobtrusively scanned such that every single byte of data on that enhanced card is unloaded into somebody else's file for them to use in however creative a way they wish to use it.

This silly harping about a number that applies rather than the name—people understand how frail their PIN numbers are. The number that's being applied to these so-called enhanced cards is no more effective and no less effective than a PIN.

So I look forward to the vote on this. New Democrats will stand, five of us, to ensure that there is a recorded vote so that our opposition to this can be expressed very, very clearly.

As well, we want to make it clear once again that people in this province should shun this government's effort to raid their personal information and data.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member always brings sound observations, I would say, to the table.

When you look at Bill 85, we know, on third reading today, it's actually going to pass. The government's here and they have people stacked up outside to carry the vote.

We would like to make one commitment here. I think the intent is sound, but, as I mentioned earlier, there are issues around the privacy side of it. I think that if we look at the idea of these photo ID cards, tied, in some cases—there are three types of cards. One is just the card for identification for, as somebody said, a senior going in to purchase something on seniors' day or something like that, who doesn't have a driver's licence, where that would be a good piece of ID.

The one that we're concerned about is the one with this radio frequency card in it, where potentially the privacy information could get into the wrong hands. That's what our concern is. As the member from Welland said, just take your time here and get it right. When you're tinkering with persons' rights of privacy, don't go too fast just to say you got it done before Christmas.

Ultimately, this is not a provincial responsibility. Inter-border issues are a federal responsibility, i.e., the passport. There should be a national card. It's not going to do any good for someone going to the United States through Quebec. This will only be an Ontario kind of card. It's not a nationally recognized card. In fact, we have no assurance that the United States will secure the card. They're going to get the information. They scan it and they've got our data. What are they going to do with the data? Are they going to link it to other profiled information?

This is too much, too fast, and in fact the government will force it through without doing the right thing.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I just wanted to put on the record that I have a constituent who has been fighting for 10 years to get a non-driver's ID. He's a senior. His name is Reubin Cipin. He lives at number 2 Neptune in my riding. He has worked along with the CNIB in Toronto to ensure that seniors who don't drive obtain a valid identification card, and that's what's in this bill. I know that sometimes we don't stand up and appreciate the work of our citizens and organizations like the CNIB, but this bill finally, after years of asking—I think this campaign has been going on certainly a decade that I've been aware of it. This card will be of great service to people who don't drive, especially to seniors who don't have easy access to a photo ID. This will give them identification that will be of most value to them. I just want to say that the people who are visually impaired and certainly those who have been involved with the CNIB think this is very important and long overdue.

In terms of this card, I wish it would be available earlier, but it's going to be done—again, we're hearing the opposition say, "Well, slow down." But it's already been, as I say, 10 years, and we are going to have to wait another year. It will be 2010 before this will be fully available to seniors. This is one achievement that is possible with this bill, having this ID that I know seniors like Reubin Cipin and all the good folks at number 2 Neptune, on Bathurst will certainly—we're going to have a party up at 2 Neptune when they get that first card.

0950

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's interesting, when you look at the purpose of this bill, in terms of what we all would agree is a need. Right? We would all agree that there is a need for some kind of identification for folks like the one described by the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who don't drive and who have a need for a piece of identification that assists them in their travels back and forth.

But when you have a piece of legislation that the Information and Privacy Commissioner has concerns about and raises red flags about, then holy smokes, it's up to the government to stand back and say, "Maybe we need to take a second look."

What did our critic do? Gilles Bisson asked the committee to do that very thing, to have the Information and Privacy Commissioner come back to the committee level and discuss the concerns that were put on the table in regard to Bill 85. Did the government open the door and invite the privacy commissioner to come back to the table and have that broader discussion? No.

It seems to me that when you are talking about people's private information, the very least you can do is get the insights, the knowledge and the skill of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to enlighten your debate and enlighten your decision-making process.

There's nothing scary or fearful about that. In fact, I think it would be the obligation of a government to heed the advice of these very people we put in place to protect the interests of the public, to protect the interests of the senior, like the one described by the previous member.

I think it's challenging, at the least, to know that our government here in Ontario is not concerned with the comments of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and on and on. A number of stakeholders have come to the table with serious concerns about the privacy of the information being put on this card, and it's a concern that New Democrats share.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. Seeing none, I will turn to the member for Welland, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I wish the Liberal backbenchers would simply pay more attention and realize what their government is doing to Ontarians, and come clean with the people they're speaking to.

For Pete's sake, if you want to give a senior an ID card, then authorize the Ministry of Transportation offices to take his or her photo, put it on a card and charge them 10 bucks for it. That's all that's needed; you didn't have to wait 10 years.

This proposal is being marketed by the manufacturers of the technology, who stand to make huge profit and who are using Ontarians as guinea pigs, quite frankly. Ontarians are paying for it, and they'll pay twice and thrice, because it puts them at incredible high risk of having their identity stolen.

Mr. Mike Colle: Give seniors a break.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Give seniors a break? You give them a break, because you know, right now, that seniors are amongst the most targeted community for identity theft, credit card fraud and robbing their accounts. And you're doing nothing. I say to Mr. McGuinty and his Liberal clan that they're exposing seniors to more risk than ever with their enhanced identity card.

If you want identity cards, authorize the MTO to take a photo, put it on a card and call it an identity card. You don't need this legislation, and you know it.

The people who create this technology, the people who have an interest in stealing and collecting this information, are the ones who want it. You're at their beck and call. This is a despicable abdication by this government of its regard and respect for its citizens and the privacy of its citizens. You're exposing Ontarians to more risk, in terms of identity theft and fraud, than they've ever been exposed to before. You're exposing them to predators who will prey on them, especially seniors, because they're the people who are targeted by the scam artists who will prey on seniors with the information that can be so readily stolen from these identity cards. If only you people would come clean.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Are there any members who wish to participate in this debate?

Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 85. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I've been advised that this vote will take place at the time of deferred votes today, after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: There's no further business for this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House is in recess until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 0955 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to welcome the mother of page Samantha Meeks, Barbara Jessop, and grandmother Marg Jessop and grandfather Merv Jessop. They'll be sitting in the public gallery.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to introduce the best perogy makers in Ontario, Peter and Helen Danchuk from Dufferin-Caledon, who also happen to be here for their granddaughter, page Sarah.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce members from the Police Association of Ontario from my area, Sarnia-Lambton and Chatham: Marc Toutant, Peter Baker, Julie Peters, Patricia Stone and Jodi Foster.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It's my pleasure to introduce Larry Molyneaux, the new president of the Police Association of Ontario; Ron Middel, the new chief administrative officer of the PAO; and welcome all the police officers who are here today lobbying for better policing in Ontario.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'd like to introduce, representing Thunder Bay and the Thunder Bay Police Association, part of the Police Association of Ontario, Greg Stephenson.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Brampton West and page Sarah Danchuk—many of these individuals have been introduced but we want to make sure they're all here: Nick Danchuk, her father, who will be sitting in the public gallery; her grandfather Eric McCabe, her grandmother Helen Danchuk, and her grandfather Peter Danchuk. We welcome all of those individuals today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd beg the indulgence of the House in allowing the pages to be introduced. Pages, please take your positions.

I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of Legislative pages serving in the first session of the 39th Parliament:

Zac Baum, Beaches–East York; Samiha Chowdhury, Scarborough Centre; Sarah Danchuk, Brampton West; Courtney Dodds, Ajax–Pickering; Sahara Douglas, Mississauga South; Jason Fernandes, Mississauga–Streetsville; Jacqueline Gilchrist, Dufferin–Caledon; Bradyn Litster, Hamilton Centre; Sara Maltese, Eglinton–Lawrence; Tess McGurn, Barrie; Samantha Meeks, London–Fanshawe; Swapnil Patki, Windsor West; Rohan Pavone, Pickering–Scarborough East; Amanda Persaud-Thomas, Oak Ridges–Markham; Sarah Ratzlaff, Toronto–Danforth; Ieta Shams, York Centre; Kush Thaker, Markham–Unionville; Luis Vera, Timiskaming–Cochrane; Jenna Waters, Wellington–Halton Hills; Brittney Whitaker, Niagara Falls.

Welcome to all of our pages.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I took a quick read this morning of yesterday's Hansard and the questions from both opposition parties related to the economy, primarily the auto sector. Questions were directed to you, questions that in my view didn't receive any meaningful answers. This is a critically important issue in relation to the future of this province, so I'm going to try again.

Can you advise the House of what you see, specifically, Ontario can do to support the 400,000 jobs and the families and communities that depend on those jobs in the auto sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm very pleased to return to this subject matter. It's very important to many Ontarians and, indeed, to the national economy. I would ask my colleague opposite to recognize that we actually have yet to receive a special request from the auto execs. I had a chance to meet with them, together with Minister Bryant, the other day. They did not put a specific request on the table. I have had an opportunity to speak with the Prime Minister about this issue. I know that Minister Clement and Minister Bryant will be travelling to Washington to see what we can gather there by way of next steps that will be taken by either the Bush administration in its final phase or those changes that might be anticipated under an Obama administration. But we will continue to work as closely as we can with the federal government and with the auto sector to make sure that at the end we are there with the appropriate support, providing the appropriate protection to taxpayers.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I guess, reading comments from the minister related to his view of the world in terms of the need for Ontario to move ahead and not wait for the United States and the federal government to make a decision in respect to support—clearly, the minister who is representing you on this file has some clear

ideas with respect to how to address the concerns, specifically with the Big Three automakers. I would ask you again, given the public stance that your minister has taken, can you be specific with respect to what he's talking about, what he's thinking about? Clearly, he's discussed that with you in your office.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've had many conversations with the minister on this, but one thing that I think we all have to keep in mind here is that if it was just a matter of Ontario, for example, competing with the state of Michigan, that would be one thing. But as it stands now, in terms of the support that's about to be offered to the US auto sector, we are up against the US Treasury. Ontario is right now up against the United States of America with all its economic might. So at the end of the day, it's going to be absolutely essential to find common ground here together with the federal government.

When it comes to the issues of liquidity, the challenges being faced by the auto sector to get credit to maintain their ongoing operations, that's something where the federal government is going to have to play the key role. So we can't land on a specific at this point in time without involving the feds.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, it is interesting to hear that there have been no specific proposals, and I guess that is because of the situation in the United States. We all know that the US is facing a recession and significant job losses, something like 8% unemployment being projected. President-elect Obama has more than a vested interest in keeping the US auto industry alive and viable, and we also suspect that this new administration in the United States is going to have a much more protectionist tilt than has been the case in the past. Clearly, this is an additional complication in terms of the approach your government and the federal government will have to take to Washington. Can you elaborate on how you're going to approach that specific issue, in terms of dealing with a much more protectionist administration in Washington?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is an important issue raised by my colleague and that's something we're going to have to keep a very close eye on. I think ideally we would like to find some way to come close to mirroring the support that will be provided by the US for their auto sector so that we don't lose any ground here. But this is a matter that is in a continuous state of flux. I think the single most important thing that we can do is make sure we're keeping the lines open between ourselves and the federal government and the auto sector here. As well, I'll be meeting with the head of the Canadian Auto Workers to get their take on this. We're trying to stay in touch as well with some of the communities that are affected by this industry. I think the most important thing we can do is keep the lines of communication open.

1040

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Premier. It was clear yesterday, when I raised the issue of the Liberal

Party fundraiser that was to be held tonight, that that was perhaps the first time you had heard that your Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities was having a fundraiser along with the Minister of Labour at a union-owned, government-funded skills training centre. Could that have anything to do with the fact that this fundraiser appears to have been postponed for a week and its location has been moved to the Ontario Liberal Party's headquarters?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm just waiting for what I'm sure is going to be a very important note, Speaker. I understand that my friend is correct. The fundraiser has been moved elsewhere.

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Who says you can't be effective in opposition?

Anyway, I can report that the fundraiser has been moved.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, to be kind, the fact speaks volumes about your lack of leadership and knowledge of what your ministers are up to. This last-minute change, hours after yesterday's question, is an admission, as you have said today, on your part that your training minister and the Minister of Labour, who's a guest speaker at the fundraiser, exhibited poor judgment in the choice of venues.

Premier, as a result of this display of appalling poor judgment, have you sent a directive out to your cabinet, prohibiting them from holding fundraisers at places that receive government funding from their respective ministries?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm going to refer this to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: It's too bad that the member opposite didn't invest a little bit more in terms of research. He could have gone over and asked his friend Mr. Hudak, the Chair of the estimates committee, about the schedule for estimates. I received a letter several weeks ago from Mr. Hudak asking me to appear in front of estimates on Tuesday, November 18, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. As a result of that, I could no longer attend the fundraiser. The fundraiser is not taking place and was rescheduled for a later time and place.

