



No. 91

N° 91

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 20 November 2008

Jeudi 20 novembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 November 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 novembre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy Clerk, is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COUNTERING DISTRACTED DRIVING
AND PROMOTING GREEN
TRANSPORTATION ACT, 2008
LOI DE 2008 VISANT À COMBATTRE
LA CONDUITE INATTENTIVE
ET À PROMOUVOIR
LES TRANSPORTS ÉCOLOGIQUES

Mr. Bradley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of devices with display screens and hand-held communication and entertainment devices and to amend the Public Vehicles Act with respect to car pool vehicles / Projet de loi 118, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'interdire l'usage d'appareils à écran et d'appareils portatifs de télécommunications et de divertissement et modifiant la Loi sur les véhicules de transport en commun à l'égard des véhicules de covoiturage.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise in the House today to begin debate on legislation that, if passed by the Legislature, would make Ontario's roads safer. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant for transportation, Mike Brown, who will resume debate on this legislation when I have concluded my remarks.

I'm sure there are many of us who have witnessed this while driving: drivers who are sending text messages or chatting on a cellphone as they turn a corner, apparently

oblivious to passengers and pedestrians. I think any one of us can go back in time and think of that happening, where we have been behind the wheel of our own car and watched somebody else busy using a hand-held electronic device and not paying full attention to driving. What was interesting when this bill was introduced, and there was some television, radio and newspaper coverage of it, people in the news business actually knocked on the windows of people who were driving their cars while talking on a cellphone. When they asked them, "Do you think this should be banned?" almost invariably, even though they were doing it, they thought it should.

I can't think of anybody—there may be people out there, and I commend them—who hasn't, at one time or other, decided that that person was going to use the telephone just this time and be distracted driving. I have to confess to being one of those, in years gone by, who have done that. We all know when we do it that it's an unsafe practice and yet we're almost compelled, by the amount of electronic gadgetry that we have available to us today, to respond to that gadgetry in a way that makes us less than safe drivers.

I suspect that, in a lot of situations, drivers simply do not realize that they endanger themselves, their passengers and other road users. But, really, the evidence speaks for itself. Research shows that a driver who uses a hand-held cellphone when behind the wheel is about four times more likely to be in a crash than if they were simply focused on the task of driving. In fact, a recent Transport Canada study found that driver distraction is a contributing factor in about 20% of all collisions on the road.

Our busy lives place great demands on us. We feel pressured to make the most of our time, and that even includes the time we spend behind the wheel of a vehicle. Certainly, new communications technologies have created some tremendous conveniences. Sometimes it becomes just too easy to use this technology any time and, in fact, in any place—except the Legislative Assembly, because if you use it here it gets seized by the Sergeant-at-Arms. So we know that we all come in in terror that at least our telephones are not going to go off in this Legislature; otherwise we have to hand them to the Sergeant-at-Arms, who has a fine collection now, I'm sure, that he keeps at home. So we do it, even when we know it's the wrong place. That's societal, now, because of the amount of technology we have available.

While the temptation to reach for our cellphones or BlackBerries while driving is there, we need to convince Ontario drivers that their full attention should be on the task of driving. This legislation, if passed, will ban text

messaging, e-mailing, dialing and chatting on hand-held cellphones and the use of other hand-held electronic entertainment devices while driving.

I would like to pay tribute, by the way, at this point in time to my colleagues Kevin Flynn, the member for Oakville, and John O'Toole, the member for Durham, both of whom have placed before this House for consideration private members' bills which deal with this matter. This is one example where, in my view, individual members of the Legislature have an influence on public policy. You see, while governments don't always adopt exactly the bill that's put forward, the advantage of it for each one of us as individual members—cabinet ministers are not allowed to present private members' bills, but for those who are, the great advantage is it creates public debate on an issue of this kind.

0910

Often, when the individuals in the Legislature bring forward a piece of legislation, it is debated in the House and it does not make it all the way to fruition—in other words, to a law that is enacted in the province of Ontario. But I don't think we should downgrade that effort on the part of individual members, because they have created a buzz about the issue, if you will, and they've gathered some attention through the media and then through the public and, ultimately, we sometimes see legislation which is passed. So, to my two colleagues I just mentioned and others who have, in this House, spoken about the need for dealing with distracted driving—and there are many pieces on distracted driving; this is one of them—I want to commend each and every one of them; also the opposition critics that we have. The word "critics" is sometimes a harsh word to use because one anticipates that they're always criticizing. In fact, in transportation, I can say that the Conservative and NDP critics often have very constructive ideas to bring forward to the House. They don't simply criticize the government, even though that's their job, and I understand that. I have sat for most of my career on the other side of the House as a member of the opposition, so I understand that the opposition's job is to keep the government on its toes and to criticize when there is a need for criticism. But also, I think in the field of transportation in particular, what I've liked about it since becoming the minister is that there are some good suggestions that come forward that I try to incorporate into legislation, regulations and policy. Not all wisdom in the Legislature resides on the government side and, indeed, not all wisdom in Ontario resides within the walls of the Ontario Legislature. That will shock some members of the Legislature when I say that.

Interjection: Pass that on to the Premier.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know, and it fits all of us, of course, in this Legislature.

Let me be clear: Ontario is not proposing an all-out ban on these devices. When we did our consultation with the various people who are interested in this issue, particularly those in the police service, they indicated what would be virtually impossible to enforce. We also have,

of course, the opportunity to utilize another bill that was passed here many years ago called the bill that deals with careless driving. So a charge of careless driving can be applied to anybody who is driving in a distracted way. I think where police were probably reluctant to employ that was—careless driving carries some pretty hefty penalties, so there was an inclination to perhaps reprimand the person or, if there were an accident, of course, to charge with careless driving or even dangerous driving. But when we did our consultations, and probably when John O'Toole and Kevin Flynn did their consultations, it was found that the major problem was with hand-held devices that people were manipulating while trying to drive.

We still hope that people are not distracting themselves in other ways. Even talking on the phone while we're driving is a certain distraction. It is not a manual distraction, but to our minds—we are not fully attuned to driving. We wish we could solve all of the world's problems in this Legislature. I assure you we cannot, but we try, from time to time, to do so with the help of the opposition and the good advice of the public.

We are simply asking drivers not to use hand-held wireless communication and electronic entertainment devices while driving. The use of hands-free wireless communications devices, such as an earpiece or Bluetooth set up to work with your cellphone or BlackBerry, will still be allowed. GPS units mounted on a dashboard will still be permitted.

We also are making sure that emergency phone calls to 911 will not be prohibited. Police and emergency personnel rely on calls from the public reporting on accidents or dangerous driving, so those would be permitted. That does not mean we are encouraging the use of hands-free devices. Any activity that divides a driver's attention for even a moment should be avoided whenever possible. And if an emergency call needs to be made, we actually encourage the driver to have a passenger in the vehicle make that call whenever possible or to pull over and make that call.

In the past, our government has taken tough action to ensure that our roads remain among the safest in North America. Let me say this point: I was surprised myself, looking at the statistics, because when you're not the minister or the critic, you don't necessarily look at the details of each ministry. But over the years, while we've had different governments in power, Ontario has developed a very good reputation for safe roads compared to other jurisdictions. We're at a point now, almost year in and year out, where we're first or second—the first in the last figures we had was the Northwest Territories—in all of North America. So we're first or second. That doesn't happen by accident; it means that successive governments and individual members of the Legislature have proposed legislation regulations and policy that ensure that that is the case and that we have appropriate enforcement of those laws as well.

We have passed legislation that deals with drivers who continue to drink and drive. We're soon bringing forward

regulations increasing penalties for drinking drivers who fall within what we call the “warn range.” That means having a blood alcohol concentration between .05 and .08.

We have recently introduced legislation that proposes to strengthen the graduated licensing system for novice drivers and to address those who choose to drive while their licence is suspended, and we’ve delivered the strongest possible message to those who think our roads are meant for street racing.

Again, if I can make reference to a member of the Legislature in this regard, there are many members of the Legislature, both predecessors—Harinder Takhar certainly was very interested in this; and the member for Etobicoke Centre was very interested in this as well. She now has the job of being the Minister of Natural Resources, but she brought forward this legislation. Frank Klees, in opposition, brought forward some good proposals, I thought, when looking at street racing. We have delivered that message to those who think that street racing happens to be okay.

It’s now time to take another important step to save lives, prevent injuries and make our communities safer. Anyone who chooses to break this proposed law addressing distracted driving would face a fine of up to \$500. But we don’t stop there. We’re also proposing to broaden the current ban on televisions that are visible to the driver to include other devices with display screens. This includes devices like portable DVD players. Indeed, they happen to be a distraction if you watch people trying to manipulate them, paying attention to them instead of driving.

Let me be clear that placing restrictions on these devices does not mean that other distractions are not important. Drivers must take care when doing anything that shifts their attention from the task of driving even for an instant. Those of us who drive the highways frequently, particularly to come into Toronto where the Legislature is, recognize very much that just a second can make a difference. How many times have you looked away, one way or another, distracted by perhaps a sound that you heard, and you look back and the vehicle in front of you is very close? So we recognize that with the speeds that are in place on highways and with the speed that cars are going at on the highways, any distraction is a problem.

Drivers who are not focused on the task of driving should not be driving; it’s that simple. Those who put others at risk by allowing themselves to become distracted for any reason could be charged with careless driving under the Highway Traffic Act or dangerous driving, which is a criminal offence.

We have to simply stop this danger on our roads. Our message is clear: Eyes on the road and hands on the wheel at all times will help prevent tragedies before they happen. We must continue to ensure that we address new risks and hazards as they arise. As with all of the safety reforms we have introduced, our purpose is clear: It is to preserve and strengthen Ontario’s outstanding record of safety on our roads. This proposed legislation supports

the McGuinty government’s commitment to prevent injury and reduce traffic collisions.