As to the insinuation that the honourable member wants to make that there was a problem with the funding that was given to him, once again, I say he should stand up in this House and make an accusation, go outside and make an accusation, or hold his tongue.

The simple fact of the matter is, yes, they received money through the STIP program. The STIP program was put in place by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the authority for that was delegated to the deputy minister. It was a clear—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: That's a laughable answer. Since I first asked this question on October 30, I've been stating these facts inside this House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask everyone—we have lots of guests here today, including lots of grade 5 students, and I'm sure these grade 5 students understand what it's like to be respectful in a classroom. I would just ask that we offer that within this chamber.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I hate being interrupted because I have to get my blood pressure to a certain level to be effective. Anyway, Minister, your judgment has been appalling. Premier, you should have known.

When I first asked this question on October 30, you took it as a joke. Your cabinet ministers—many of them laughed. They laughed again yesterday. This isn't a laughing matter. This is an appalling lack of judgment and a complete conflict of interest. I ask the Premier again, what are you going to do to make sure this doesn't happen again?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, the event in question was postponed or cancelled several weeks ago and it is taking place in a few weeks. Because of scheduling, it's at a different venue.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I ask him to stand up and say what's wrong with the fact that the Ontario Sheet Metal Workers received money to purchase equipment and installation associated with sheet metal worker training, including a plasma cutter, manual lifts, elevator platforms and a fume extractor. They received money for their Toronto facility for equipment related to training for gasfitters and sheet metal mechanics, including high-efficiency heating systems and water heaters.

The simple fact of the matter is, I'm very proud of the fact that we work with our training partners in order to deliver training to apprentices. The system to award those grants is done at arm's length from the minister—it has been delegated to the deputy minister—and it is a fair and transparent process. If he has allegations otherwise, then I invite him to stand up and share—

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

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, here is the state of the Ontario economy in year six of the McGuinty economic management: We have an auto industry, responsible for one in six jobs in southern Ontario, which is engaged in a day-to-day fight for survival; we have a forest industry, the backbone of the northern Ontario economy, where 9,000 direct and another 40,000 indirect jobs have been lost.

When will this Premier admit that after more than five years in office, his economic plan has failed and that, quite frankly, the five-point plan that he keeps talking about has not been able to deal with the tidal wave of job losses that continues to hit Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that Ontarians, notwithstanding the assertions made by my colleague, understand that there is more at play in Ontario than just the impact of our economic policies. There are national policies that have some influence in our province, and

there are some very important global economic circumstances which are at play here as well.

But I can tell you, the most thoughtful people on this matter tell us that it's really important for us to continue to make the kinds of investments we've made in the skills and education of our people, in our infrastructure, in promoting innovation, in reducing our business taxes and in continuing to go ahead with partnerships with businesses. That's the foundation on which we've built our economic house in the province of Ontario, and we'll keep strengthening that as we move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: The Premier continues to point to factors beyond his control, but the point is that there are many tools in the provincial economic tool box that the McGuinty government simply has refused to use to date. For example, just last night on TVO's *The Agenda*, Jamie Lim, president of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, said that the battered forestry products industry desperately needs an industrial hydro rate. We have, on this side of the House, been talking about that for years.

Why is this Premier continuing to refuse to implement an industrial hydro rate to save jobs in northern Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have been working with the forestry sector—I think we have some \$1 billion that we've made available for supports—and we've moved ahead on a number of fronts where we're had the support of the individual referenced by my colleague.

But there's nothing that's really easy. He's suggesting that if we somehow reduce hydro rates for industry, somehow there's not going to be an impact on the remaining ratepayers. Those are individual homeowners and the like.

We are going to continue to work with the forestry sector. We'll continue to work, through the Minister of Energy, on doing everything that we can to maintain responsible hydro rates. But I think it's not entirely responsible to say that the quick fix is to be found simply in reducing hydro rates for one particular sector.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I think that a real forward-looking strategy would also look at the quality of jobs that are being created. More than one million Ontarians work at jobs paying \$10 an hour or less. There is simply no way that a family can survive on less than \$10 an hour. A new report out today makes this perfectly clear. This Premier can immediately put money into the pockets of those who will spend it by simply using one of the most important tools in the government's economic tool box: the minimum wage.

Will this Premier act immediately to raise the minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour, or are one million people going to have to wait another two years to earn a decent wage so that they can contribute to this economy?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It really comes down to a sense of balance. My friend has an interesting proposal—

we've heard it many times before—but he's suggesting that we discount entirely the consequences of moving to that kind of a minimum wage on the business community. Businesses are having a hard time today in Ontario, and I think the last thing we want to do is impose some new costs on them. What we are doing is moving ahead with responsible levels of increase in the minimum wage. We've done that some five times now. We will continue to move ahead with increases in the minimum wage in the future, but we'll always do it in a responsible way, always trying to strike the balance between fairness for workers and fairness for those who are making the investments and creating jobs for our workers.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Michael Prue: Again, back to the Premier: One of the great failures of this government is its failure to develop an effective Buy Ontario strategy. When the government had a chance to require 50% of domestic content for transportation, it chose 25%. When it had a chance to implement a credible Buy Ontario policy for energy, which would have created thousands of new jobs by creating our very own wind turbine industry, it failed to approve projects such as the 150-turbine proposal by Trillium Power Wind Corp. When will this Premier finally quit tilting at windmills and seize the opportunity to create jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. George Smitherman: On the matter of energy creating jobs, I had the extraordinary pleasure, as the Premier has had in the last few weeks, of attending at the opening of significant new wind farms, part of the evolution of green energy, which is helping to fuel the green economy in the province of Ontario.

But on the matter at hand with respect to domestic content—the member has mentioned both energy and transportation infrastructure projects—I think it has been clear over the course of the last few weeks in this House that we are working to adopt policies which can enhance even further the amount of domestic content in the matter of purchasing methods.

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister has admitted that much more can be done, but the fact is that other provinces, and I cite Quebec, had the foresight to kick-start their own wind manufacturing industry. Hydro-Québec plans to spend \$5.5 billion on 2,004 megawatts of wind power, with most of the equipment to be manufactured in that province. In Quebec, 60% of the total expenditure for each wind farm must be incurred in that province, creating thousands of green jobs. At a time of massive job loss in Ontario, Ontario should be a world leader; instead, we are a world laggard. We're not even on the map.

My question back to the minister: How does the minister explain the failure of this government to actually go in this direction?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member, in an effort to make his point, exaggerates to the point of

defying credibility. To refer to the province of Ontario as a laggard in the evolution of green energy is to seriously state on that member's behalf that he doesn't get it and he hasn't sought to research the matter at hand.

In the case of Quebec, indeed there are lessons to be applied from that very jurisdiction, and we're looking very much at the manner in which they have worked. As the Premier had a chance to say yesterday, the very steel for the wind turbines that the member speaks about came from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. This is an example of the opportunities in the evolving green economy and related to green energy to make important contributions to our economic circumstances. We've done that in a variety of ways already. There is area for improvement, and the honourable member should stay tuned for actions in this very regard.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I have been awaiting actions for a long time. I'd like to return to the proposal by Trillium Power Wind Corp. Multibrid, a German-based turbine manufacturer, is working with Trillium, a local renewable energy developer, to build a massive wind farm in Lake Ontario. This project alone would likely require an investment of more than \$1 billion and would consist of 150 turbines.

Trillium, which sees its Lake Ontario project as the beginning of a new industrial strategy for the province and a creator of high-value, green-collar jobs, desperately wants to purchase its turbines from a manufacturer like Multibrid that locates in Ontario. All it needs is the approval from this government, and it hasn't got it. Why is this government dragging its heels on that approval?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I want to say to the honourable member that through the investment of dozens and dozens of different entrepreneurs, totalling, I think, about 130 or 140 distinct entrepreneurs, many more than 1,000 megawatts of renewable energy have come online in the province of Ontario to the tune of an investment of several billion dollars.

So, again I say to the honourable member, to characterize the province of Ontario as a laggard in this regard is rather offensive. It does a disservice to the extraordinary investment and entrepreneurial effort that has been made.

On the point at hand with respect to a specific proponent, there are a variety of options and offers that are made available to tie a permit for a certain amount of generation to manufacturing. That's why I have already acknowledged twice and will for the third time that we do think that there are opportunities to apply lessons from, for example, Quebec, and I'm looking at the policy to be able to do that at this very moment.

ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. Minister, there are several changes

being made to the policy and procedures of the electronic monitoring program in your ministry. One of these changes will remove the requirement of electronic surveillance resource officers to conduct a home visit when completing technological reports for the suitability of installing the equipment. These home visits require a ministry employee an opportunity to actually inspect the residence where an offender will serve a house arrest while on a conditional sentence and under supervision of your ministry. Your new policy will instead have an ESRO conducting interviews over the phone to prepare their technological report, trying to confirm the identity of someone they can't even see.

There's no way that an ESRO can confirm the actual identity of the individual they are speaking with on the phone. Furthermore, with nobody from your ministry making home visits, there's nothing stopping these individuals from operating a meth lab, a grow op or any other criminal activity from their residence.

These foolish changes are simply negligent cost-cutting measures that water down a viable public safety program. Will the minister commit today to backing away from these policy changes and—

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: That's a legitimate question. Let's be very, very clear and let's make it in terms that everybody can understand, and let me be very, very clear that our number one priority is community safety and it will continue to be community safety. That is why our policies and operational decisions will always be aimed at putting community safety first.

Technology allows staff to remotely access equipment suitability. Staff previously had to take precious time in order to do this monitoring. It's being done in a more effective and full manner.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, I don't agree with you.

As you're aware, these poorly thought out changes will take effect December 1 of this year, just two weeks away. Without question, they will negatively impact the safety of Ontario's communities and add more unnecessary work for Ontario's police services.

Electronic monitoring is not a new technology and has been utilized to effectively supervise offenders in other provinces and jurisdictions. All successful programs in other jurisdictions require home assessments of offenders by electronic surveillance resource officers and a public education about the program in the community. We are taking steps backwards here in this province by eliminating home assessments.

Will the minister agree to rescind the changes planned and conduct a comprehensive, independent review of the electronic monitoring program in our province?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Before any decisions are made, they're well thought out and well researched. They are not knee-jerk-reaction decisions.

This clearly will provide for a higher level of monitoring. It will allow us to use our human resources in a more effective manner, and it will ensure that our number one priority is indeed our number one priority, that being community safety for the people of Ontario.

AGRICULTURAL LABOUR POLICY

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: Since 1995, Conservative and Liberal governments in this province have denied agricultural workers the right to join unions and bargain collectively. Yesterday, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled against this government's policy and struck down the offending legislation as unconstitutional. Will the Premier assure Ontarians that the government will not appeal this decision and that it will finally agree to end the exclusion of thousands of agricultural workers from the Labour Relations Act of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question. What I can say is that we will take a very close look at the decision. We are determined to find fairness, both for our farmers and for farm workers. So we will draw careful guidance from the decision just rendered, but we'll take our time to do that, as I know my colleague would want us to do.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We're talking about thousands of agricultural workers, workers working in some of the most dangerous and hardest-working and lowest-paid jobs in this province. We're talking about their constitutional rights as determined by the Ontario Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada. You don't have all the time in the world, Premier. The Court of Appeal gave you but 12 months to remedy this; otherwise, your legislation will become null and void. Why won't you accept your responsibility to these workers and accept your responsibility to enforce and uphold their constitutional rights?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I always appreciate my colleague's passion on these issues. He speaks of responsibility, and that's a good word. One dimension to our responsibility on this side of the House is that, in the face of a decision rendered by the Ontario Court of Appeal, we should just take at least a few days to carefully consider that and its implications. My friend is absolutely right: We've been given 12 months to address this, and I think we should take at least a few days to look at the decision itself and make sure we fully understand it.

POLICE

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. It goes without saying that for many of my constituents, community safety is a top priority. Today the Police Association of Ontario is visiting the Legislature, and I think it's appropriate to recognize the contributions of Ontario's police officers and the civilian members of our police

forces. The men and women of Ontario's municipal police forces and OPP lay their lives on the line daily to ensure that we live in the safest communities possible. I know that every member of this House recognizes the PAO's important contributions, but recognition is not enough. Our government must ensure that police have the personnel, equipment, training and support required to safely and effectively do their job.

Minister, please explain to this House the support this government has provided to Ontario's police to date and what we will be doing moving forward to ensure that police are able—

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Ontario's communities are safer because of our excellent police services and our commitment to work with the Police Association of Ontario as an active partner. So, at the advice of the Police Association of Ontario, we continued funding the community policing partnership program and extended that funding into perpetuity. At the advice of the Police Association of Ontario, we worked at a Safer Communities policing program, hiring 1,000 new additional officers and 200 OPP officers, and extended the funding in perpetuity as well. We continue to work with our policing partners, including the PAO, in a number of ways to ensure that they have the tools needed to do their job, because at the end of the day, as I said earlier, community safety is our number one priority.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you for that response, Minister. I'm pleased to hear our government has a deep appreciation for the fine work done by our Ontario police in keeping our communities safe. Effective partnerships at all levels are needed to truly protect our communities. When communities, schools and police and all levels of government work together, we have the safest communities possible.

I know that it was with great fanfare that the federal government, in their 2006 election platform, promised to put 2,500 officers on the streets of Canada. It's one thing to promise and quite another to actually deliver. I've heard that, unfortunately, Ontario received roughly only 30% of what was originally promised and that the program is only temporary. In addition, I've heard from many members of the policing community and from my community at large that this program does not provide what is needed for our municipalities to plan long-term.

Can the minister explain—

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member brings up a very, very important point. Are partnerships important? Yes, partnerships are important in community safety. Do we have an absent partner in all of this? The answer is, yes, we have an absent partner. That partner is the federal government that promised a 2,500-police-officer recruitment program and didn't deliver on that. As a result, Ontario got shortchanged.

So I made a commitment to our policing partners that we would be an active participant in lobbying the federal government for Ontario's fair share. We're not getting it. We will argue with the federal government; we will advocate on behalf of the people of Ontario and for our policing partners.

Let me tell you what Larry Molyneaux, the president of the PAO, says: "The PAO continues to strongly"—

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

CORONER'S INQUEST

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, two years ago, Mr. Steven Huc Minh Chau killed his wife, Shao-Fang Liang, and two children, Vivian and Ivan. He was recently found by the court to be not criminally responsible for their deaths due to his mental state at the time. As you may know, in a press conference this morning Mr. Chau has asked for a coroner's inquest into the deaths of his wife and children. This has been supported by members of Mr. Chau's family, by members of the medical community and by members of the Chinese Canadian community, many of whom are here in the gallery today.

Minister, there is a widespread view that this tragedy could have been averted. Despite concerns expressed by Mr. Chau's family to his physicians that his medical condition was worsening daily before the tragedy, nothing was done to stop it. Serious questions have arisen from this matter. Will you please call a coroner's inquest—

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Obviously, there isn't a person in the House who doesn't have a great deal of sympathy for this situation and any other situation—but I think the member is asking for me to invoke section 22, when there is a process in place that has to be carried out before I would have the power to invoke section 22. I encourage everyone connected to this to ensure that they follow that process. That begins with the local coroner, and if that decision isn't an agreeable decision, they have the opportunity to appeal to a regional coroner. Then, if they are not satisfied with that decision, they can go to the chief coroner, because the coroners are in the best place to make that decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The minister is quite right in saying I am making the request under section 22 of the Coroners Act. In addition, Mr. Chau himself has asked, through his lawyer and in a personal note that he has also written, because he recognizes there are very serious medical and legal issues arising out of this case, of general application, that need to be dealt with both for the protection of the public and for the people suffering from major mental illness in this province. There is no question that Mr. Chau's family was failed by both the Ontario system of mental health and by the legislation,

and that there's something that needs to be done about this.

Minister, I ask you, will you please use your discretion in this very important case to deal with these issues that need to be resolved for the safety of the public and for the people involved?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: First of all, let me inform the member clearly and the people who are in the gallery, people who are truly concerned, that there is a process in place. Before section 22 is invoked, that process has to be gone through; so it's at the local level, the regional level and then at the chief coroner's level.

Let me tell you, no other government has invoked section 22 because—and let me quote Bob Runciman on December 12, 1995, when he said, "It's not within my area of responsibilities to direct the chief coroner to undertake such an investigation, but I will certainly make him aware of the member's concerns." I am asking the member to ensure that everyone understands that there is a process in place, that the coroner is the best person to make that decision, and that the decision will be based on public safety.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The minister has changed the eligibility criteria for the temporary care assistance program, stressing out thousands of grandparents raising their grandkids.

Last week, I visited with grandparents in London, Hamilton, Cambridge, Kingston and Bancroft. We all reviewed the new eligibility criteria, and they sadly admitted they no longer qualify for TCA. However, the minister's parliamentary assistant said in the London Free Press that "whoever is eligible today will be eligible tomorrow."

Will the minister follow her PA's lead and also pledge, despite her new rules, that the grandparents eligible today will be eligible tomorrow?

1110

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much for the question. I know that the member is very persistent about the temporary care assistance. Again, we all here in the House thank the grandparents, and not only the grandparents, because this program is offered also to a neighbour, to a family member, to friends, so we thank those who are offering to help children in need. We thank them today for doing that.

We continue to offer support to those who are stepping in to look after children who are in need, and we will continue to offer that service. I'm saying to the grandparents today, and to the neighbours and friends who are helping, that the rules that are applicable today are the rules that will be applicable—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I must say that the minister continues to stand up in this House and thank grandparents, and then she cuts them off, so I'm a little confused.

Last week, I met with dozens of grandparents raising their grandkids across southern Ontario who have already been cut off from temporary care assistance. The minister talks an interesting line, but the reality is that the cut-offs have already begun—Hamilton and Ottawa—already deemed grandkids being raised by their grandparents ineligible.

Will the minister tell us which municipality is next, or will she do whatever it takes to ensure that those grandchildren eligible today are eligible tomorrow?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, I'm saying that the rules that are applicable today are the rules that will be applicable tomorrow. We will continue. Again, I'm repeating the member from Hamilton: "Blow the whistle on grandparents."

So we reviewed the application of the rules and, yes, there were some municipalities that were not applying the rules as they should have been. I'm saying again that the people who are looking after children who are in need today will continue to receive the support that this government is offering, because we've increased the budget every year. We're increasing the budget, and we will continue to support those who are stepping in to take care of children, and I thank them today.

MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO

Mr. Kim Craitor: My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Minister, this past Sunday, November 16, the Métis people of Ontario celebrated the life of Louis Riel, honouring his contributions to the Métis as a people and to Canada as a whole.

The Métis people played an instrumental role in the shaping of Canada, and they continue to work hard to share their culture, music, traditions and knowledge of the environment with their fellow Canadians.

According to the 2006 census, 73,000 people identify themselves as Métis in Ontario, making our province home to the highest population increase among the Métis people in Canada.

Minister, I know that since taking your new portfolio, you've been working hard to improve relationships between the government and the aboriginal communities in Ontario. Can you please describe the specific inroads you've made with the Métis people in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It was my honour on the weekend to gather with the Métis Nation of Ontario to honour Louis Riel. This has traditionally been an event that comes with a fair amount of anger and frustration, and rightfully so. The Métis Nation has not been recognized, generation after generation, government after government, in this province. Even their mere existence has not been recognized, let alone their culture and the huge contribution they've made to our province and our country.

On Sunday, that anger gave way to celebration. I was honoured to be present at that ceremony because the very next day, I had the honour of signing a framework agreement with the Métis Nation of Ontario, with President

Gary Lipinski. For the first time in the history of this province, the Métis Nation of Ontario is—

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

Mr. Kim Craitor: Minister, your predecessor Michael Bryant was praised by the Métis leadership, particularly by the past president of the Métis Nation Tony Belcourt. Perhaps the minister might inform the House what other First Nation leaders are saying today. As well, Ontario has made relationship building and real progress with our aboriginal partners a major priority, and perhaps the minister would like to elaborate on that.

Like Métis people throughout the province, the Métis community in the Niagara region is working hard to increase their economic opportunities and improve their quality of life.

Minister, can you provide us with some more information on the framework agreement and how it will affect the lives of Métis people throughout Ontario and in my constituency?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd be pleased to provide that information, but first I want to recognize the work of my predecessor in putting together a good part of this early work on this very historic framework. He has done a tremendous job in helping to create a new relationship with our First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, and this framework goes a long way to changing that relationship.

The Ontario government and the Métis Nation of Ontario will now be working in a new and collaborative relationship that will lead to improving the well-being of Métis children, families and communities, that will protect and promote the distinct culture, identity and heritage of the Métis people. Through this framework, we'll be able to encourage economic opportunities and recognize and respect Métis traditions, structures and institutions.

Every once in awhile in our political life, we get to be part of something that's historic and very meaningful. I'm pleased that I've had—

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

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, I'd like to raise an issue of what I consider to be driver licences obtained through fraudulent means or for fraudulent reasons. Since February, residents in my riding have received over 100 driver's licences with names and faces other than theirs, which have been mailed to their addresses. Since this became public, they have been bringing them to me—in the last two weeks, over eight alone. One lady has received four in the last two weeks. She has received 20 to 25 since February. I'm going to be sending over eight licences that have been received in the last week. My staff tells me that since yesterday some more have arrived at my office. This is causing a great deal of concern to residents in my riding.

There must be a way of tracking this fraud down and stopping it, Minister. Can you assure this House that there's something you will be doing, starting today?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The answer is, yes, there is.

I want to first of all commend the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for bringing this matter to my attention assiduously. As a result of bringing it to my attention, investigations have been taking place with a view to overcoming the problem.

I think the member realizes that there have been some other instances where people who want to avoid Drive Clean change their address and then they change the address back, for instance.

The Ministry of Transportation's investigative force is working with the Ministry of the Environment's investigative force at the present time, looking at each of these cases, and bringing in prosecutions when they are justified. I want to thank the member for his ongoing interest in this and assure him that we are taking very strong action to overcome what is a serious problem.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Minister, but I think it's a lot more than an environment issue; it's more than just about Drive Clean.

The widow who has received 25 licences since February lives alone on a rural road. Not only has she received licences, but she is receiving notices from the 407 to pay her fines. She has also received notice to renew licence plates which are not hers but which belong to these fraudulent licences. She also found in her mailbox all kinds of cards, obtained because of those driver licences, allowing some of these people to vote in the last federal election.

This goes way beyond environment. This goes way beyond emissions testing. This is a big problem, either in MTO or somewhere, when one person can receive 25 licences issued to 25 different people.

We have to do something to stop this so that this lady can sleep at night. It's affecting her health. Her doctor has put her on medication because of this.

You live on a rural route, you're wondering who—

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

1120

Hon. James J. Bradley: My friend is absolutely right in this case, as he is in so many cases when he raises issues in the House. I want to assure him that we have been working with the Ministry of the Environment on this. Both the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Transportation have officials who deal with matters of fraud. Also, we are in consultation with the Ontario Provincial Police and other police services across the province to determine where prosecutions can take place.

I'm also informed that we've found a technology solution that we believe is a sound interim measure to reduce this type of fraud, and this is something we will begin implementing right away. We're also exploring broader policy solutions to address what I think the member has identified as a very significant problem. So I

thank him for bringing it to the attention of the House and to my personal attention, and we're taking action.

DENTAL CARE

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

Today, a report from the Ontario Dental Association calls for action to protect the dental health of Ontario's children and families. Why hasn't the government created a provincial dental care plan as promised during the 2007 provincial election and again in last year's budget?

Hon. David Caplan: I understand that the Ontario Dental Association has released a report today. I look forward to reviewing the report with my colleagues the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the Minister of Health Promotion, because we all know that good oral health leads to better overall health. That's why our government is spending \$69.2 million annually to provide low-income Ontarians with dental services through the social assistance system. We're spending an additional \$11.9 million to provide urgent dental care treatment to low-income families through the children in need of treatment program, and that's a 15% increase since 2004. In March, the Premier announced a three-year, \$135-million dental plan that will extend support to even more low-income families.

I look forward to expanding on the answer in the supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Here's what the Ontario Dental Association has to say about the children in need of treatment program. They say, "It is the strongly held view of the Ontario Dental Association that the children in need of treatment program is counterproductive and unfair to the children of this province, particularly to low-income children."