0920

There’s another significant matter in this particular bill, and that is environmentally friendly transportation solutions. It was recently brought to my attention that the current definition of carpooling, under the Public Vehicles Act, has made it difficult for individuals in certain situations to form carpools to go to and from school, social events and even work. That is why we’ve proposed an amendment to the Public Vehicles Act to make it easier for people to carpool. We are removing the barriers and red tape associated with carpooling in Ontario, in hopes that this will further encourage their use and help remove single-occupant vehicles from Ontario’s highways.

One of my colleagues, Gilles Bisson, who represents Timmins–James Bay, brought forward a private member’s bill in this regard and has been campaigning for this. I want to say that we thank him for that. Once again, it’s a demonstration that all members of this House have concerns about safety, and sometimes they manifest themselves in bills before the Legislature. So Gilles can take pride in being part of this legislation, as he should. He can even include that in his leadership material as he goes about the province campaigning for the leadership of the New Democratic Party. I thought I’d get that in for you, Gilles, for those who may not be aware that you have launched that campaign.

Road safety is one of the government’s top priorities. Our goal is to keep Ontario’s roads among the safest in North America, and indeed the entire world. This bill will make every Ontarian safer, protect families and keep communities safe. Certainly, I encourage—it says in my notes, “I urge all members to support the bill.” I prefer, “I encourage all members to support the bill.”

What is helpful as well with legislation is getting some input to the legislation. The public should know as well—I guess members of the Legislature know, but the public often doesn’t—that in addition to the legislation, which is a kind of umbrella under which you may pass regulations, there are regulations which are promulgated or put in place. It’s also good to consult there. We consult particularly with our safety partners, and we listen to what the public has had to say. Sometimes we don’t make the modifications they want, but sometimes we do.

Whenever you’re developing a bill of this kind, as well, what happens is that you usually do a pre-consultation. Again, there are people we refer to as safety partners. They’re the Ontario Provincial Police, in our case province-wide; local police services across the province; the Ontario Safety League; the Insurance Bureau of Canada; Mothers Against Drunk Driving; the people who run driving schools—in other words, a variety of people we consult before we even develop legislation of this kind. And sometimes we discuss matters of relevance to road safety with individuals as well.

Ultimately, we come forward with a bill—it’s not just something that comes out of someone’s mind and appears. The bill comes forward and goes through a com-

mittee process in cabinet. At that time, members of cabinet—by the way, Premier McGuinty has made a change that I think will be emulated by governments in other jurisdictions and by any subsequent government there may be in the province under a different Premier; that is, he has encouraged and allowed individual members of the Legislature on the government side who are not part of the cabinet to sit on cabinet committees. I'll tell you that has made a big difference. Their perspective is often different. People who are free from the day-to-day responsibilities that preoccupy people who have ministries are often in a much better position to offer some independent thought on these matters.

So it goes through this process. Legal counsel put it into legalese—into parliamentary language—and we proceed with the legislation. Then we have a debate in the House, and I'm always interested in what members have to say about legislation of this kind. I know that sometimes people think, "What's the use of going through the motions?" I actually find it interesting. I even read Hansard after or, since I'm a night hawk, I watch the replays of the Legislature late at night and see what my friend the member for Thornhill, or any other member of the Legislature, is saying about something in the House. I think that's beneficial.

Often, particularly if the opposition feels there's a need to do so, we go to committee, and our government has pretty consistently gone to committee. There's always a debate about how long and where and so on, and I understand that. I was an opposition House leader and a government House leader, so I know those particular battles. But I find it beneficial, when you're in committee, to hear different delegations that are coming there, to hear what opposition members have to say and the good questions that are asked.

Sometimes the government brings forward amendments based on those kinds of inputs from the public and from all members of the Legislature. And sometimes, although I'm sure this is not as frequent as the opposition would like, we even give a nod of approval to an opposition amendment. But the opposition should know that often it may not appear to be that amendment, but the government may take the amendment and put it in place. I'm sure, as I tell my friend from Halton, that you know how we always give you credit when we take one of the amendments you have and make it a government amendment. We're happy to do that.

So, members of the Legislature, I hope you will give this bill your favourable consideration. It does not have a lot of components to it. There's some subsequent legislation, which has been brought in, that is multifaceted. We've tried to keep this a fairly narrow bill, and I know that in opposition you like that very much; you don't like omnibus bills, and I understand that. I hope you give this some favourable consideration, though I'm never presumptuous enough to believe that it is automatic in this House.

I will now relinquish the floor to my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin, the parliamentary secretary for transportation, Michael Brown.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I would like to thank the minister for his thoughtful presentation as we move forward with this particular bill.

I rise in the House to continue the discussion of this proposed legislation that would help make our province's roads safer by reducing distractions for drivers.

Over the years, Ontario has earned the reputation for having among the safest roads in North America. This is a record we have maintained for over a decade, and to keep Ontario at the forefront of road safety, our government is always looking for new ways to deal with new challenges we face in today's ever-changing driving environment.

Today, Ontario faces a global road safety issue, one that many provinces, states and countries are beginning to recognize as an emerging danger on our roads. With the number of cellphone users on the rise and new types of wireless communication technologies on the market almost every day, we know that the time to act is now. Now is the time to deal with this issue before it gets out of hand. Now is the time to remind drivers to keep their eyes on the road and their—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I've given every consideration in this matter, but it's way too low. A quorum call, please. This is pretty bad.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we have a quorum?

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): A quorum being now present, the honourable member for Algoma-Manitoulin has the floor.

0930

Mr. Michael A. Brown: As I was saying, with the number of cellphone users on the rise and new types of wireless communications technologies on the market almost every day, we know that the time to act is now. Now is the time to deal with this issue, before it gets out of hand. Now is the time to remind drivers to keep their eyes on the road and their hands on the wheel.

As Minister Bradley had pointed out earlier, the evidence really does speak for itself. Research shows that drivers using hand-held electronic devices are about four times more likely to be in a crash than drivers who are focused on the road. Let me repeat that: Research shows that drivers using hand-held electronic devices are about four times more likely to be in a crash than drivers who are focused on the road. Our proposed legislation will help improve driver behaviour and save lives.

We are not alone in our thinking, here. We have the support of many organizations, who agree that now is the time to put a stop to distracted drivers who continue to text, e-mail and chat on their cellphones and BlackBerry devices or focus on their hand-held wireless entertainment devices while driving.

If this legislation is passed, Ontario will join more than 50 jurisdictions worldwide that already have laws in place to deal with this type of driver distraction.

In October, when we announced our plans to move forward with this proposed legislation, a number of our road safety partners stood beside us to lend their support, including the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Ontario Safety League, just to name a few.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with the members some of the supportive words we received from those organizations on that day. Deputy Commissioner Larry Beechy, speaking on behalf of the Ontario Provincial Police, noted that the legislation will help get the message to Ontarians that, "Driving is not a part-time job, it is a full-time job ... that it requires every one of our faculties to operate your motor vehicle." He sees this legislation as being a great tool for law enforcement officers across the province.

Dr. Suzanne Strasberg, president-elect of the Ontario Medical Association—and a family doctor—emphasized the importance of this legislation in preventing injuries by changing driver behaviour. "Every day," says Dr. Strasberg, "we see victims of road collisions, whether it be trauma in the emergency room or ongoing treatment of injuries in the clinical setting.... Not only will this ban address the dangers caused by drivers distracted by their cellphones, BlackBerries and other hand-held devices, but it has begun a dialogue among the people of Ontario."

It is true that this legislation has gotten a lot of people thinking. More importantly, however, it's gotten a lot of people thinking about their own driving behaviour and the potential life-altering consequences of a moment's inattention at the wheel.

Changing driver behaviour is an enormous task that cannot be accomplished overnight. But, with the help of our police, our safety partners and the people of Ontario, we know that this legislation could make our roads safer places for everyone. Together we can and we will do more to save lives and prevent injuries to keep our communities safe. Our "eyes on the road, hands on the wheel" approach will actively prevent tragedies before they happen. It is time for our government to make the call and end this type of distracted driving. I urge all members to support this bill.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I'm going to get a chance a little bit later—probably not today but on future days—to comment on the points made by the minister and the parliamentary assistant.

I would say that, yes, this is certainly legislation that has been long sought after by many members of this House. This is an issue that a lot of us have paid attention to in regard to the dangers of the use of telephones, BlackBerries and other devices while driving.

However, as always, I think this bill is going to have to go to committee. There are some issues that I know I'm being contacted on. I'm sure the minister is being lobbied, as well as the parliamentary assistant. For example, the people in the courier industry: One of the issues raised to me is that the courier industry is an essential part of allowing commerce to operate in the province of Ontario. They use portable, hand-held devices that are push-to-talk-type radios in order to be dispatched to pick up a parcel at one end of Yonge Street and bring it somewhere down at the other end of Yonge Street. They use this type of technology, which could end up being banned under this legislation. We're going to have to take a look at making sure we don't bite off our nose to spite our face when it comes to banning devices. We can't be banning devices that are currently being used by commerce and by others that are basically aids to the work they do. I'm sure there are ways around regulations; we can figure that out.

The other issue was the device they have which is like a tablet, which basically shows where they pick up deliveries, where they bring the deliveries to. The driver needs to glance over at that to find out, "Where am I going next?" That industry is indicated, by stats, as a fairly safe industry; they have far fewer accidents per capita than most others. What I would say is that this bill has to go to committee to address some of those concerns.

Is the bill a step in the right direction? I'm sure my colleague the member from Hamilton Centre will say, "Yes, indeed." But as always, I think we need to do due diligence and give people an opportunity to come before us at committee in order to speak to the issues that need to be fixed, to make sure we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater in this bill.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is an interesting piece of legislation. You could say it's another ban. That brings, I believe, the number to 29 or 30 bans this government has introduced; not all have passed, but they have introduced 30 bans. It's a very Liberal approach: "This is the way we think your life should be run; therefore, we're going to ban all of those that we don't agree with." That's obviously the Liberal way.