Ontarians want access to a dental plan that provides preventive dental care for all Ontario children, regardless of income, and for low-income families regardless of their current employment status. Why were teeth excluded from medicare? It's the only body part that's not in. It is incomprehensible. Rather than give Ontarians false hope, will the minister commit to bringing in a truly comprehensive dental care plan today?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm not sure I understand the rhetoric that's behind the question. In fact, this government is not only providing true hope, but is providing additional resources that low-income Ontarians are able to receive. In fact, over 30,000 low-income children are receiving that kind of support, and I think the member would want to acknowledge that absolute fact.

We're going to continue to work with public health units, community health centres, dentists and dental hygienists to deliver prevention and treatment services for low-income families, and especially for children. Part of our plan to help children lead healthy and active lives is the doubling of student nutrition program funding, banning junk food and trans fats from schools, developing new, healthy nutritional guidelines, 20 minutes of

daily physical activities in schools, and Eating Well Looks Good on You, working with David Rocco.

There are a number of different programs, but, importantly, additional resources have been provided—

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

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question today is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, you announced the findings from the provincial-municipal fiscal and service review, which was good news for property taxpayers in municipalities across Ontario.

The city of Peterborough will benefit particularly from the court security upload because it has a court that serves many surrounding municipalities, as well as my own, without receiving any funding from these other municipalities. But, Minister, the report was a little vague about how these costs will be paid for by the province and what the actual benefit will be to municipalities that fund court security. The upload of court security costs is good news, but my municipality, the city of Peterborough, needs to know the details in order to plan for the future. Will the minister tell us today about the details of this upload?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm particularly proud of the work that AMO and the city of Toronto, along with my colleague the Minister of Finance, conducted with the fiscal and service delivery review. Court security upload was one of the top priorities of the municipal sector. They kept saying, "Why is it that court security costs for provincial courthouses are borne by municipal property taxpayers?" So we have agreed that the upload will begin and it will be phased in over a seven-year period. It will save municipal taxpayers \$125 million.

I want to quote the Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards when they said, on October 31, "Ontario's police leaders and police services boards today welcomed the commitment by the government of Ontario to fulfill its responsibility to pay for court security and prisoner transportation costs...." We are proud to work with the police association, the chiefs of police, and our colleagues the Attorney General and the Minister of—

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Minister, for clarifying a very important issue. The downloading of court security costs onto the municipality was an unfair burden placed on communities across the province that was ignored by previous governments until now. This downloading took funding from community priorities such as social programs, infrastructure and policing. Now our government has put in place a reversal of this burden for municipalities, and my constituents would like to know how this is going to affect our police force.

In my community, we're more than appreciative of the service provided by our police and are happy that this review will free up more of those resources and keep our

communities safe. I understand that through the phased-in uploading approach, my community, the city of Peterborough, and others in Ontario will save \$125 million by 2018 for court security. Can you please outline what policing benefits my community and others across the province will be able to see with this new uploading of costs?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd refer this to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I thank the member for a very, very important question. Municipalities, along with their policing partners, the police association or chiefs of police, will be best able to decide where these newly freed-up dollars should go. Some municipalities may choose to hire new front-line police officers. Others may choose to invest in police equipment or other community policing initiatives.

You see, the beauty of this upload is that it's going to free up money for municipalities to invest in those priority areas that Larry Molyneaux and the Police Association of Ontario have—working in concert with each other. That's what community safety is all about: collaboration and partnerships.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Premier. It is day 11 of the York University strike, Premier. Fifty thousand students are missing out on their education. The holiday break is coming fast, exams have been scheduled, and students are losing important class time.

Before anyone gets into any discussion of back-to-work legislation, is the Premier willing to use the moral suasion inherent in his office to encourage both sides to arrive at a solution expeditiously and get students back into their lecture halls and striking employees back to work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just say that I think it's in everybody's interest that this matter be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity. I'm not sure there is anything of greater value in which we can invest in our young people than their education.

We've been strongly encouraging the sides to come to the table, to stay at the table and to resolve this as quickly as possible. We've also extended an offer, as I understand it, that if there's anything we might do by way of a conciliator or a mediator, something that can bring the sides together and accelerate a resolution, we are more than willing to do that.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's good to hear, but so far nobody is talking. Words must be followed by actions, Premier.

I was at an anti-strike rally yesterday morning and spoke to hundreds of students. Thousands more are staying at home right now. They need action now, otherwise their semester, their year and their future plans may be a writeoff.

When will the Premier act, and how will he ensure that his action leads to a successful solution?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: This government cherishes our education system, and we have a labour relations record that is second to none. We continue to build on that, to have stable and balanced labour relations.

As the Premier said, we do have assistance that is available in the form of mediators to the parties. We want to make sure that the parties come to the table and can resolve their differences.

We highly respect the collective agreement process. It is the best process. We asked them to double their efforts, to come to the table, so that we can get those students back into the classroom and get everybody working at York University.

1130

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, you will know that the Chiefs of Ontario are meeting this week in Toronto in order to discuss the Mining Act reforms. Clearly, they're saying the extension that you granted them in regard to the consultation is not enough.

If a decision is made at the Harbour Castle inn tomorrow or today that they want more time, will you accept that recommendation and extend the time for consultation beyond what you have done now?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly I am very pleased to report to the House that with the very significant involvement of my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, we were able to come to an agreement with our First Nation partners to extend the consultation period to January 15, 2009. We do think that it is vital to take greater time to build a greater level of support among First Nations so we can bring forward better legislation.

It's important to note that we have some strong support from very significant First Nation leaders. Let me read a quote: "The Ontario government's decision to extend consultations on the Mining Act in order to properly consult with First Nations is further evidence that the government understands the importance of improving relationships with First Nations in Ontario," said Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse of the Chiefs of Ontario. "The understanding and respect that today's decision clearly shows will result in a better future, not only for First Nations, but for Ontario as a whole."

So there's very significant support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, the only place that the First Nations are in agreement with you is that they want the Mining Act changed and they want revenue sharing, clearly, and that's what Chief Angus Toulouse and others are telling you.

The problem is that—let me explain the geography to you—these are landlocked communities. These are communities that have no road access. These are communities that have very poor infrastructure. They need the time to do the consultation with the people within the

communities in order to give you the green light to go ahead with whatever changes are made. You can't do that by January 15. If you're trying to get from Attawapiskat to Fort Severn, you have to come back down to Timmins, go to Thunder Bay and fly back up again.

I'm going to ask you the question: If they come forward today with a recommendation to extend the deadline beyond January 15, will you accept the recommendation and do what's right by the First Nations of this province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The fact is that we have come to an agreement with First Nations on the January 15 consultation period. Indeed, we did extend the consultation period to November 12 and entered into discussions. Again, my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs was very involved in these discussions to extend the deadline.

We are receiving significant support for this. I want to read another quote, if I may, from Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians Grand Chief Randall Phillips: "I am supportive of the recent action taken by Ministers Duguid and Gravelle and the Ontario government to ensure that a more collaborative approach is used to address First Nations' concerns regarding the proposed revisions to the Mining Act... Although it's ... not a perfect process"—we'll acknowledge that—"this opportunity to develop a better working relationship with the Ontario government on issues that directly affect First Nation communities is a step in the right direction."

We're very pleased with the work that has been done. I'm very grateful to my colleagues for their help in the consultation. We're pleased to extend the consultation period.

CONSERVATION

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is home to a number of beautiful parks and significant natural conservation areas. These parks are home to wildlife and are places my constituents can visit to reconnect with nature.

One of these parks is Charlottenburgh park, which is managed by the Raisin Region Conservation Authority. I know that you have a special fondness for this park, for you visited it this summer.

This government has pursued a number of initiatives to strengthen this park and protect natural wildlife. It is my understanding that we are now assisting the Raisin Region Conservation Authority to plant 375 new and varied species of trees within the park. Minister, can you explain the benefits of this initiative?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to say thank you to the member for his complete and utter support for conservation initiatives in his riding, as to many other members who are working with us.

As you know, we have a lot of forests in northern Ontario. We're not so fortunate in southern Ontario. So we've made a commitment to plant 50 million trees, but

obviously we can't do that on our own, so we're working very closely with the Ontario stewardship program. The conservation authorities are absolutely pivotal to helping us manage these 50 million trees in terms of programs; also Trees Ontario and Evergreen.

We all know the benefit of trees. They're healthy, they provide shade, they clean our air; aesthetically, they make a difference. But also, we know that by working with our farming community, we can make a significant difference, and so by working with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, we also are ensuring that we're planting sufficient trees and working through their stewardship program. So I thank—

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

DEFERRED VOTES

PHOTO CARD ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES CARTES-PHOTO

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on third reading of Bill 85.

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

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1140.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia
Albanese, Laura	Dunlop, Garfield	Naqvi, Yasir
Arnott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Fonseca, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Shurman, Peter
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	MacLeod, Lisa	Smitherman, George
Carroll, Aileen	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Chan, Michael	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chudleigh, Ted	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Wilkinson, John
Craitor, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Wilson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Witmer, Elizabeth
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Tabuns, Peter
Gélinas, France	Marchese, Rosario	
Hillier, Randy	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 71; the nays are 10.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion passed. Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome, in the west members' gallery, the member from the 35th and 36th Parliament representing York Mills and the 37th Parliament from Don Valley West, David Turnbull. David, welcome back to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to welcome to this House John and Susan Towndrow from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. They are certainly tireless workers in my riding for many different causes. Welcome.

MEMBER'S WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It seems as though there aren't any other guests to introduce, so I'm going to take this opportunity just to step slightly outside on a point of order: Since we're often separated from our loved ones on special days, I take this opportunity to wish my wife, Joan, a happy 47th wedding anniversary and to tell her that I love her.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We wish you congratulations, and I understand you're taking her to the top of the world for dinner this evening. Enjoy dinner at the CN Tower.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RED RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to rise in the House and make a statement here to support the red ribbon campaign against drunk driving. It was celebrated just recently in Durham region. In fact, on December 4, Durham region's MADD chapter held its kickoff for the 2008 red ribbon campaign. Awareness of the event took place at Williamson GM Dealership in Uxbridge and at the Vos' independent grocer in Port Perry. I'd like to commend Troy Bramley, MADD vice-president and Durham's red ribbon coordinator, President Melissa Langworth, and all the volunteers who were part of the campaign.

MADD Canada reminds drivers that an average of four Canadians are killed and 196 are injured each day due to alcohol and drug-related incidents. The red ribbon campaign continues throughout the holiday season,

which we're all aware of. Their advice is that safe driving must be a year-round commitment, not just at this time of year, and it's a 24/7 commitment. Remember, the responsible thing is: If you drink, don't drive. Interestingly enough, this afternoon there will be a bill introduced by the Minister of Transportation, who will engage in many of these same comments.

So my advice to my constituents and my fellow members here is: If you drink, don't drive, but enjoy the holidays.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm privileged to fight for the interests of thousands of at-risk children being raised by their grandparents.

What I've discovered about our system leaves a very sour taste. For example, when a related person, usually a grandparent, raises a child, they are eligible for about a quarter of the financial support that an unrelated caregiver receives. So if my neighbour steps up to the plate and fosters my grandchild, they'll receive \$900 plus per month per child. I quote some of the criteria from the children's aid society on the Toronto website:

"The daily board rate and coverage for other expenses such as clothing, medical and dental costs, school supplies, recreation etc. are provided to the foster parent to cover the costs of a child or youth's basic needs."

All of these things show "settled intent," but this government uses the phrase "settled intent" under temporary care assistance as a means to disqualify related persons, who receive a meagre \$231 a month for the first child and \$188 for every subsequent child under the temporary care assistance program.

The punitive nature of the new temporary care assistance eligibility criteria is shocking and creates an extremely stressful environment for the children and their grandparents. These caregivers are relieving your system of three quarters of the cost of putting the same children into foster care, yet this government attacks them at every turn.

At a time when there is a critical shortage of foster parents, when this government changes the daily routine at Queen's Park with a claim to make it more family-friendly, it embarks on a full-frontal attack on related family caregivers and their at-risk grandchildren.

The reason behind the government's ongoing—

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

TASTES OF THE HILL FESTIVAL

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I recently attended the town of Richmond Hill's second annual Tastes of the Hill festival. Hundreds of residents gathered at the Richmond Green Sports Centre in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham to indulge in this local, multicultural food festival. Although only two years old, it has quickly become a popular community tradition. Local restaurants, bakeries and stores provided an excellent oppor-

tunity to savour many delicious and diverse samplings—which were literally from soup to nuts—for two good causes: the York Central Hospital fund and Autism Ontario–York region chapter.

The Tastes of the Hill festival demonstrated once again that my constituency is one rich in diversity and great community spirit. I saw first-hand how the participants, their food offerings and the attendees represented many different countries. These included Japan, Italy, Iran, Thailand, China, India and Hungary, each adding its own magic touch to make this festival a great success. More than 40 participating businesses worked hard to prepare the many wonderful dishes, assisting in fundraising activities for charity.

I applaud the efforts of the Tastes of the Hill chairperson, Richmond Hill Regional Councillor Vito Spatafora, and the countless volunteers, local businesses and residents who all participated to make this fundraising celebration such a success. I look forward to the third Tastes of the Hill in Richmond Hill next year.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HALTON

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last Sunday afternoon I was glad to attend a very special new-home dedication for the Walala, Herman, and Kearsy-Smith families in Georgetown. Their three new homes were built by Habitat for Humanity Halton. This past summer, I was one of 1,183 volunteers who, together with Habitat staff, put in some 15,000 hours to build new homes for these deserving families.

Joining me at the dedication ceremony were Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr, Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette and Councillor Jon Hurst. Representing Habitat for Humanity Halton were Ed McMahon, chairman of the board; Kathrin Delutis, executive director; and other members of the board. As I'm sure they would all agree, the ceremony was both emotional and inspiring, as we shared in the excitement of these three families, who will soon enjoy the warmth of a home they can call their own.

Of course, it's also a story with deep and impressive global roots. Habitat for Humanity International has built more than 200,000 homes around the world, providing affordable, decent and safe housing to more than one million people in more than 3,000 communities.

Even more remarkable than the numbers I've given is the philosophy of this organization. It's about giving a hand up, not a handout. It is a partnership, a sharing of dignity, pride and determination, leading to accomplishment. It's about living up to the name of this organization and showing the humanity of our communities.

I know that all members of this House will join me in congratulating Habitat for Humanity Halton on a job well done.

SUSAN RYAN

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is with a heavy heart that I rise today and pay tribute to one of my constituents,

Susan Ryan, a beloved member of the Mississauga community whose life ended before its time.

In Mississauga, everyone knew Sue and everyone loved her. She was enthusiastic about everything that she did. We saw this when she was president of the Mississauga Real Estate Board and in her advocacy for property rights in Ontario. But her enthusiasm was most evident in the charity work she did in Mississauga. Sue volunteered at Interim Place, a shelter for abused women, and was a tireless advocate and fundraiser for Victim Services of Peel, Big Brothers and many local housing projects.

To say that Sue was a leader in our community would be an understatement. She dedicated her life to helping others and is someone who made a difference in the lives of many people.

On behalf of the residents of Mississauga–Brampton South, I would like to express my condolences to Sue's family and her many friends during this very difficult time. Sue's legacy will live on for many years to come.

1510

BRUCE MILLER

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome all the police officers who are here this afternoon from all the different police services, representing the PAO lobby day here at Queen's Park, and I want to thank them for their leadership under their new president, Larry Molyneaux, and their new CEO, Ron Middell.

I was pleased to have a visit this morning from Tim Vaillancourt, of the Midland Police Service, and Jim Christie, the vice-president of the OPPA. I know that Jim is in the audience today, along with Kim Williams from the OPPA. I'm pleased to see them here.

Today I really wanted to take a moment to pay tribute to the former CEO of the PAO, and that's Mr. Bruce Miller, who will be having some celebrations tonight on his retirement from the PAO. Bruce served from 2000 to 2008 in that position.

The membership increased in that time from 12,000 to 31,000 police officers, and in his time he brought in the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the Toronto Police Service under the body of the PAO.

Bruce had a real knack, in his position, to work with all political parties, and I can't tell you how much time Bruce has spent at committee hearings on any bill, whether a private member's bill or a government bill, that affected the policing community.

I personally want to thank Bruce for his work on the ignition interlock and the blood sampling bills that I had put through the Legislature as well.

I wish Bruce all the best, and many years of health and happiness in his retirement.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to express my thanks to the Honourable Dwight Duncan and the Ministry of Finance for the Ajax and Pickering municipal

and Durham regional grants received from the Investing in Ontario Act.

Ajax will benefit from a grant of just over \$4 million, which will go toward the new LEED-certified operations and environment centre, and construction will start this spring. This LEED building is in addition to new Ajax LEED fire hall opened by Ontario Minister Gerretsen last month.

Major road repairs to Ravenscroft are also under way, moving it up for repair by several years with provincial money.

Pickering Mayor Dave Ryan has just hosted his fourth annual Pickering mayor's gala on Saturday, raising money well into six figures, with some major funding again going to our Ajax-Pickering hospital. Mayor Ryan welcomed the province's \$3.9-million allocation, calling it a welcome infusion.

Regional Chair Roger Anderson has graciously accepted Durham region's funding of \$28.4 million to provide regional services in the municipalities, including Ajax and Pickering, with \$12 million allocated to roads and bridges and \$12 million for the Corbett Creek-Pringle Creek sewer plant, \$3.3 million for Durham transit, and \$1.1 million for Fairview seniors lodge.

ST. PETER KNIGHTS

Mr. Phil McNeely: Last week, the St. Peter Knights in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans dominated the National Capital Secondary School Athletics Association's tier 1 senior boys' football championship, downing the South Carleton Storms 32-7 to take the prize. Though they roughed it out in the pouring rain, the play of the Knights' offensive line was outstanding, and it was a great game. The championship is St. Pete's sixth at the NCSSAA since 1997. They won the city championship in 1997, 1998, 2003, 2004, 2005 and now, once again, this year.

The Knights head to Minto Field this Saturday to take on the Kingston Frontenacs in the provincial semi-final. The winner of that game will fight for the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations title. That game will take place here in Toronto, and if my hunch is right, the St. Peter Knights will be playing in that game.

As always, the Knights continue to demonstrate the value and importance of teamwork, perseverance and good sportsmanship, qualities that all honourable members can agree will be assets when the students move forward in their studies and, of course, in life.

I'd like to thank all the volunteers with the St. Peter Knights football team and across my riding of Ottawa–Orléans for their tireless efforts in support of amateur and minor sports.

Congratulations to the entire St. Peter Knights team and head coach Jim Mick for a great game and a well-deserved victory.

I look forward to many victories and, of course, some great football.

RED RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Mr. Khalil Ramal: On November 7, I attended the London chapter of MADD's 2008 red ribbon campaign.

Between November and January every year, people across Ontario are celebrating the holiday season, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving are asking Canadians to pledge their support for safe and sober driving by tying a red ribbon on their vehicles and key chains.

The red ribbon campaign is not only a public awareness initiative, it's also a time to remember the victims of impaired driving. Intervention is one of the key ways to prevent intoxicated driving, and MADD has used the opportunity to teach the young adults of Mother Teresa Catholic high school in London the dangers of drinking and driving. Impaired driving is a serious crime that is not to be tolerated.

Minister Bentley and I showed our support for Mothers Against Drunk Driving alongside representatives from the London police, city officials and the OPP. I would like to thank kindly Allstate Insurance for being the national sponsor for this initiative, and I would like to remind everyone to drink responsibly this holiday season.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et apportant des modifications corrélatives à deux lois modificatives.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I will make a statement during the time allocated for ministerial statements.

LAND TRANSFER TAX AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES DROITS DE CESSIION IMMOBILIÈRE

Mr. Brownell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to amend the Land Transfer Tax Act / Projet de loi 127, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits de cession immobilière.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: This bill amends section 12 of the Land Transfer Tax Act so that when the Minister of Finance sends a notice of assessment or reassessment under this section to an agent or other representative of the assessed person, the minister shall, at the same time, send the notice to the assessed person. This will certainly be a cautionary alert to the assessed person so affected by the Land Transfer Tax Act, and I appreciate the residents of Sunrise Acres in my riding who have brought this to my attention.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise today to make a statement concerning the legislation that has been introduced in the House today. This is not in the statement itself, but I want to pay tribute to all of those who have contributed in some way to this legislation which is, I think, of great significance to the province of Ontario, particularly to those who are among families who have had some tragic circumstances surrounding them and also to those who are what we would refer to as our, I call them stakeholders, but they are advisers in the field of traffic safety in the province, and that includes representatives of our police services who are represented at this House today.

I'm pleased to report that our past legislation has proven effective. The new legislation will improve road safety in Ontario. The citizens of this province are fortunate to have had one of the best safety records in all the whole world. Our roads are among the safest in North America and have been every year, for more than a decade. Our laws and regulatory measures have toughened the province's seat belt, child car seat and booster seat rules. We have targeted street racers and other aggressive drivers and we have delivered needed changes to Ontario's drinking and driving laws. I introduced new legislation a few weeks ago that will, if passed by this Legislature, make it illegal to use hand-held communications and entertainment devices while driving.

1520

Yet, despite all our best efforts, motor vehicle collisions in Ontario still add up to about \$18 billion annually in health care and social costs. Every day, two people are killed and 10 more are seriously injured on Ontario's roads. Many of these collisions are, in fact, preventable. To combat some of the most persistent and dangerous driver behaviours, we need to make drivers understand the consequences.

Today I am introducing new legislation that will, if passed by the Legislature, keep our young drivers safe and get drunk drivers off our roads.

Statistics tell us that teen drivers are three and a half times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision than

drivers aged 30 to 34. Fourteen years ago, Ontario was the first jurisdiction in North America to introduce a comprehensive graduated licensing program. We have learned that inexperienced drivers have higher collision rates and need more time to learn and practise good driving skills that will help them survive a lifetime of driving. Under proposed regulations related to this legislation, we will extend the program from two years to three, to give novice drivers the time they need to get the right skills and to keep them safe. We will also work to keep children and youth safe by extending the existing nighttime teen G2 passenger restriction to an all-day passenger restriction. Teenage G2 drivers have a high rate of collisions when carrying other teenagers. We will restrict teenage G2 drivers from carrying more than one young passenger aged 19 and under at any time during the first year of G2. We will introduce escalating sanctions for repeat violations of graduated licensing system restrictions and convictions that carry demerit points and court-ordered suspensions. There will be a 30-day licence suspension for the first conviction, a 90-day suspension for the second conviction, and a return to the start of G1 for anyone who has a third conviction.

We are making progress when it comes to impaired drivers. Ontario had the lowest impaired driving offence rate in Canada in 2005, the last year for which we have complete statistics: 39% lower than the national average. But drinking and driving collisions still represent about one quarter of all traffic fatalities in Ontario. We must maintain a constant vigilance against drinking drivers. All US states now have zero blood alcohol concentration laws for drivers up to age 21, and these laws are cited as one of the most important reasons for a drop in young driver collisions. Our new legislation will extend the zero blood alcohol concentration requirement that currently applies to all drivers who are 21 or younger. We are going to give the police the tools they need to impound the vehicles of drivers who blow over the legal limit or refuse to take a breath test. Police would also be authorized to impound vehicles without an ignition interlock device when driven by persons who are required to use one. Research suggests that up to three quarters of suspended drivers continue to drive. To help deter this behaviour, we are giving the police the ability to impound the vehicles of more suspended drivers right at roadside.

There are real families that understand too well the painful loss of a loved one whose life was taken due to a collision.

I would like to take a moment once again to acknowledge the presence in the House today of Eleanor McMahon and the Perry and Mulcahy families, who have suffered unimaginable loss. Our deepest sympathies, and I know I speak for all members of the House, go out to these families. Yet, in spite of their pain, each of these families has made courageous efforts to turn their loss into an opportunity to prevent further tragedies on our roads so that others will not have to go through their tragic experience.

That is the hope of this legislation. "Safer roads" is a McGuinty government priority. This proposed legislation will, if passed by this Legislature, keep Ontario at the forefront of road safety. Our legislation and regulations will help keep our young and novice drivers safe. We will give them the right skills and experience they need to survive. Our proposed legislation will keep drinking and suspended drivers off our roads.

I encourage all members to support this legislation.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I am rising today to update members of the House on Exercise Trillium Response 2008, a simulated ice storm in Ontario's northwest. Trillium Response is the single largest disaster response exercise to be held in Ontario in recent memory. It will put Ontario's ability to respond to a major disaster to a very strenuous test.

Disasters are life-altering experiences. We all witnessed the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the tsunami in southeast Asia. If this simulated ice storm were real, it would endanger thousands of lives, shut down roads, knock out communications systems and critical infrastructure, and cause untold damage to the area's economy.

Emergency management is about mitigating the effects of disasters, preparing in case of disaster, responding quickly to save lives, minimizing economic impacts, and speeding up the recovery after a disaster. It is about getting the right people with the right resources to the right places at the right time.