I was pleased to hear the minister talk about his looking forward to amendments from the opposition and how they would be duly considered and some might even be passed and looked at seriously. I was pleased to hear the minister say that, because the experience of this government has been that there are precious few amendments that have ever been accepted from the opposition.

One of the problems in this bill is that I'm not sure how serious the government is about it, because there are no demerit points associated with convictions. If there are no demerit points associated with a conviction, basically it becomes: "Pay the fine, and keep on driving. We need the money." This is a cash grab; it's like photo radar. It doesn't do anything to get bad drivers off the road. Bad drivers keep driving. They don't accumulate demerit

points and therefore lose their licences. They don't accumulate demerit points and pay higher insurance costs. They just pay their fine and keep on driving, and the government is happy to receive that money and to let the highways remain in their unsafe conditions with these drivers on them. So I would say if the government is serious about this, one of the amendments should be that they would add demerit points, two or three demerit points, to this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is a pleasure for me to take a couple of moments this morning to talk about Bill 118. Really, this is an interesting piece of legislation. My good friend the member from Durham, I believe on at least three occasions, has brought forward private member's legislation to ban the use of cellphones, which is part of this bill. I think a member from the third party has also brought forward a private member's bill that targeted the same thing. There's no question: When I talked to the police chief in the city of Peterborough, my good friend Murray Rodd, and the detachment commander for the local OPP, Mike Johnston, they certainly expressed to me on numerous occasions the need to do things to improve highway safety in the province of Ontario. One of the areas they've clearly identified is the issue of drivers being distracted while they are driving, involved in a number of things; one of them, of course, is using cellphones. So there's no question that this bill uncovers a number of issues. Certainly, the Canadian Automobile Association, which if you are a member you receive on a monthly basis, often spends some time in its publications to clearly identify issues that need to be addressed in terms of road safety and making sure that people operating motor vehicles are not distracted. Bill 118 goes a long way to bring in legislation that prohibits a number of those things that we're all tempted to do from time to time while we are driving—to be distracted while we are driving. Bill 118, along with other measures brought forward by the Minister of Transportation, is all intended to keep Ontario roads safe.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I think it's sad that the Conservatives are opposing this initiative. I heard the member stand up and say he's against banning this. The thing is that there's a role for government to play when the health and security of our citizens are at risk. This has nothing to do with ideology; this has to do with safety. Those of us who have heard the stories—I know that a friend of mine who certainly changed my mind on this issue was saying that one of his nieces was in a very serious car accident because she reached down to pick up her ringing cellphone, which was down in her purse, as she was driving. The phone was ringing, and as she reached down to pick up that purse she got into a horrendous accident.

If it could help educate people, especially our young people, about not using these hand-held devices in cars,

we will be doing something to prevent these avoidable accidents; not all of them, but at least to educate all of us, whether we're texting or whether we're answering or picking up cellphones. I think most reasonable people feel that this is the proper thing for a government to do, because most people, I think, support this initiative. If you ask most of my constituents, they think it's a reasonable safety initiative. To frame this as ideological is typical of the knee-jerk, neo-con approach which has destroyed the American economy, where they stand back and become spectators as things fall apart. At least we're trying to do something to protect public safety on our roads.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The minister or the parliamentary assistant has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. James J. Bradley: First, to the critic for the NDP, Gilles Bisson: I think he makes a good point when he says that you want to hear from those who may be quibbling with certain parts of it. We want to hear from them. Also, when we're developing the regulations which will be very specific, if there are exemptions that are required, we can look at that at that time; but I think he makes a good point.

To the Progressive Conservative Party: when you say "Progressive Conservative"—I just saw my friend from Halton give a good example of the progressive and conservative, because on one hand he was complaining that we're even bring forward this legislation. That was his conservative side saying that because it's banning something else. On the other side, he said the bill should be tougher. It should have demerit points. That was the other side of the issue. So I love seeing the Progressive Conservatives back in the House, as opposed to just the Conservatives before.

About the cash grab: The provincial government doesn't get this money; the municipalities get this money. We know municipalities are eager to acquire additional cash to meet their very real requirements, so the provincial government does not receive the funding from any of the fines.

In addition to that, I must say to my friend from Halton, we looked very carefully at demerit points. One of the consultations we had was with the police services. As much as possible, you don't want them having to go to court every time you turn around. They do if it's careless driving or dangerous driving. They do with a lot of the laws they must enforce. One of the thoughts that was expressed to us was that a fine was certainly in order. A lot of education was necessary. I think John O'Toole said that when he was bringing forward his legislation, but that if you had demerit points you're going to have people constantly going to court over these issues and tying up the courts and the police officers even more. So that was the reason we chose that.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I understand that we have pre-arranged for unanimous consent to defer our critic the member for Newmarket–Aurora's leadoff on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Well, do we have—take your seat, please. I say to the member, take your seat. Do we have unanimous consent to defer the PCs' leadoff? Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you for the begrudging granting of unanimous consent, to all members.

A funny thing happened to me on the way to the Legislature this morning. A couple of things popped into my head. I am known in this Legislature for a bass baritone voice. Unfortunately, it does not extend to singing, so I'll say these words, which come from a 1960s song:

Keep your mind on your driving,
Keep your hands on the wheel,
Keep your snoop eyes on the road ahead.
We're having fun sitting in the back seat,
Kissin' and a-huggin' with Fred.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I remember that song.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You remember that song?

That was the distraction of the 1960s. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

The other thing that happened is that I decided, in the very brief drive from Avenue Road and St. Clair, which is the approximate area in which I live—it takes about seven minutes to get to Queen's Park—I would keep my eyes somewhere else and look at what was going on in other cars. I don't see many cars on that drive, but I noticed two people drinking coffee, which is in and of itself a distraction. One of them had snow all over his windows, another distraction. Two people were on hand-held cellphones, which is one of the main things we seek to regulate through this bill. Another person was using an earpiece that fully covered his ears, not one of those little plug-ins, so I wonder what his hearing would have been like had somebody yelled to him, much less honked a horn. One lady was applying makeup as she drove.

When we speak about Bill 118, which is entitled, Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, 2008, the thought is that it could cover a myriad of things. Although people out there, whether they be individuals who confront us as members of provincial Parliament or talk radio hosts, or whoever is discussing this, like to call it the "cellphone ban bill," it's not just a cellphone ban bill.

The other thing that came to mind was a line that was uttered by the Premier this week in this Legislature on another subject: "Who says you can't be effective in opposition?" I think, in this particular case, there is a lot to be said for being in opposition, because I want to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague from Durham for introducing no less than six private members' bills that aimed at prohibiting the use of hand-held cellphones while driving. He has tried to do that since the late 1990s, and I appreciate the fact that this has been basically universally recognized in this House. It only goes to show that it takes some time to talk sense into some of the prominent members in Premier McGuinty's government who very publicly in the past have stated their opposition to these initiatives.

I will quote from Hansard as I go on. This only goes to show that perseverance does indeed pay off. My colleagues and I on this side of the House are in cautious support of this legislation, and I want to make that clear. There is a lot that has to happen before we get there—but cautious support. I say "cautious" because we think that this government has to take a tougher stand on unsafe driving; "cautious" also because we are aware of this government's unnatural need to over-regulate anything they get their hands on; and because this bill does not emphasize cellphones or other hand-held devices and, basically, as it stands, has an unlimited scope.

Members of this House who have paid any attention to me whatsoever know that I have a particular aspect of my character that reacts negatively when we talk about bans for the sake of bans. Having said that, I really like legislation that protects the proverbial "you from me and me from you." I think that, if we work it right, this bill can fall under that category. This is the slippery slope, especially with the nanny-statist McGuinty government we have which, if left to its own devices, would start regulating CDs, radios, earpieces and other non-hand-held devices, and that can be done in regulation, so we'll get on to the question of hearings shortly, but we definitely need them.

0950

It's common sense that any television, computer or other device that has a display screen, other than GPS or similar aids, should not be used by a driver while a vehicle is in motion. If you do use a GPS device, and I do, it talks to you. You program it before you start moving, and you listen what it says. Goodness knows I spent enough years before they invented those things listening to somebody in the right-hand seat say, "Turn right now." Now we've created the electronic version of it.

I know there is some discussion about the fact that it is the conversation rather than the hand-held cellphone that distracts drivers. This does not mean that you have or should have the right to ban passengers' conversations and singing along with the radio.

I hearken back to approximately 25 years ago, before we had cellphones in automobiles, when if you saw a single individual in an automobile, and his or her mouth was moving, you knew that what was going on was singing with the radio. I see a lot of nods around the Legislature. Now if you see a single person in a car and the mouth is moving, you assume that it's a conversation with somebody using Bluetooth technology, and I assume that very shortly, all automobiles will be equipped with Bluetooth technology working through the sound system, which is the safest form of conversation that you can have.

You can address the use of cellphones and other hand-held electronic devices, but how are you going to ban distractions? Distractions in and of themselves are a part of driving. If you take a defensive driving course—which all of us on all sides of this Legislature certainly condone—at the school level, we talk about teaching defensive driving, and defensive driving is about avoiding

distractions. Distractions can be anything: They can be the sudden change of a light; they can be somebody stepping off the curb. So you have to have to have your eyes out there.

I heard a statistic recently, and I can't attest to its precise veracity, but if you are travelling on the 401 at 110 or 115 kilometres per hour, which is, yes, slightly over the speed limit, but typically the speed of the road, you cover a football field every second. So if you take your eyes off the road for one or two seconds, goodness knows what can happen. Are you going to ban distractions in their entirety? No.

We also have to reassure people out there. The first call that I got in my office was from a person who heard that this legislation was going to be tabled by the minister, and asked, was that going to mean his business was going to go broke because we're not going to be able to communicate in cars whatsoever? I said, "Well, I can't speak to a bill before I've seen it." Now I have. Obviously the bill does not seek to ban the use of communications devices. What it does seek to do is regulate their use. Obviously, as well, there are many businesses that are totally dependent on this kind of dispatch.