Emergency Management Ontario, the office of the fire marshal and the Canadian Forces have developed a scenario that will test all elements of a rapid-response unit. At its peak, the exercise will involve over 1,500 participants from 40 different organizations, including provincial ministries, federal departments, municipalities, First Nations and non-governmental agencies.

The simulated disaster began last week with a first fictitious heavy snowfall accompanied by freezing rain. Then, events ramped up during the weekend with another, heavier snowfall and even more freezing rain that blanketed the area under a thick coat of ice. For example, the city of Thunder Bay and surrounding communities declared an emergency after being hit by over 40 centimetres of snow and 20 centimetres of freezing rain in under 48 hours. As the consequences of the simulated storm pileup, the exercise scenario will escalate, with other assets and resources, including one of the Canadian Forces' giant C-17 cargo airplanes, being pressed into action.

The twists and turns of this simulated disaster still need to remain confidential so that we can test the full effectiveness of our emergency response capacity.

The exercise will also test for the first time emergency response initiatives that the McGuinty government has introduced over the last year. That includes our Supply Chain and Logistics Coordination Alliance, a rapid-

response network of private sector companies working with the province of Ontario to ensure critical supplies are received in communities within hours of an emergency. I also hope that Trillium Response will be a reminder to the people of Ontario that we all have a personal stake in being prepared. The simple fact is that every Ontario household should have an emergency survival kit that would allow a family to be self-sufficient for the first 72 hours of a disaster.

1530

Emergency preparedness is only as strong as its weakest link. In preparing for an emergency, manuals and computer models can only take us so far. You need to get the boots and equipment on the ground in realistic situations to ensure we are prepared should a real emergency strike. That is what we are doing with Exercise Trillium Response.

I wish to thank all our partners in this historic exercise: the provincial ministries, the federal departments, the Canadian Forces, municipalities, First Nations, Confederation College in Thunder Bay, and non-governmental organizations. Together with our partners, Ontario is contributing to make Ontarians safer and more resilient in their homes, in their communities and across the whole province.

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

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: I can only say, right at the outset, that if there is anything that can be done to make our roadways safer, we are clearly in support of that. I think the record speaks for itself, if you look clearly at the work done by our transportation critic, Mr. Klees, who was unable to be here today. That's been his theme: making our roads safer. In fact, in complimenting the minister today—and he's quite generous in his compliments—he would thank Mr. Klees for taking the lead on the street racing issue some time ago, but more recently, in this legislation introduced today.

I can say on the record that a letter was sent by our leader, John Tory, after working with Mr. Klees, to Premier McGuinty on September 5, 2008, and this followed our leader, John Tory, speaking with the Mulcahy family and was considerate of their concerns about trying to take some action as soon as possible to make our roads safer. This is a reaction, a response to that. I'm a bit surprised that it wasn't rolled into the current bill, Bill 118, because that bill in itself is a Highway Traffic Act amendment, of which I, myself, am very supportive.

I would say that this seems like a bit of a photo op in some respects—the timing of it is—and I'm suspecting that we should have more hearings on it. I think this is what I would call for: to have public hearings and thorough dialogue, because there is some content within the bill that needs to be clarified.

In fact, I would put on the record as well that in the clippings this morning I was pleased to read that one of

the students, Trevor Mayoh, who is the president of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and student leader at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, acknowledged the benefit of the legislation that may help in managing drivers' risk, but he believes that the proposed changes unfairly target youth. "It's looking at a problem," he says, "and going about solving it in a completely wrong way and a discriminatory way as well"—targeting young people. There are standards there on the blood alcohol issue as well, which are different than the general rule of .08.

So we're also concerned about the restrictions on the passengers in the vehicle. This could have influences for designated drivers, if young people are out socializing. It could affect young people who work. Some of the penalties here are a bit stiff. If they lost their licence for a minor Highway Traffic Act violation, they may not be able to get around, or in fact could lose their job. So I think that hearings on this will solve some of those small issues that we're raising.

Again, I want to remain committed to doing anything possible to make our roads safer in Ontario. I want to refer to the correspondence that I've addressed by our leader, John Tory, to the Premier, and to the work done by our critic Frank Klees. That's evidence that we're supportive. At the same time, it should be fairness for all. There should be one rule for all, and that's the fairness part of this bill. There needs to be a full debate, and I'm sure we will see that around the province.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'll just take a moment to comment on the comments made by the minister on Exercise Trillium Response 2008. We know that these disasters hit periodically in different jurisdictions around the world, and I think it's just good planning that we, as legislators, as municipal politicians and community leaders, make sure that those resources are in place to be able to accommodate any kind of disaster that would, in fact, occur.

I do want to thank the minister for at least acknowledging today the federal government. Usually, when he's up making comments he's criticizing the federal government for something. It is nice to know that the Canadian Forces were involved in this exercise. I think it's important that the Canadian Forces, which are a huge resource for Canada in times of emergency response, are acknowledged.

I think also we have to say once again that you never know when one of these things is going to happen. We think of the ice storm a few years ago, and we think of some of the floods we've had. When you think about the size of our province, we all have to be prepared.

I thank and congratulate all those who have made this response a success, and hopefully they'll never to have use it. That's what we're here for, but if we're prepared it's to everyone's betterment.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm pleased that this Legislature is responding to what I think is an issue that needed to be dealt with for some time in the province of Ontario, and that is the issue of how we're able to try to fix some of the problems that we have around making sure that our highways are safe and that young people—and older people quite frankly, my age and older—are responsible when it comes to their actions behind the wheel.

First of all, I want to say, as the critic for the New Democratic caucus, that we support the zero-tolerance-of-alcohol provisions in this legislation. We think that is a really good idea. It's something that we've long advocated for along with other people in this province, and we think that is definitely a step in the right direction.

That we have zero tolerance on the first offence of people who are speeding is a good idea. I think we need to have a bit of a discussion on this as a committee because I'm a big believer that you need to get this type of legislation into committee so that we can hear from people who may have opinions that are different from ours but may have some valuable advice in order to guide this Legislature towards doing what is the right thing.

One of things I want to talk about—and this is a little bit difficult because the Mulcahy family has had a tragic loss, as other people in this province had losses where young people have been killed behind the wheel or as passengers in those cars. But somehow or other, and I said this out in the media scrums, we can't legislate everything. There comes a point where individuals have to take responsibility. I know this is tough to say in this type of debate, but it's something that needs to be said: that we as legislators can't always be trying to legislate away what problems in our society are by legislation that comes through this House. We need to think about how we're able to make that happen.

I'll give one example. I think it was actually under the Conservative government. It might have been our own; I can't remember, but one of the provisions was that the owner of the vehicle be responsible for whom they lend the car to. Again, in the context of the Mulcahy family, I understand that's very difficult. I'm a parent, I'm a grandfather. I don't want to minimize the loss that this family has gone through. But we need to somehow or other—and sometimes we're totally out of control as parents, and I understand that—find ways of making sure that we are responsible as the owners of the vehicles, make sure that we take our responsibility when it comes to who is going to be driving our cars. I'm a parent. I've got two wonderful daughters, 31 and 36—we're lucky—and a grandson who's not driving yet; he's only two and a half months old. But it's sometimes tough because your kid comes to you, you're think they're responsible, and then they go out and do the wrong thing.

The next part becomes driver training. Maybe one of things that we've got to do through this bill is to take a look at how we prepare young people towards the responsibility of driving. I use the word "responsibility"

quite purposely because driving is not a right. It is not a right, and people should understand that driving is not a rite of passage at age 16. It's a privilege that we have as people in this society, and we need to make sure that young drivers at age 16, but quite frankly 51-year-olds like me, 30-year-olds and 75-year-olds, understand that this is not a right but a responsibility. We need to do all that we can to, first of all, make sure that the public understands that when you're driving a vehicle that's 2,000 to 5,000 pounds, it's an instrument that you can kill somebody with. It's a lethal weapon in the wrong circumstances. As drivers, we have to take our responsibilities, and that is everything from zero tolerance around alcohol, not using cellphones when we're driving in our car and talking on our BlackBerries—something that I stopped doing some years ago because of an incident that happened to me. Thank God nothing happened—and all those other distractions that happen when we're driving cars.

1540

Maybe one of the things that we need to take a look at in this legislation is how we can strengthen the driver training system so that drivers who are new—and I don't care if that person is 16 years old or 40 years old; the issue is the same—as part of their training, become very keenly aware that driving is not a right, it's a responsibility, and that we, as responsible citizens, aged 16 or 40, have to take that responsibility seriously. I think it needs to be incorporated within our training system. I would argue that's one of the things that we need do, to take a look at the whole issue of the curriculum around training.

The other part is—and this is the final part that I'll end on—why do people break the law? We can write all the best laws we want in this province. They break the law because they think they can get away with it. It's an issue of, maybe there are not enough police on our roads. I know there's a limited amount of things that we can do in this Legislature, but it is an issue.

If the person gets behind the wheel and drinks and drives, if the person speeds on our highway or the person does reckless driving as a result of what—it's not just the thrill of driving the car fast or the truck fast; it's also the fear of not being caught. One of the things that we need to instill within people is that, yes, there are fines and there are penalties for bad driving, but there is a real possibility you can be caught. And we need to look at new technologies in order to assist the police to better patrol our highways. Maybe we've got to get into a debate about how we use some of these technologies to get there.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to read this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It was sent to me by a

number of individuals, particularly a constituent of mine, Cynthia Stopforth, from Longford Drive—actually, a neighbour of mine. 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 very pleased to sign and to support this petition, and to ask page Swapnil to carry it for me.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’ve signed this.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

“Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

“Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren.”

I support this petition wholeheartedly and sign my name to it and give it to the page.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has launched a blatant attack on our province’s grandparents raising their at-risk grandchildren by cutting off access to the temporary care assistance program;

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

“That the Legislature call on the minister to overturn her July 2008 directives outlining the temporary care assistance program and grant all grandparents raising their at-risk grandchildren access to this much-needed financial support.”

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition referencing the preservation of the Ajax-Pickering hospital.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

"That the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) and the Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) board of directors review the Rouge Valley Health System makeup and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

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

I shall affix my signature to this and pass it to Sarah.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current system, practice and arrangement of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically, the 'near monopoly' of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario; and

"Whereas The Beer Store 'near monopoly' is controlled by 'for-profit, foreign-owned companies' and these companies are not accountable to the people of Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

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

"That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store, thereby allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario."

I have signed this.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from two outstanding citizens in the Lawrence Park area of Toronto, George and Judith Teichman. It's on behalf of the petition to recognize June 4 as Tom Longboat Day in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tom Longboat, a proud son of the Onondaga Nation, was one of the most internationally celebrated athletes in Canadian history;

"Whereas Tom Longboat was voted as the number one Canadian athlete of the 20th century by Maclean's magazine for his record-breaking marathon and long-distance triumphs against the world's best;

"Whereas Tom Longboat fought for his country in World War I and was wounded twice during his tour of duty;

"Whereas Tom Longboat is a proud symbol of the outstanding achievements and contributions of Canada's aboriginal people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize June 4 as Tom Longboat Day in Ontario."

I support this petition from the people of Lawrence Park and I affix my name to it.

1550

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: "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;

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

"Whereas section 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."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Looking forward to the petition from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I have a petition here that has been sent to my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, on whose behalf I am reading it. It is from Deb Duval of Nesbitt Drive in Sudbury. It is addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and it reads as follows:

"Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

“Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

“Whereas no safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

“We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario.”

On behalf of my seatmate, the member of Niagara Falls, I’m pleased to signed this petition and to ask page Jacqueline to carry it for me.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: You’ll be glad to know that this is the last of the petitions I’ll be issuing, since Bill 50 has been passed by this House yesterday. It’s in support of the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, Bill 50.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the OSPCA Act has not been updated since 1919;

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50”—which they’ve done—“entitled the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008....”

That’s the last petition, and it shows petitions work. I’ll affix my name to it.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: It’s my day to be reading petitions on behalf of my colleagues. This one I join with my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora. It is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario. 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 ... entitled An Act to proclaim April 2 Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario.”

I’m pleased to sign this and to recognize the contributions of the Polish community in sending it to me, and to ask page Brittney to carry it for me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Are there any further petitions the members wish to read? The member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: Sorry, I thought I had the last one, but I have one more from the people from Brooke Avenue and Fairlawn Avenue in the city of Toronto, in regard to support of Bill 50, the animal welfare act.

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

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends.”