Will you ban children on sidewalks, cats crossing the street, playing basketball on a court near a road because of the potential for a distraction? I think not. But let me quote from a 2003 Hansard in debate on one of my colleague from Durham's private member's bills on this subject, and at the time the speaker was the current government House leader, and he said: "I can't support this. I think this government has to work better with the industry to educate people, to ensure that cellphones continue to be a safety device on the streets. If we're going to tackle the distractions, let's tackle the distractions outside the car and the real distractions in the car"—and he was referring to Big Macs, radios, Sony Walkmans and passengers—and let's "not get bogged down with this particular effort." Things seem to have changed on his part and on the part of the government, and frankly that's a fine thing.

While our party supports legislation that makes Ontario's roads safer, we have always emphasized the importance of personal responsibility, enforcement and consequences. A responsible driver gets behind the wheel knowing that there will be distractions on the road that require his or her attention. Education and awareness do play important roles and will have an impact in reducing the number of drivers talking on hand-held cellphones, but you cannot omit enforcement. That point was made by the member from Durham in initially responding to this bill.

Let's deal first with the educational aspect. I fully support educating everyone in Ontario about the dangers of using electronic devices while driving. By the way, I include myself. While I do have Bluetooth technology in the car, and I think it applies to many people in this Legislature, the tendency to hear the sound of one's BlackBerry or feel the vibration of the BlackBerry, knowing that a message is coming in and wondering—

because there's always something urgent to respond to—what that message may be makes me, oftentimes, reach down for that holster, pull out the BlackBerry and, in between driving, look at the screen and see if I can get the general gist of the message. I admit that that's the wrong thing to do, and I keep chastising myself when my wife isn't in the car chastising me on her own.

The worst thing is to try to react and come up with a short text message, and get back with one thumb while you have the other hand on the wheel. That's got to stop. It's got to stop on my part and it's got to stop on the part of everybody who is either a legislator or in business, the people who use these devices, which are, after all, becoming more prolific rather than less prolific. Education is a huge aspect of this bill, and so is moral suasion. So I do support educating all of Ontario's drivers about all of these things. The legislation should include changes to drivers' education in Ontario at the fundamental level.

When I was 16—goodness, 45 years ago—I took a course in defensive driving and we talked about distractions, which included no electronic devices, but they did include things like tuning a radio. Well, it's an electronic device, but it had five buttons at the time and that took you away from the road. If that was the case, then goodness knows what you can do now with the prolific number of devices that have come on the scene. Courses in Ontario need to outline the dangers of using electronic devices while driving. It is my hope that one day, talking on a hand-held cellphone while driving a car will be as incomprehensible as lighting up a cigarette in a hospital.

Interestingly, if you look at bans that protect, as I said before, me from you and you from me, we're talking about things that are comparable to smoking in buildings, which began as a movement rather than as any legislation. Buildings and companies started to say, "If you want to smoke, take it outside." It only later became enshrined in law. Now, if you did it, you'd be besieged by the people who work around you, saying, "You can't do that." I suspect that, much as I describe my own reactions to my own abuse of my BlackBerry and the fact that I have to put it away, the legislation will push me along. We'll get to the question of enforcement momentarily.

Education takes time. We need to start making our roads safer now. You've already wasted years not listening to my colleague from Durham, I say to the government. Now that you've taken a step, albeit a tiny step, in the right direction, let's ensure that this gets done right. Without the ability to enforce, legislation becomes pointless. This bill, as written, does not outline any real and significant consequences for breaking a cellphone ban and it does not outline who is going to do the enforcement or how it will be enforced. Will the enforcement be carried out by police, and if so, how will they carry out this enforcement? What tools will they be provided with to enforce such legislation? Do they even have the resources to do that, between chasing speeding cars, watching out for dangerous drivers and, I might say, checking for adults who might be smoking in cars carrying under-age children? You passed, or maybe I should say we

passed, that law in the spring and I commented on it then. Is anyone enforcing it? Anyone? I don't think so. But it's there. The fact that this government's bill didn't provide answers to any of these questions suggests that they have not yet bothered to consult in a meaningful way with anyone affected by this legislation to get those answers.

Would breaking the ban cost a driver demerit points? Not according to this bill, as it stands today. Ontario would be the only jurisdiction that does not have demerit points assessed for breaking this type of law. If this is an illegal and dangerous activity, a distraction resulting in unsafe operation of a vehicle, it is an activity that requires a severe penalty, in my opinion—points, because points translate into something palpable, which is questions, at the very least, being asked by one's insurance company, if not, indeed, seeing one's premiums rise.

What would be the cost of breaking this law? A slap on the wrist? A few bucks? A lot of people—and I've had calls to my office, saying, "I'm prepared to take that risk if that's what it is." So it's not big enough. The question is, is the government really serious about making our roads safer with this bill, or are we again on the receiving end of an off-the-cuff, token bill that creates media buzz, which it surely has, but fails to accomplish an objective? The government is not about public relations. The government of a province, this province, is about people.

1000

I'd like to read another quote, and this comes, again, from 2003 Hansard, in debate on one of the private member's bills from the member from Durham. The quote is from the current Deputy Premier. He said: "It is interesting to me—my father was a trucker—that CB radios weren't outlawed, that there wasn't a prohibition on the use of CB radios over time, because the evidence was so clear that the distraction was causing motor vehicle accidents. We didn't see that because we weren't at that time having an Ontario Legislature, I guess, that sought to find little populist wedge issues."

Let's just try to define here what is a little populist wedge issue. It is your job to consult with the people who are affected by this legislation, which means that everyone with a car should have input on how to make driving safer. We should be hearing from people like the Canadian Automobile Association; we should be hearing from organizations like the Canada Safety Council; and yes, we should be hearing from Joe or Jane Doe who do the driving, whether what they're driving is an 18-wheeler or the family Ford Focus. It doesn't make any difference. The government needs to consult more broadly with stakeholders concerned with public safety as well as others affected. I might make the comment that in a number of cases recently, we have not seen sufficient consultation on the part of this government on legislation that it's putting forward and, very particularly, taking the show on the road so that committees can hear from people who are constrained from travelling to Toronto to make their deputations and need to make them in situ, in the venue where they live. So I'm hoping that when this bill goes to committee we get a chance to do that.

The government does need to consult more broadly with stakeholders concerned with public safety as well as with everyone affected. The police, trucking and transport organizations, logistical stakeholders, must be consulted, and not in a controlled four- or five-hour session. Again, I say, not only in a session held here at the Legislature. Hearings have to be held throughout the province.

This bill talks only about the use of electronic devices while driving on a highway and this is a very important aspect that has to be dealt with. Is the government leaving it up to each driver to decide what is considered a highway and what is considered a city street? The definition has not been made clear. Or is it using the standard definition of highways are roads with speed limits of 80 kilometres per hour or greater? If so, does that mean that when driving down a busy city street, drivers can use any electronic device? The two people that I saw using hand-held cellphones on the way to the Legislature this morning on Avenue Road, post-legislation, when this bill becomes law, would be exempt if that were the case, so we need clarification on that.

Take it a step further. Have you ever been driving behind a car in a busy supermarket parking lot when the driver is talking on their hand-held cellphone? I don't think I need to say more than that, but I will. When children are running around, when other cars are pulling in and out of parking spots, people are busy putting their groceries away, there is Mr. or Mrs. Smith blabbing animatedly and not really looking out the window to see what's going on. That's how accidents happen. In fact, one could make the case that they're not accidents at all if the dedication of one's concentration is on that conversation and not out the window.

We've all been there, getting frustrated behind a distracted driver who is talking on a cellphone and either driving 30 kilometres under the speed limit or weaving from one side of the road to the other. That can often be more dangerous than driving on a straight, empty highway. I personally feel safer driving on a highway than I do in the city. In fact, I consider myself a good driver who can multi-task due to things I've been able to do in my past. I am an aggressive—what they call "Montreal driver." That's where I was trained. City drivers scare me: people coming out of nowhere, trying to make it through a yellow light in time, slamming on their brakes because they see something on the road.

So really, all in all, this legislation is like most of the other government bills we've been forced to debate in this House, like the pesticides bill that claims to protect Ontarians from pesticides but in reality limits pesticide control in this province to only 2%.

The government is trying to ban hand-held cellphones and other electronic devices, but only on those roads where they don't really pose as much risk, and apparently relying on moral suasion as opposed to penalties in the way of a deterrent. Are police supposed to be patrolling the highways for cellphones or for speeding drivers? That's one of the questions we must answer. They are out to catch dangerous drivers, not check on children watch-

ing movies in the back of a van or the dad flipping an eye over to the screen up front. Meanwhile, it's a free-for-all on the busiest streets in the middle of a city like Toronto.

I'm guilty of it, as I've said; I know every member of this House at one time or another is as well. We get an e-mail or a call and we respond to it in the car. We have to stop that. This bill would deter me from doing it, especially if all of the me's in this province are given the appropriate consequences through penalty.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I really appreciated some of the remarks made by the honourable member. Interestingly enough, we were having a brief conversation earlier about this very bill, and the members in this general area—I'm not going to name names—were talking about the instance when they decided they were never going to use their cellphone again in their car. It was that split second where they luckily realized that they were almost going to have an accident: They could have hit somebody in a crosswalk; they almost banged into other car. So the issue I think is really clear. The minister knows that it's time for this legislation to be put into place.

We do believe that there are some things the government needs to look at, and we look forward to the opportunity of having those discussions in committee. But there is no doubt that even those of us around this chamber have had situations where we could have ended up having an extremely difficult situation occur and then having to figure out how to deal with that. This is a preventive measure that I think is useful and will benefit so many people.