I support this petition, and this is the last one. Sorry.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALIFIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR ONTARIANS ACT, 2008

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2008, on the motion for third reading of Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l’accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la

santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to this bill. It is not a particularly long bill; in fact, it's one single page. I'll read from it to let the public know what it says. It says the following:

"Duty of college

"2.1. It is the duty of the college to work in consultation with the minister to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals."

That's the extent of the bill.

It's informative because of what it says. It is the duty of the college—and that is the regulated health professions—to work in consultation with the minister, and what it's really saying is that they have not been doing that in the past and that there was an obligation on governments, this one in particular, to state in the act that those regulatory bodies have to work with the government. It suggests that they haven't been working with the government in the past and that the government has to rely on a bill to get them to do what it suggests they should be doing. I found that interesting. It suggests that in the past the government may have articulated a position with the regulatory bodies, and it's possible that those regulatory bodies said no. It's really hard to believe that that's the case, because I know that the College of Physicians and Surgeons has been increasing the number of IMGs, international medical graduates, over a period of time. They've done that under the Tories, probably under some duress, to be sure, and they've done it under the Liberals, because we've seen a number of increases in the past. I think we went from 40 under the old Tory regime to approximately 250 today under the Liberal regime. That's why the Liberals can say, "We've multiplied IMGs by hundreds"—simply because they went from 40 to 250. It's not a whole lot, because there are thousands of international medical graduates. Still, when you consider where they were to where they have gotten to, it's a serious increase, I have to admit. The College of Physicians and Surgeons obviously has been responding to pressure from government, so I am puzzled as to why we need to put it in the form of a bill. I wanted to say that, because I found it intriguing.

It does say to those regulatory bodies, "From now on, I don't want to have to tell you, because now it's your duty to do what we tell you." Okay, that's fine. I think it's a useful thing. If regulatory bodies have been protecting their professions and have decided that they would block new entrants for whatever reason, I think it is the duty of government to oblige these regulatory bodies—that it is their duty to respond to governments when they tell them. I think it's a good thing.

1600

Having listened in part to the parliamentary assistant when she gave her speech, however, I gathered that her push was to get more international medical graduates to

be practising, rather than the other regulated health professionals. That was my sense, and it was the sense of our critic as well, that that's what the government is pushing. They're pushing more international medical graduates than they are the other professions. That's what I got from the speech made by the parliamentary assistant from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. If that was not the case, perhaps she or others could tell me that I and others might have been wrong in this impression.

We say to the government, we do have to focus on the other regulated professions and not just the international medical graduates, for a variety of good reasons.

By the way, in a related way, I want to say that we do have a lot of international medical graduates in this country. I know that many are in the US and Europe as well. I do have to state a concern. They have come to this country on the promise that they would get jobs, and for the last 15 years they haven't been getting those jobs. How sad that is. I have attacked the federal government on a number of occasions because it was their responsibility to bring people and then to tell them, "Here's how you get the job for which you were trained and which you thought you would get."

For years, I've been attacking the federal government, both Liberal and Conservative—the Liberal and Conservative governments, for a long time—because it was wrong of them to bring them over and then we find these people doing jobs that demean their abilities. That's one point I wanted to make.

The other point for me is, why bring these medical doctors to this country, where we don't use them, as opposed to perhaps not recruiting them from the very countries where they're desperately needed? These African countries—and it's not just limited to Africa that I speak of. There's one country, the name of which I can't recall, where 60% of the medical profession left that particular country to go all over the world. Yes, to Canada and yes, to Europe. How depressing, the idea that we recruit them, don't give them the job and take them away from a country that desperately needs them. It's a depressing, depressing image.

I wanted to make that point because I think we have to be very, very careful in following the ethical international recruitment guidelines in a way that simply is respectful of those individuals and is respectful of those countries that desperately need those very qualified individuals.

It speaks to the fact that we need a made-in-Ontario solution. We can't just rely on getting these international medical graduates as a way of filling the void in this province. It suggests that we need to do a heck of a lot more in our own province to make sure that we have the graduates here that are needed.

Yes, as a matter of fairness, more and more of these international medical graduates who are here should be able to practise. And yes, as a matter of justice for our own communities, we have to have a better plan that speaks to how we graduate more and more of our own doctors, especially given the shortage of doctors across this province.

But we need more than doctors. I don't have the quote in my hand, but if I can find it, I will make the point that Dr. Rachlis—here it is. Michael Rachlis, an expert on health care in Canada, was recently quoted as saying, "Even if the numbers of doctors doubled, unless we were to change the structure in which they work, Canadians would still have inadequate access."

I remind our Liberal friends that it isn't just a matter of getting more medical doctors—although that's a very useful thing to do, especially in some areas where we don't have doctors—but that we have to expand the field to other professions.

By the way, I'm reminded, as we talk about the need for medical doctors, that there is in the contract that they have to sign a line that says they're going to have to go and practise for five years in the underserved communities. I've got to tell you, that's a discriminatory practice. It's coercion of the worst kind. We're saying, "We need you, but you won't be able to practise here; you've got to go to Timbuktu to practise."

I don't know whether my Liberal friend here is laughing because he agrees with me or laughing because he disagrees. I don't know which.

We don't force regular medical doctors to go practise in the underserved areas. We say to those other poor suckers that we just roped in because we desperately need them, "You've got to go where they desperately need you." I've got to tell you, my fine Liberal colleagues, that is highly discriminatory.

I am told by one doctor who came to see me in my office that even the former Minister of Health said as much in a meeting with other international medical graduates, and he assured me there was more than one individual who heard it. And I thought, "Why would George"—I mean the Minister of Health—"say that and not do something about it?" Did he hope that the other minister would solve it rather than he who declared this to be a discriminatory practice? You could check with some of your Liberal colleagues and see what views they have on this, but you should look at that.

There's got to be a better way to compensate doctors or to reward them as a way of making sure they go where they want to be, because at the end of those five years, assuming you accept the practice of discrimination, they can say, "I'm going back to where I really wanted to be." Then you've got the same problem all over again, because people have to be in areas that they want to practise in. You just can't coerce them. It's just not a very useful practice, I suggest to my Liberal colleagues.

Beyond the idea that we need to get more doctors into the field and that colleges have a duty to work with the government, the government has a duty on its own to see what else it needs to do, and I pointed out the made-in-Ontario solution and finding ways to get more doctors into the system.

Secondly, work to make sure that we have more midwives, who are desperately sought out by many. You'd be hard pressed to find a midwife, if you happen to be pregnant and are looking for one, because there aren't that many, and those who are practising are always

practising. It would be lovely to have more midwives, given the need and the desire by women and men and those families that desperately want midwives as the caregivers for the pregnancy of that particular woman.

We are also lagging behind in the training of nurses—lagging behind. I say to you that Ontario has the second-lowest number of nurses per capita in Canada. That's not a proud legacy to leave as a Liberal government. You should be looking at that. McGuinty as well delayed the hiring of 9,000 nurses, and only last month he said we're going to have to slow that down, on top of which we include the many nurses who have been laid off from other hospitals because hospitals simply do not have enough money to keep those essential workers. Not only did Monsieur McGuinty, the Premier, slow down the hiring of nurses—and, by the way, we only have in this province 800 nurse practitioners to 23,000 physicians. So we slowed down the number of nurses that we have. I can't believe that a government would consider that a very useful strategy. Nurses and nurse practitioners are an important part of an integrated service that you provide to our community. So we can slow down the progress as we build new communities by taking such actions.

We have slowed down as well the creation of the new community health centres because of the economic concerns. We know that these community health centres are an essential part of primary care in all of the communities in Ontario. At a time when we need more of them, we have slowed down the number of those community health centres because the government, presumably, finds itself strapped or is not competently dealing with it in order to get more of them on stream where they are needed, in our community. So we have to look at how we bring in more nurse practitioners, health promoters, physiotherapists, dietitians, pathologists and the like, as part of a health human resource strategy that says health belongs not just to the doctor, but to so many others that provide an essential service to our communities.

1610

I want to speak as well, in the time that remains, to prevention. I am thinking about diabetes, because that was an issue that was debated just last month when the Liberals introduced a Diabetes Month bill. I thought to myself, "What a useful thing to do." Of course, people should be aware that diabetes is a growing problem. We have one million people who suffer from diabetes; and it's a growing number. It will grow by 1.3 million in the next couple of years. So it's a serious issue because it brings serious health problems to individuals who have diabetes, and if it's not well managed, some people have leg amputations as a result of it, some people have kidney failure and need dialysis, and some people's eyes fail as a result.

It's horrible; and rather than looking at what we can do to prevent it, we simply spend the money to treat the problem—diabetes 2 in particular. We spend about \$8 billion treating diabetes, and I think we spent \$5 million on prevention. It's absolutely nuts. It's the wrong way to deal with an issue that is preventable in most

cases. So as I think about that, what is the government doing about prevention? Why do we spend so much on treating problems rather than preventing them?

That's why, as a critic for education, I say that we need more physical education teachers in the classroom, not just telling teachers they should be jumping up and down with their kids for 20 minutes. We need physical education teachers who are specialized, who know what to do with students vis-à-vis their health. We know that 65% of our schools across Ontario don't have a physical education teacher. We need more community centres, not fewer. We need to have more recreation centres across the province, more child care, so families have a place where they can take their kids and the like, just to point out a couple of examples that say what it is that we should be doing by way of prevention. Simply telling people, "Oh, by the way, diabetes is a serious problem," isn't an answer. Yes, of course, we have to manage it better, but we should prevent it before it becomes a problem. I don't think we do enough of that, in my experience in this place for 18 years.

Remember, the Conference Board of Canada report ranked Ontario's health care system fifth of 10 provinces. We're in middle of the pack; again, not another proud legacy that you want to be connected to. So spending is one part of it. Spending more sometimes is not the right answer; we have to spend it more wisely. Spending just on doctors isn't the right answer either. We have to look at the broad field of other professionals who take care of people's needs. We've got to deal with poverty, because we know poverty causes a whole lot of problems, particularly for poor people and aboriginal young men, women and families. If we don't deal with that, we're going to create an ongoing, perpetual cycle of, yes, poverty, and yes, medical ill-health, leaving more and more of our people in a dire physical state, allowing governments to find more and more of the resources that we don't have to treat the problem rather than making sure that we're preventing it.

So all of that is to say this is a nice little bill, and I get to speak to what it actually does, which is to say, "It is the duty of the college to work in consultation with the minister to ensure, as a matter of public interest, that the people of Ontario have access to adequate numbers of qualified, skilled and competent regulated health professionals." I want to say that I support it. For what it does, I support it. It doesn't do much more, and perhaps Liberals might argue it wasn't intended to. It doesn't speak about the other health professionals, at least not from what I heard from the other Liberals that spoke to it, and maybe they will today, or maybe another day. Maybe it's intended to be unfolded in the good passage of time. Who knows? But as it is, it's hard to oppose it. So I wanted to say I support this bill with all of the suggestions that New Democrats have made, with our critic and myself and other speakers who will be speaking, including my colleague from Parkdale-High Park, who shall speak shortly, assuming that there are few other speakers who will stand up to speak.

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

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to comment on the comments made by my colleague opposite.

Bill 97 imposes an obligation which falls upon all regulatory health professions—absolutely—but the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario stands alone as one of the colleges that needs to make additional changes to break down the barriers. The work that I was asked to undertake on behalf of the government was specifically with respect to medical doctors. No doubt there continues to be work to do on behalf of all the professions, and this bill puts in place that foundation for them to do that work. I do want to point out that many of the other professions have gone a long way to putting in place bridging programs, programs with respect to integrating foreign-trained professionals in their areas, but the College of Physicians and Surgeons, as the regulatory body, is the body responsible for setting entry to practice requirements and registering physicians in Ontario. It is the body that determines who of those who have been trained elsewhere around the world will be eligible to practise in Ontario. Whether that person resides somewhere else or resides here at the instance, it is the CPSO that is the sole conduit through which that individual will gain entry into the profession of medicine. It is for that very reason that since the introduction of this bill we've been working hard with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to break down barriers.