I can recall that when I was a young woman carpooling with a couple of other women I worked with, one day I decided I wasn't going to be in the carpool. It turned out that the woman who was driving went to Tim Hortons, put a coffee on her dashboard, turned the corner, the hot coffee fell all over her lap and she was in a car accident as a result. You know that these things happen. They happen often, unfortunately. It's these kinds of pieces of legislation that maybe can help resolve some of the distractions that drivers have.

Having said that, there's a little piece in this bill that I'm a little bit concerned about. It says that there is going to be recognition of power-assisted bicycles in the legislation, also known as e-bikes, setting up powers to regulate their operating requirements. I'm looking forward to making sure that e-bikes are allowed on the roads in Ontario. I hope that's what the minister is going to be doing.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to the honourable member from Thornhill speaking about this issue, and he brought to this House many different, important remarks. I'm glad to see him and to hear from him. I know he doesn't like banning stuff much, but he likes some kinds of bans to protect the safety of the people in Ontario.

I listened to him when he was talking about the educational part. He brought his experience to us, and he

talked about the temptation and tendency when you hear the vibration of the BlackBerry or the phone or you feel it, and then you try to reach out to see what's going on. I think it sometimes causes danger. I agree with him, and I share the thought. Most of the time when my wife is sitting beside me, she won't allow me to answer because it will cause harm to myself and to the people around me.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Transportation for bringing this issue forward. I think it's about time to create some kind of protection mechanism in order to protect the people of Ontario—the drivers and also the people who walk on the streets—because sometimes we lose control while we are talking on the phone and not paying attention. If somebody in front of us slams on the brakes, stops accidentally or quickly, and we are not paying attention, we hit them and cause some kind of accident. So I think it's important to create some kind of mechanism.

Talking about the consultation part, I believe the Minister of Transportation mentioned the wide range of consultation, and I think this bill is going to go to committee. We're going to listen to many people and take their input and their advice on this matter, because it's an important matter.

We talked about the logistic approach. I think some people using dispatching, like truck drivers or police or courier companies, will have some kind of exemption. It depends on circumstances, the timing and how we can plan it. I think it's a very important piece of legislation. I think it's about time that it be passed in order to put some safety in place to protect the people in the province of Ontario.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: In my previous comments, I didn't congratulate Mr. O'Toole for bringing in this bill. He brought this bill to the Legislature, not three times, as was previously mentioned by the government, but I believe he brought it in a total of six times. It's nice to know that the government has finally listened to Mr. O'Toole. I would respectfully suggest that Mr. O'Toole's bill is a little stronger than this one and perhaps is a little better than this one.

I liked the member from Thornhill's comments, particularly the quote that he gave about the CB radios and looking for populist wedge issues. That quote, of course, came from Mr. Smitherman, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. It's interesting that he said that in May 2003, and here we are some five years later doing exactly that.

Ontario is in the throes of perhaps the worst economic crisis that this province has seen, certainly since the 1929-34 government. I think that over the next year or two, we may find that the consequences of the economic upheaval that we have may even surpass the days of the Great Depression. However, the government is banning cellphones, distracting the public's attention from the issues that should be debated in this House. An emer-

agency debate on the economy and what actions this government should be taking is certainly in order. I think history will look back on this session of the Legislature with great dissatisfaction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member from Thornhill has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you to the members from Hamilton Centre, London–Fanshawe and Halton for their additional comments.

It was interesting: As I rose to speak in this response, my cellphone vibrated and I have resisted the urge to take it and read it, which is an adequate reminder of what happens in the car all the time.

I found it interesting when the member from Hamilton Centre discussed the fact that she was having a conversation about the moral suasion inherent in this bill. I think that the conversation over the course of the past two or three weeks since the government tabled this legislation in first reading has been very much about that. It has served, if nothing else, to remind people that what they're doing is wrong and potentially injurious not only to themselves but to anybody around them.

To the member from London–Fanshawe, thank you again for underscoring the educational component, and thank you for confirming the fact that there are other people who have wives who say, "Don't do that"—because we are constantly guilty of pulling the BlackBerrys out when we are driving our automobiles, and that's just the wrong thing to do.

Again, let me summarize what has to happen with this bill. We have to solidify what is and what is not okay to operate while we're driving. We have to specify precisely where: on highways, city streets, parking lots, wherever it's going to be. I hope it's all of the above. We have to figure out how and when this bill dovetails with careless driving that exists in the highway code already. We have to determine how this is to be enforced or even if it will be enforced, and by whom. We have to decide that there either are or are not going to be significant penalties, and by that, I mean demerit points, as opposed to just a fine of up to \$500. And of all these things, the most important is that we have to listen to professionals and we have to listen to all drivers in Ontario in hearings that travel the province and make this an open process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'd like to introduce two constituents from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Brian and Sandra Loucks, former educators in the

community of Cornwall. Brian was my principal at Longue Sault Public School for a number of years. Welcome.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm very pleased to introduce, in the east member's gallery, Mr. John Richardson, Commissioner for the Department of Economic and Community Development for the state of Maine, and with him Wade Merritt, the vice-president of the Maine International Trade Center. Mr. Richardson is a former Speaker in the Legislature in the state of Maine. Please join us in welcoming them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to introduce the family of our legislative page from Hamilton Centre, Bradyn Litster. With us today is his family: Bradyn's father, Dwayne, his mother, Monica; his brother Alec and sister Cailyn are here in the west gallery. I'm very pleased and proud to welcome him today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Minister, related to the General Motors pension deficit, and there doesn't seem to be a clear answer on the state of the pension, media reports today indicate that about a year ago it was at roughly \$4.5 billion—that was of course before the stock market meltdown has left the fund short, we're reading approximately another \$1.5 billion. Minister, as part of this government's meetings with GM executives over the past number of days, have you learned yet what the current amount is of the GM pension deficit?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm privileged to be in a position today, on behalf of a variety of government ministers, to field the question related to pensions, which is of course a serious matter at hand for many, many people in these uncertain times. I can tell the honourable member that, with respect to the discussions that are ongoing with automobile manufacturers, the Minister of Economic Development is initiating those processes with a view towards establishing a clearer sense, doing the due diligence, if you will, on a variety of those matters, as we seek to obtain the clearest sense of the current circumstances and the best sense of opportunities going forward. So although I cannot offer too much additional information to the honourable member, I can tell him that this is part and parcel the nature of the conversations that are ongoing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The minister mentions due diligence, and it's unfortunate that he doesn't have that information today. We know the conversations have been occurring for at least a couple of weeks with General Motors. When you look at the history with respect to this obligation, we know what happened in 1992 with

respect to the former NDP government; the rules were changed, so that GM is the only Ontario company paying into the province's pension benefits guarantee fund. That means of course that in the event—certainly we're not suggesting that's going to happen, but anything is possible at this stage of the game—in the event of GM's bankruptcy, taxpayers will be on the hook for that shortfall in the pension. We're talking about, perhaps, billions of dollars. Minister, are you and your colleagues taking this substantial debt on taxpayers' shoulders into consideration in deciding on the terms of any—

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

Hon. George Smitherman: To the direct part of the honourable member's question: Is this matter, that of the pension circumstances, being taken into consideration in the context of the discussions with automobile manufacturers and General Motors? Yes, most certainly.

The honourable member's question does underscore the very extraordinary importance of the automobile sector in the province of Ontario. That's why we do think it's important to be engaged with our partners at the federal government—your former colleague Minister Clement, working alongside Minister Bryant—because this sector is an extraordinarily important one and because the matters at hand, including that which has been raised by the honourable member in the House today, are, of course, very significant.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: People who are concerned about the situation are not going to get much solace from those kinds of responses. There's no details, just more rhetoric. It confirms the Premier's remarks yesterday that he doesn't have a plan B if any of the three automakers go under. That was the same answer the Premier gave three years ago in response to the crisis in manufacturing. He had no plan B, and now that industry is disappearing with a real risk that the auto industry is next.

Minister, with Ontario taxpayers on the hook for billions of dollars, how do you expect Ontarians to have any confidence in your government when you tell them you have no contingency plan in place if GM, Ford or Chrysler go under?

Hon. George Smitherman: I don't think that Ontarians viewing the Ontario Legislature today will take much confidence from the approach of the honourable member, with respect. These are difficult matters; everybody acknowledges that. The gravity of the circumstances are really rather extraordinary and no one is pretending otherwise.

The honourable member stands up in his place today and demands to know a number. What's interesting is that the member today demands instantaneous information, but for the better part of the time that we've been in government for the last five years, as we worked with the automotive industry, this party actually had a policy of benign neglect, voting against all measures which were designed to help to stabilize a sector which is obviously under a lot of pressure. The sector knows and the

people of the province of Ontario know that the government of Ontario, led by Dalton McGuinty, understands this is an important sector in our economy. That's why we're working so carefully in partnership with the federal government at this moment.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Tired partisan rhetoric.

My next question is to the Attorney General. Attorney General, can you confirm that it's the crown's policy to appeal a decision releasing an accused facing serious charges where the crown's case is so strong that bail is not justified?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The crown takes prosecution of every serious case and prosecutes them to the full extent of the law. We prosecute them at every stage, we take tough positions on bail, take tough positions on the trial and on sentencing. We will continue to do so, and I'll look forward to my colleague's question for further details of what specifically he would like me to address.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That should have been either a yes or a no answer. It's what members of the public are entitled to know since it's the public's confidence in the justice system that the Attorney General should be concerned with.

Again, back to him: Related to the bail system, Attorney General, can you confirm that it is the crown's policy to appeal a bail decision that names a former victim of an accused as a surety or supervisor for that accused, on serious charges of sexual violence?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The policy of the crown with respect to every serious charge is to prosecute them to the full extent of the law. That obtains whether it's at bail, whether it's at trial, whether it's with respect to the sentencing.

One of the things that we're doing now is to take a look at every part of the trial process from our perspective—the bail part, the trial, the sentencing and the post-sentence part; take a look and see whether the policies that we have are the right ones; look and see whether the coordination we have with our other justice partners—such as the police, such as corrections, other agencies—is as strong as it should be; take a look and see whether the supports that we have are what they need to be; and then take a look at what the law is in relation to those. We want to make sure that any revolving door of justice is stopped.

1040

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Again, regrettably, the Attorney General can't give a straight answer when he could read it straight out of the crown policy manual. Nathaniel O'Brien, accused of murdering Susan John and her mother, Saramma Varughese, was released on bail, despite DNA linking him to a violent sexual assault and despite victim identification.

We learn now that the judge named his mother as one of his sureties, even though the media reports that in 2007, O'Brien was arrested for beating her. This is truly

bizarre, Minister. Susan and Saramma's family are outraged by these facts and they will be holding a rally here at Queen's Pak this Saturday demanding a public inquiry into their deaths.

Minister, you're going to be speaking at that rally. Will you be giving the public inquiry they're demanding and deserve?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I will be at the vigil. I will be there to speak. I will be there to express not only our condolences, but I'll be there to express our anger and our determination: our determination to take a look at every part of the justice system to make sure that those who are serious threats to society stay where they need to be and in custody. We're going to stop the revolving door of justice where it revolves. We're going to look at the bail part. We're going to look at the sentencing. We're going to look at the post-sentencing. We have a crime summit coming up with the police on the 25th. We are going to make sure that nothing is left unturned to protect the safety of the members of the public.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the acting Premier. Media reports suggest that General Motors Canada was facing a pension shortfall of \$4.9 billion a year ago. That shortfall is now likely over \$6 billion. The General Motors pension shortfall is very likely the tip of the iceberg. There are likely many other pension plans in Ontario that are also in trouble.

The McGuinty government has had five years to implement meaningful reforms to help protect and sustain the pension plans of Ontarians. The McGuinty government has talked a lot, but why has there been no action over the last five years to do something meaningful to help sustain and protect the hard-earned pensions of Ontario workers?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for the question on the matter raised as well by the Leader of the Opposition. I'll say the same things that I did to him, which is that obviously, this matter—one of many that is on the table in the circumstances that are being faced at the moment—does underscore the pressing challenges associated with the automotive sector in the province of Ontario. That's why we're engaged proactively, the Minister of Economic Development working alongside the federal minister in Washington today, seeking to make sure that, as these discussions go forward, the important interests of Ontario, Ontarians and workers are contemplated. More will be known about these circumstances as events continue to unfold.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government wants to pretend that this somehow is something that's just appeared in the last four or five months. The fact of the matter is that this has been a growing problem, not only in the auto sector, but in the forest sector and in the manufacturing sector generally. We have literally had, for five years, a ticking time bomb in terms of the underfunding of pension plans.

My question, and the question that I think a lot of Ontario workers want to know, is, where has the McGuinty government been for the last five years? Lots of talk on this issue, but no action. Why has the McGuinty government failed to take action over the last five years to protect people's hard-earned pensions?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's always nice to see the leader of the third party arrive at a new issue as if he's got no history with its past. He wants to know where we stand. Well, the people that worked and were pensioners at Stelco in the Hamilton community well understand that, as a government, we stood by them and we worked at their side to address the circumstance that the honourable member, through his service, had contributed to.

These are challenging times for those workers and for Ontarians and it does underscore most certainly the necessity of working very, very closely with the federal government and with manufacturers in these circumstances. That's the work that's ongoing, and that is the work that ministers of this government are engaged in as we speak.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Let me say, the Acting Premier isn't helping Bob Rae's leadership campaign with that answer.

The McGuinty government constantly wants to point to something that happened 20 years ago or something that may be happening in Washington or something that may be happening elsewhere in the world, when the fact of the matter is the McGuinty government has had five years when it could have taken concrete action here in Ontario to help sustain and protect workers' pensions. In fact, Professor Arthurs has said today that there are concrete things that needed to be done, and many of us in this Legislature—my colleague from Hamilton Centre, my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—have been pointing this out to you for the last three or four years.

Again, the question: Why has the McGuinty government only talked, talked, talked about sustaining pensions when we've had a ticking time bomb over the last five years?

Hon. George Smitherman: We see the extent to which the honourable member seeks to make up for a lack of action on his part on the subject. He talks about the active engagement of the member from Stoney Creek over the last three or four years, when the member has only been in the Legislature for a year. This is the kind of excess that we're being subjected to quite regularly.

I find it interesting, as well, that a report done by a very respected individual that came out today has already been summarized by the honourable member and characterized with some of the language that he offered. This is a report by a respected individual that warrants consideration and will be helpful as we go through the very important work that the Minister of Finance spoke about yesterday. We're very grateful to Mr. Arthurs for having completed this report, and we will be working very carefully to investigate the advice that it offers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. Leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think what we just heard is an indication that we'll get more talk, talk, talk from the McGuinty government on pensions—no action.

POVERTY

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Acting Premier: I also want to ask about the Ontario Association of Food Banks, which released a report today that shows that poverty costs Ontarians \$38 billion a year in health and social costs and lost employment revenues. That's \$3,000 per Ontario household. My question is this: At a time when this report says the government should be taking immediate action to fight poverty, why is the McGuinty government in fact slowing down its proposed fight against poverty in Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I don't know why the member opposite thinks we're slowing down our fight against poverty in this province. The report that has come out today on the cost of poverty is exactly what we need to understand what the cost of poverty is.

Poverty is no longer something we need to address simply because it is the right thing to do. Poverty is something we need to address because it's costing us too much to have too many people living in poverty. We know that when kids grow up in poverty, when they arrive at school not quite as ready as the other kids to learn, when they're away a little more often, when they drop out of school, they're far more likely to go on to social assistance, to get involved in our youth justice system, to end up in the child welfare system. We really need to address poverty in this province, and this government is committed to reducing poverty.

Mr. Howard Hampton: To cite just a few examples: In October 2007, the McGuinty government, with much fanfare, announced that they were going to invest in a low-income dental program. We're now on the verge of 2009, and the McGuinty government has not put one red cent into a low-income dental program. You've spent the last year talking, talking, talking about poverty, but in fact have done nothing.

My question again is this: At a time when more and more people are falling into poverty, when this very reputable study says that you should be doing something immediate to take on poverty, why is the McGuinty government continuing to talk, talk, talk and do nothing?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand the politics of poverty and I understand that the member opposite wants to make political hay out of this, but let me tell you, this is a government that, as we speak, is reducing levels of poverty in this province. The Ontario child benefit, which you voted against, is reducing poverty in this province. The increases in minimum wage, which you voted against, are reducing poverty in this province. I'm proud of our record, I'm proud of our commitment to poverty, and I would welcome the support of all members in this House to be committed to reducing poverty in Ontario.

Mr. Howard Hampton: This is astounding. The McGuinty government wants to talk about the politics of poverty when we're here to address the reality of poverty. This is a government that took away the back-to-school clothing allowance from the poorest kids in Ontario. Now, as we're facing cold winter temperatures, this is the McGuinty government that took away the winter clothing allowance from the poorest kids in Ontario. Another report shows that tooth decay leads to declines in health overall and huge costs for the health care system—a McGuinty government that hasn't put one penny into a low-income dental program.

I ask again: When are we going to see some real and immediate action from the McGuinty government to take on poverty, rather than more talk about politics?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's hard for me to know where to start, frankly. The Ontario child benefit, which I'm convinced the member opposite still doesn't understand, because if he understood it he would support people like Jacquie Maund of Campaign 2000, who actually recognize the importance of the Ontario child benefit. It does many good things, but one of the best things that the Ontario child benefit does is it combines the programs—winter coats, back to school, Ontario child care and OCCS—into one benefit that families can count on whether they're on social assistance or whether they are taking the sometimes difficult step of getting back into the labour market. Because we know that families who are working at low-paying jobs need extra support for their kids. The Ontario child benefit does that. In addition, we have—

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

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Yesterday, my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon asked you an excellent question and, as usual, she didn't get an answer. I would like to revisit her point. Ms. Jones asked if you would release the impact cost analysis that should have been prepared before you introduced Bill 119.

My question is simple: Did you even complete an impact cost analysis?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I would like to thank the member for the opportunity to talk about impact cost analysis. I want to read him something here from the Council of Ontario Construction Associations. Here's their position and what they've said: They "support a mandatory coverage system. Such a regime ought to ensure those exposed to risk on construction sites pay or have paid on their behalf WSIB premiums. This would foster a level business environment and serve to reduce the size and scope of the underground economy. Presently, just 61% of the construction industry pays 100% of benefits."

We want to support those companies that pay. We want to make sure that we level the playing field within the construction industry. I don't understand why that member or any of those members can't get—

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, I didn't hear anything in that response about an impact cost analysis.

It's very clear to me and thousands of small construction business owners that you have not done your homework on your WSIB bill, Bill 119.

Let me ask: What analysis did you complete? Where is the proof that your bill will actually make thousands safer? How many thousands are we talking about? Surely you know that. How, exactly, will this bill uncover the underground economy? An answer to any of these questions would be appreciated.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I guess the member doesn't understand the difference between 60% and 100%. Well, when you have 60% paying for 100% of the costs, that is completely unfair. Who is this going to protect? All those independent operators, all those construction workers who today are not covered, are putting their lives at risk on those construction sites, doing a lot of the work in all of our communities, building homes, schools, hospitals, roads. We want to make sure that they're insured. We want to make sure that when they go to work in the morning, they come home at night safe and if something does happen, that they do have benefits to take care of them, to take care of them to age 65, to make sure that we work with them and their families to make sure that they are covered.

This proposed legislation is about safety for our construction workers and it's about levelling the playing field for business.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Yesterday, the minister stood in this House and promised that grandparents eligible for temporary care assistance today will be eligible tomorrow. It is tomorrow, and our special guests in the gallery have been cut off: Erlene, raising three children in Hamilton; Clare, raising one grandkid in London; Connie, raising one grandkid in Ottawa; Brenda, raising two kids in Brantford. Oh, I'm sorry, they're not cut off until January. They know that the minister's statements are inaccurate.