As I've said previously, in a few short days, as of December 1, changes will be made and allow entry for those individuals practising in other provinces and in the United States. There is more work to do. That work continues. Bill 97 sets a foundation to allow that work to go on in the years ahead, as it should.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member from Toronto was eloquent and succinct.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Trinity-Spadina. That's Toronto, isn't it? Well, the member from Trinity-Spadina, of course, was succinct. You know, you can trace this problem back to his government, actually, when Bob Rae reduced the number of medical students that were allowed in Ontario by 10%, although not until 1993, I think. That 10% isn't a huge number, but it was enough to tip the balance. Once you get behind the curve, it takes a tremendous amount to increase that. We increased it, I think, 15% in the late 1990s; we increased it another 10% or 12% at a later date. I think our overall increase in medical students was something like 35% under our eight years of government. Even that wasn't enough to catch up to the demands of the medical profession in Ontario. It's a moving curve.

I liked his comments—I find that I'm always a little worried when I start agreeing with the NDP, but I liked his comments about the system that we are in. His government wasn't able to change that system very much. Our government, over eight years, was not able to change

that system very much. We moved forward, I think, towards a system that would be more responsive to the needs of the community, but it's a huge, huge ministry, the Ministry of Health, and in order to change the way it operates takes a monumental effort over a good deal of time. That consistency hasn't been there as governments have changed. So, hopefully, as we move down the road we'll get more doctors, better doctors who will operate in a system that responds to the needs of Ontarians.

1620

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to comment upon my colleague from Trinity–Spadina, most eloquent of speakers, and certainly I look forward to maybe a comment or two on this bill.

As he said, it's a very small bill. It's a baby step where a quantum leap is required in terms of the greying of Ontario and the baby boomers getting older. We know that this is a crisis waiting to happen unless we really revamp the way we look at health care in this province.

What this bill speaks to, which I think is somewhat strange, is, in very dramatic terms, what it doesn't say as well as what it does say. It seems to imply that the conversation has broken down between the government and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and it takes a bill to begin the conversation again. I didn't realize, I don't think we on this side of House realized, that things were that bad.

Having said that, now that they've moved to make things better—not a bad idea as a first step. So much more needs to be done—far, far more, and not just about doctors. As my colleague pointed out very eloquently, it should also be about nurses; it should also be about midwives. You have to register for a midwife now at the time of conception, just about, to be able to guarantee one. It's not just about midwives. It's about community health centres where we have nurse practitioners. It's about a whole new way of looking at health. It's about prevention.

We need to do this sooner rather than later because if we think the bill is great now, just imagine in 10 years. One can see by the difference in budget between health promotion and health where this government is going. It's not interested in health promotion; it's interested in curing the sickness after the sickness occurs—and even there we're falling short. It's not only about diabetes; it's about so much more. I'm happy to speak more about this.

Again, I applaud the member from Trinity–Spadina for his thoughtful and eloquent engagement in this issue.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I do agree with the member from Trinity–Spadina when he talked about the social, moral obligation that we have not to take doctors away from developing countries and to be very careful about going down that road.

I do agree with him, also, that health care is more than just about doctors and hospitals, and that's why our government—I know Minister Smitherman was the first

minister in over a decade to increase funding to community health centres. We've got 55 new satellites opening across the province. We also have family health teams—hundreds of millions of dollars. There's a new concept of family health teams which is very important, because it's not just doctor-centred. We also increased funding for midwives, because midwives are a critical component of women's health. Also, we've created a new type of doctor's assistant, which is going to be able to get new doctors coming on stream. And in diabetes there's a whole new regime put in place, with a multi-million-dollar investment announced by the minister in the new diabetic registry, to track and to treat diabetics and to ensure that type 2 diabetics get the preventative strategies in order to ensure that they stay out of hospitals.

There are many challenges in health care, and this is one part of it. But I totally agree with the member from Trinity–Spadina that sometimes we are too doctor-centred. We all love our doctors and need our doctors, but we need to look at lifestyle, we need to look at preventive health, and we need to look at getting the proper guidance at a very young age in terms of what we eat and how we exercise, as he mentioned. These are very important things in terms of the whole spectrum, but this is one key part of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Trinity–Spadina has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank all of the members who made their interventions.

I really do believe we're not spending enough on prevention; I really do. Government members can say all they want, and I think sometimes we've all failed at this as governments. We're not focused on what we could do to create better health in our society. We spend so much money on treatment. I just find it's the wrong thing to do, and we keep doing it. I know you can point to some little things that you're doing as a government. I don't want to just be critical of this government, because I think many governments have been at fault as well, but when I give you the number of \$8 billion that we spend treating diabetes versus, if I recall, only \$5 million that we spend on prevention, it should tell you something. I say this as a member of this Legislature: There's a disconnect; it's wrong. If we could be neutral as politicians, we should all be saying there's something wrong with that.

We've got to look at poverty and health. Everyone knows that if you're poor, you're going to have a lot of health problems. Study after study tells you that, yet rather than dealing with the issue of poverty, we're going to spend billions of dollars treating those poor people. It doesn't make any sense.

Yes, we support this measure. If it takes this kind of bill to get the regulatory bodies to loosen up a bit, God bless. But we've got to look at the real problems that we have in our society, and unless we do that, we're just going to waste a whole lot of money treating a disease instead of dealing with it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Speaker: I'd like to move a motion for unanimous consent without notice regarding tonight's late show.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there unanimous consent for the member for Halton to move a motion with respect to the late show tonight? Agreed.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I move a motion that tonight's late show be moved to tomorrow night.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Halton is moving a motion to ask that the late show that was scheduled for tonight be done tomorrow night. Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Hon. Michael Chan: It's my pleasure today to rise before you to talk about the importance of and my support for Bill 97, the Increasing Access to Qualified Health Professionals for Ontarians Act.

First, I'd like to applaud both the former and the current Ministers of Health and Long-Term Care for proposing this important and timely bill, along with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Laurel Broten, for her extensive Report on Removing Barriers for International Medical Doctors, on which Bill 97 is based.

This issue is very closely related to my ministry. As you know, many of those internationally trained medical doctors are relatively new to this country. We call them newcomers. Serving newcomers to the fullest extent is the mandate of my ministry.

I want to share a story with you. Back in June, this summer, I was in the Ottawa area attending a bridge training program. There were 15 attendees for this program. All of them are internationally trained medical doctors. When 15 internationally trained doctors are available to meet with a politician at 10 o'clock on a weekday morning, you might suspect that something is not working to perfection. One individual told me that she was unable to get a job, even as a hospital custodian, because she was a doctor; she's overqualified. Another individual told me that on her flight to Canada to become a permanent resident, a fellow passenger had a heart attack, and she was called upon to save the life of this particular individual, which she did. That's the fortunate part. The unfortunate part was that when her plane landed on Canadian soil, she was no longer considered a qualified doctor.

I see Bill 97 as an opportunity to put an end to wasted human potential in a field that desperately needs the help. If passed, it has the potential to work hand in hand with the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act brought forward by this government in 2006 and passed in 2007. The purpose of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act was to ensure that the skills, expertise and experience of foreign-trained professionals, including internationally trained doctors and health professionals, are properly utilized.

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Under the leadership of our Fairness Commissioner, Dr. Jean Augustine, we have made tremendous progress. So far, the Office of the Fairness Commissioner has developed guidelines for fair registration practices, submitted a report on the study of registration practices, released its first annual report back in the summer, and set up a framework for conducting audits. When the com-

missioner's mandate is fully completed, Ontario regulators will have a fair, open and accountable registration process, meaning a clean assessment of academic credentials, a timely response to all applications, and reasonable fees.

Bill 97, if passed, will ease the way for internationally trained doctors to practise in the province. It will enable the government to work with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to amend regulations under the Medicine Act to create a number of opportunities for internationally trained medical doctors. It will streamline the registration process for doctors already practising elsewhere in Canada, in the USA, or in other countries with a comparable standard. It will also provide internationally trained doctors with transitional licensing that recognizes that many doctors can come here and begin practising with limited supervision.

The government will also be able to enhance existing programs and processes to provide a timelier and efficient assessment process for internationally trained doctors. They will be able to enhance both training and orientation programs.

We will be able to provide expanded access to individualized support for doctors trained in other systems and provide them with cultural and language education, mentorship or hands-on training. In cases where international medical graduates are not likely to get a job as a doctor, we will assist them and transition them to work in the health care system.

Bill 97, if passed, will reaffirm to Ontario's 23 regulated health professional colleges that access to health care is a matter of public interest. This bill does not place sole responsibility for access on the regulatory colleges. Rather, it acknowledges the vital role they play in helping us to implement solutions to the growing supply needs in our health care system. For that, I want to re-assure my support of Bill 97.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to take my minute and a half or so to speak about community health centres and their vital importance—in my riding, I have two: Parkdale Health and Four Villages—and hold out that model as perhaps a direction we can go that will help us with the health care dilemma we have in this province. I know Bill 97 is a first step, a baby step. We've said we support it; no questions there. The question is, what after Bill 97?

Right now, we have 23,000 medical doctors in Ontario and only 800 nurse practitioners. We all know the community health care example, or we should. That is an example where doctors, first of all, work on salary, where nurse practitioners do many of the jobs that doctors have traditionally done but don't need to do, and where dietitians or nutritionists, physiotherapists, psychologists and others—a host, including social workers—work together to solve the health needs of communities. That is the model that works in Quebec.

Now, the question is, why is Quebec so much further ahead in the delivery of health than we are in Ontario? Perhaps for the same reason they're further ahead on day-

care. You can get daycare for \$7 a day in Quebec. Don't tell me that doesn't have an effect on children's health—it does.

It's not just about the money from the federal government; it's about the political will. We would love to see the political will that would bring in a daycare program here, the political will that would look to the expansion of community health centres as a way of approaching medicine that costs less, delivers better medical health, and recognizes the contribution of nurse practitioners, nurses and other medical personnel as well as doctors.

So just a suggestion for the government: After Bill 97, look at community health centres, please.

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

Mr. Kuldip Kular: It is a great honour to speak on Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

I'm an internationally trained medical graduate. I moved to this country in 1974. I know how internationally trained medical practitioners feel when they're not able to get into their own profession.

It took me almost a year before I was able to get into a residency program at Dalhousie University in Halifax. When I got into the residency program, I felt great. I was able to train for two, three years and then move to a Canadian hospital, into the Canadian health system. Then I was able to start practising, first in eastern Canada, in New Brunswick. Later on, I moved to the great city of Brampton.

Bill 97, if passed, will not only help internationally trained medical doctors to get into their own profession, but they would be able to get into the health care delivery professions where they can be helping the people of this province so that they can get the kind of care they deserve. Definitely, it will help us to transform our health care system from sick care to healthy care.

I think this bill should be fully supported by all sides of the Legislature of this province.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This bill is a one-page bill, so there's not much in it to disagree with, and it will probably get all-party support, I would expect, but it's one that perhaps doesn't go quite far enough.

In this case, I would agree with the government—which is, again, perhaps a rare experience—that health care does need changing in this province, and perhaps small steps are the best way to go.

When introducing change, it's always a difficult concept to get people to embrace change. People get comfortable in the system they're in, even though in our system of health care we have doctor shortages; we have long lineups for critical operations; we have lineups for treatment of debilitating diseases. That just shouldn't happen.

However, if you come in and introduce large changes that are aimed at correcting these inequities or these problems in our system, all too often you get tremendous pushback from various sectors of our society, including the people who run our hospitals. Those pushbacks are not a healthy thing to have taking place in any system, including our health care system. For that reason, I think that small changes, although we need many, many of them, are a good thing to do, and continue to do aggressively over a period of time.

Certainly the shortage of doctors is a problem that is paramount to the system, obviously, but it isn't the only one. The system itself needs changing. Even if we had an adequate number of doctors, it would be very questionable as to whether those doctors could do an adequate job of health care given the system that we have in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Seeing none, I'll return to the Minister of Citizenship, who has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank my colleague from Parkdale–High Park for her comments and my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and my colleague from Halton.

I want to state that this act, Bill 97, is addressing internationally trained medical doctors, but in my speech I mentioned 23 other health professions. My ministry is also looking after the 37 regulated professions. So yes, we are working hard in other professions as well. Hopefully one day we will work on the community centres you talked about.

My colleague from Bramalea, I could feel your hardship when you were here. But then, by having you speak to the House today, maybe those hardships in the future will be lessened, that we are actually progressing to try to turn around more internationally trained doctors able to practise in this province or practise in Canada.

To from my colleague from Halton, a colleague mentioned how the previous government had 40 internationally trained doctors. We have about 300. While the number is many more, the number does not actually represent a huge number. So yes, we are quite prudent in changing or advancing this number of internationally trained doctors. We are also determined to open up changing other professions as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bentley has moved third reading of Bill 97. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day? I recognize the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I move adjournment of the House.

Speaker of the House: Mr. McMeekin has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1643.

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

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