Will this minister look these grandparents in the eye and explain her statements and actions in the last few months?

Interruption.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We welcome all our guests to the Legislature. We encourage you to observe the proceedings, but just ask that you not participate in proceedings. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to the grandmothers and also all those family members or neighbours who are taking care of children in need. Thank you very much.

Yes, I said yesterday that those who are eligible today for temporary care assistance will be eligible tomorrow. I'm so surprised when the Tories come in and heckle me about this program, because under their leadership the program went from \$14 million to \$8 million. They cut the program and they're standing up today in support of comments by the NDP. This program is in existence today, has been in existence for the past 30 years and will continue to be in existence. But I'll say to—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I invite the minister to come outside. There are another 150 grandparents who want to talk to you.

The minister continues to confuse the facts and refuses to acknowledge her government's callous and mean-spirited decision to cut off grandkids from the funding they need. Since this minister's words and actions mean she no longer has the confidence of those she's supposed to serve, including some of Ontario's most vulnerable people, why won't she do the honourable thing and why won't she resign?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It is very unfortunate that this member is using this tactic to scare the people off. That's not true. This program is not going to be cancelled like this member is telling us. This program is in existence and will continue to be in existence. We are supporting those children who are in need of protection and helping the parents or neighbours who are supporting them.

There are four other provinces that have a similar program to the one in Ontario. Five provinces and two other territories don't have this program, but we believe in it and we will continue to work with those who are taking care of children to support them on a temporary basis.

1100

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question today is for the Minister of Labour. Minister—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Hamilton East: Maybe you want to go outside?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Minister, you as well as I know that virtually every person in the province of Ontario is concerned about the economy, and with that come concerns about whether they have a job or whether they'll be able to find a job.

I was in contact with a constituent just recently who told me that he was lured by the promise of employment. He paid \$300 to a temporary agency for what was called a required security guard training course. When the course was over, he was told there were no jobs available and he could not have his money back.

Minister, that \$300 could have been used to pay his rent. Now he has no job, and if he can't make his rent payment, he may find himself homeless. Can the minister

tell us how this situation could be legal in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for Pickering–Scarborough East for his heartfelt question. I sincerely regret that your constituent now finds himself in this situation. When we undertook a consultation earlier this year, we heard similar stories. We also heard stories about some agencies that charge large fees up front in order to place workers and then only provide workers with a few part-time assignments that do not even recover the initial payment. Unfortunately, in our current legislation, there are no prohibitions to prevent the few unsavoury agencies that would choose to take advantage of vulnerable workers from charging these fees.

This issue was addressed by my parliamentary assistant, Vic Dhillon, in his private member's bill introduced last season, and is being looked at seriously. I'd like to take a moment to thank Mr. Dhillon for all his hard work.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm aware that there were extensive consultations done on temporary agencies. It's my understanding there were other issues dealt with at the same time during these consultations. Could the minister tell us if, in effect, that's the case, and what these issues were, as well as when we can expect to see the minister move forward to address some of these critical issues for these people?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Thank you again for the question. The other issues looked at by my parliamentary assistant, Vic Dhillon, during our consultation on work through temporary help agencies were current provisions in the act that deny public holiday pay, severance and termination pay to temp workers; barriers to permanent employment; whether clients who use temp workers should be held responsible for their Employment Standards Act violations; and if there is a need to provide information to temporary workers about their assignments.

Mr. Dhillon and I have reviewed over 120 submissions we received and will be looking very closely, with our colleague Deb Matthews on her poverty agenda, and hope to be making an announcement very soon on this important issue.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, the cost of caring for a child in foster care is approximately \$900 per month. The cost of a child being raised in a kinship home is \$231 under temporary care assistance. What is your plan B to offset the increased cost to the foster care system when these children are forced out of their grandparents' home as a result of you cutting off temporary care assistance for grandparents raising their grandchildren?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, the temporary care assistance program is there to stay, not like when your government was in power: You cut it from \$14

million to \$8 million. I understand why your colleagues asked you to ask this question, because you were not a member at that time.

This government is supporting those who are taking care of these children and will continue. In December, we're giving another 2% increase. What this party did is, they voted against it. Every time we move forward to help children, to help their parents, to help their caregivers, what these two parties are doing is, they are voting against it. Shame on you.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: If the minister would like a history lesson, I'm happy to give her one. Temporary care assistance came in under Janet Ecker under Mike Harris in this Parliament.

Minister, there aren't enough foster spaces in the system now for the children who need it. These grandparents are helping you to look after children who would otherwise be living in group homes at a much higher social and economic cost to the government and to them. What is your ministry's plan to accommodate children being forced to leave kinship families?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me correct what the member just said. Temporary care assistance has been in existence since the 1970s. What they did—that government introduced “settled intention” into the legislation in 1997 and they moved it under Ontario Works. They stand up and they're saying, “What a shame it is that this program is under Ontario Works.” It was your government that moved this program under Ontario Works.

We will continue to support the parents and the grandparents and family members who are taking care of those children. Again, in December, we're giving a 2% increase, and we're thanking all of those who are stepping in when children are in need.

UNION CERTIFICATION

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a question of the Minister of Labour. When over 60% of Ontario's jobs are part-time jobs, and when more than 3.5 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay less than \$25,000 a year, and when more than 85% of those in those low-wage jobs are non-unionized, if this government is really serious about poverty, why won't it permit card-based certification for all Ontario workers, not just some of them?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: This government has worked closely with labour, with employers and with employees through Bill 144. We feel that we struck the right balance to bring fairness and stability to the workplace.

I can say that we have an excellent record when it comes to labour relations. Some 97% of collective agreements are done without any work stoppage. They're done in agreement by bringing the parties to the table, resolving any issues, any disputes that they have amongst themselves.

I feel we're doing a very good job here when it comes to the province of Ontario. It's a record that many look to

with envy. I continue to keep on with that record and to make sure that the record stays strong the way it is.

Mr. Peter Kormos: This government's denial to the vast majority of Ontario workers of the right to card-based certification denies those workers access to the provisions of the Labour Relations Act. Fair-minded Ontarians, like those amongst thousands who have signed cards like these, want to know why this government turns its back on the majority of workers, the most vulnerable workers, the poorest workers, the hardest-working workers, those who work at two and three jobs, by denying them and continuing to deny them card-based certification when it allows other workers that same right to form a union by basis of card-based certification.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We focus on the workers. We make sure those workers are healthy and safe and that they work in fair environments. We make sure that we uphold the Employment Standards Act. We are undergoing work and consultation when it comes to vulnerable workers with temporary work agencies. It's about making sure that we work in partnership with our employees, our hard-working Ontarians, the employer and labour groups. We've done that, and we've done that very well. The record speaks for itself: 97% of collective agreements without work stoppage. I think we've brought peace, stability and fairness into the marketplace.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Culture. All my colleagues here in the Legislature have the great privilege of representing the finest people in the greatest province in Canada, the province of Ontario. Our province has a proud history that has been shaped to a great extent by the individuals who led it as Premier. Until recently, though, the legacy of these former Premiers was not properly recognized, and in some instances their final resting places remained anonymous tombstones. During the last term, I worked diligently to correct this and ensure that these final resting places receive proper recognition. On Thursday, November 13, the former Premiers of Ontario finally received their due recognition. Can the minister explain what the government is doing to recognize and honour the services of Ontario's former Premiers?

1110

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: The McGuinty government, through the Ontario—

Interjection.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: There are those of us who value the heritage of this province, and one of the groups that values the heritage of this province is the Dalton McGuinty government, and through the Ontario Heritage Trust, another group that seems to think what we have in this province is worth honouring, they recently launched the Premiers' gravesites program with a ceremony in St. Andrews West honouring Ontario's first Premier, John Sandfield Macdonald.

The Ontario Heritage Trust provided \$412,000 to create this program, which honours the service and achieve-

ments of our former Premiers and their efforts to build a stronger Ontario. I'm pleased to advise the House that this new program was inspired from a private member's bill championed by the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, and it has attracted considerable media and I think—

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: I can tell you Thursday was a great day for the province of Ontario and for all those who passionately advocate for the preservation of our history, and I and my colleagues have done that here in Ontario.

I want to thank those members who supported me in the past with this initiative: the previous Minister of Culture, Caroline Di Cocco; the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London; those who came out to the gravesites in 2006, to the ceremonies that I held; and Premier McGuinty himself for his leadership.

Thanks to the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Timmins, please come to order.

Mr. Brownell: Thanks to the Premiers' gravesite program, the former leaders of Ontario are receiving due recognition, communities across the province are gaining a source of community pride, and a great opportunity has been created in Ontario to learn more about those who led our province as Premier. This program comes courtesy of the Ontario Heritage Trust, a great agency that does excellent work preserving and promoting our past.

Minister, can you tell us what other initiatives the trust is engaged in to promote awareness of our heritage across Ontario?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank the honourable colleague for his interest and understanding of how important this entire heritage initiative is.

The Ontario Heritage Trust continues to work with various partners and individuals to commemorate the people, the places and the events that have shaped our history and shape our culture—even a culture that includes the member from the opposite side of the House. This year, the Ontario Heritage Trust brought hundreds of communities together to participate in 54 successful Doors Open Ontario events.

Through this innovative program, hundreds of communities showcase their rich local heritage while attracting thousands of visitors to participate in this unique experience in cultural tourism, which, for the interest of the House, hugely boosts local economies at a time when such economies can use a boost.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: To the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the Halton regional council unanimously passed a resolution to freeze growth until it receives well-needed funding for hospitals. I repeat, there will be no more building permits approved in Oakville and Milton

until this government lives up to the infrastructure obligations. This is a very serious matter, minister.

Your government delayed progress at Oakville hospital because of a supposed lack of construction capacity. Well, that was then and this is now. We live in a whole new world in the past three months.

It's time to put the Oakville and Milton hospital projects back on the books. Minister, will you do that?

Hon. David Caplan: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that I appreciated the chance to speak with him the other day and also to my colleague from Oakville.

A couple of things that are important: First, we recognize there are substantial growth pressures out there, and that's why our government, this year, is investing \$9.9 billion in infrastructure—a number that is unprecedented. There is some limitation in construction capacity, and the honourable member can suggest, if he wishes, that everything has changed in the last three months, but it is our obligation on projects as big as that one—which is an extraordinarily large project in Oakville—that we actually have companies that bid against one another in a tendering process that is competitive and gets value, and those conditions do not exist at present.

We're working very vigorously with the local member, Kevin Flynn, on trying to have the fastest possible timetable, because there is a government in Ontario that supports hospital construction; it's our government. That party continues to propose—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The bottom line is that Halton needs hospitals and they need them now.

Your government's failed policies across the board have contributed to this situation. From your irregular municipal funding to your disastrous economic mismanagement, the regional council in Halton is being forced to resort to these kinds of ultimatums. I understand, Minister, that these are tough decisions, but that does not excuse your lack of action.

Minister, will you commit today to immediately renew the construction on Trafalgar hospital in Oakville and immediately begin the process of expanding the current hospital in Milton?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, the member uses the word "ultimatum" and suggests that's an appropriate tactic. I don't think that's right.

I'm looking forward to the meeting that I'm going to have with Regional Chair Carr. Our government has nothing to be embarrassed about with respect to the investments that we've made in Halton—\$386 million on highway improvements. The land for the hospital, in the first place, was provided free of charge. We've invested \$197 million in Halton schools, \$332 million in transit investments, \$10 million for MIII projects, \$23 million

for municipal roads, \$12 million for affordable housing plus the municipal gas tax payments.

We agree, there are areas where additional investment is needed in Halton. I've been working closely with the member from Oakville on this very matter, and I'm looking forward to the conversation with the regional chair.

We don't think ultimatums are the right solution. We want to work in partnership with Halton region. We want to see more growth and development in that community, and we're committed to building new hospital infrastructure, starting in Oakville when we—

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

NURSES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Out of a \$40-billion budget, why did the minister decide to break his promise to hire the desperately needed 9,000 nurses?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm glad that the member raises this, because there is no broken promise. In fact, because of the economic circumstances, we will be lengthening the time over which we will be able to do that. We had originally hoped to be able to do so over the course of 2011, but because of the economic circumstances, it will take us a little bit longer. But we will not do what the NDP did when they were in government, which was fire over 3,000 nurses, and we will not do what the Conservatives did when they were in office, which was see a reduction of over 6,000 nursing positions.

This government has taken a different approach. To date, we have seen over 8,000 nurses hired in this province. I look forward, as I did earlier today meeting with the Ontario Nurses' Association—and they, too, understood that we are fully committed to seeing those 9,000 nurses in practice in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Ontario health care system needs more nurses now. Why did the minister choose to balance the books on the backs of our nurses?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, we are hiring nurses today. Somebody did a search of Workopolis and found over 500 positions for Ontario nurses currently on offer, so the member's information and the characterization that she makes are fully incorrect.

This government hires nurses. The NDP fired nurses. The Conservatives fired nurses. On this side of the House, we know that we need front-line medical personnel to provide the high quality of care that Ontarians would require to lower wait times in emergency departments.

We've sat with our nurses to make sure that they are an integral partner with us, moving forward. I had a chance to speak with them today at their biennial convention, and they know that they have a partner in Premier McGuinty and in this government.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

There is snow on the ground this morning, which means that the cold and flu season is officially upon us. For many Ontarians the flu is simply an inconvenience, but for our province's most vulnerable populations, the elderly and chronically ill, the flu can be life-threatening. It results in extended hospital stays and causes unneeded stress for family and friends.

For the past eight years, the government has offered free flu shots in an effort to reduce the number of Ontarians who fall ill with the flu. I ask the minister, how can Ontarians access this program?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member from Richmond Hill, but I also want to acknowledge the member opposite who introduced this program into Ontario. It was certainly the right thing to do and I want to remind all members of this House and all Ontarians to get a flu shot. I had mine a few weeks ago. It was easy and it was painless.

For the 2008-09 flu season, Ontario has ordered five million doses of the influenza vaccine. Free flu shots are available throughout the province through doctors' offices, employer-sponsored clinics, public health units, local pharmacies and here today at Queen's Park, downstairs in the basement. They're also available in hospitals, long-term-care homes, community health centres and CCACs. We are trying to make it as simple as possible for Ontarians to get their flu shot. It is my sincere hope that anyone living in Ontario who is more than six months old will take the time to get a flu shot.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the minister for his advice, but I am wondering about the effectiveness of this program. Ontario is the only province to offer a fully funded vaccination program. I want to ensure that it's really reducing the number of Ontarians who fall ill and relieving pressures within Ontario's health care system. Can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care tell the House whether this program has successfully reduced the number of hospitalizations and doctors' offices visits across the province?

Hon. David Caplan: The member is right. I know that the member from Waterloo would agree with me about the program's effectiveness. I'm very concerned about ensuring that our precious health care dollars are being spent on programs that produce results. Ontario's influenza immunization program was the first large-scale program of its kind in the world. I'm glad to be able to tell the House that a recent study by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Studies, or ICES, as it's called, found that Ontario's flu shot program annually prevents 300 deaths, 1,000 hospitalizations, 30,000 visits to emergency departments and 200,000 visits to doctors' offices. It has already relieved tremendous pressure on Ontario's health care system.

I'm also pleased to say that the world has taken notice. Our flu shot program has been hailed by the World Health Organization as a model for other countries to follow—

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

NURSES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm glad to hear about the success of the flu shot. I guess this government did something right.

Anyway, my question is for the Minister of Health, and I'd like to just set the record straight on something else also. The reality is—I don't know what the NDP did regarding nurses, but I do know that we hired an additional 12,000 nurses. I also know that the former Minister of Health—under his leadership, the government fired 791 nurses, at a cost of about \$97 million.

My question is to the minister. Minister, today, your answer provided cold comfort to ONA. I'd like you to address the issue of how Quinte Health is going to cope with the fact that—

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

Hon. David Caplan: I do agree that my colleague did introduce the flu shot program. She also, unfortunately, left some devastation when it came to nurses in the province of Ontario. I wouldn't rely upon press releases from the Conservative Party of Ontario, but rather from the College of Nurses. The number of registered nurses in Ontario fell by 3,000 between 1990 and 1995 under the NDP. There were 6,200 fewer working in hospitals in the first four years in office of the Conservative government. There were 8,000 new nursing jobs created by my colleague, Minister Smitherman, when in office, offering a guaranteed job to every new nurse in the province.

There is more that I have that I can share, but those are the facts. Ontario nurses, when I was at the ONA convention, readily acknowledge the support that this government has—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Minister of Health. People listening obviously heard that he wasn't comparing apples to apples. The reality is that we hired 12,000 nurses, and the reality is that we introduced community care access centres. There were 7,000 nurses that went to community care access centres. You should get your facts straight.

So my question to you is, Minister, at a time when Ontario needs 10,000 nurses, according to Doris Grinspun of the RNAO—and they need them now to catch up with the rest of the country—why have you postponed the hiring of 9,000? Why are you allowing 50 nurses to be cut at Quinte and somewhere up to 400 in Hamilton and other places in the province?

Hon. David Caplan: Once again, the member unfortunately has her facts wrong. I'm glad that I was able to set her straight earlier.

There are other indicators as well. For example, there was a tremendous shift that we saw, beginning with the New Democrats, where nurses were moved from full-time to part-time to casual positions. In fact, that was accelerated by the Conservative government. Under our government, the number of nurses working full-time has increased 10%. These are facts that are indisputable.

There's another fact: This member and her party advocate the elimination of the Ontario health premium. The Ontario health premium accounts for \$3 billion of health care funding to hire those nurses in the province of Ontario. This member and her colleagues advocate the elimination of that premium, and this member must answer the question: What services would she cut from the health care system?

OBSTETRICAL CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is also to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Does this minister believe that newborn babies should be separated from their mothers at birth?

Hon. David Caplan: I think the answer to that is no. We're providing tremendous maternal and newborn care right across the province. In fact, I had the great pleasure to introduce, for the first time in a long time, a pediatric strategy here in the province of Ontario, expanded NICU capability.

In fact, because of the work that has gone on previously, Ontario has been able to see a tremendous brain gain. We have been able to attract Dr. Shoo Lee, one of Canada's foremost neonatologists, to Ontario. He not only provides tremendous care, but he provides incredible research.

This member would know the commitment we have placed behind these services and that we will continue well into the future. I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today, Hamiltonians learned that 39 doctors and department heads at two Hamilton hospitals say that that's exactly what's going to happen when the Health Sciences restructuring occurs. Therefore, they're saying that high-risk deliveries won't even be able to be performed in Hamilton anymore. Will this minister finally do his job and send Hamilton Health Sciences and the LHINs back to the drawing board, so that mothers and babies and children and adults can get the health services they need at the McMaster site?

Hon. David Caplan: The plan at Hamilton Health Sciences specifically is all about providing better care. I would quote for the member Brenda Flaherty, the executive vice-president of clinical operations; she says, "I certainly respect their"—referring to the doctors—"concerns and want to work closely with them." She goes on, "I'm confident we can build a model that provides high-quality care to our obstetrics and gynecology patients."

I know that the officials at the hospital are confident that Hamilton Health Sciences and doctors can reach an

agreement so that high-risk deliveries will still be done at McMaster. I know that the proposal is a change. But in fact, it will, in the opinion of the people there, be able to produce better care. I know that—

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

MEDICAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Atreo Medical, an Ontario company, was featured in Time Magazine in 2007, "Best invention of the year." In its article, Time magazine described the CPRGlove, a device which is designed to "talk you through proper resuscitation." This made-in-Hamilton innovation was developed by three biochemical and electrical engineers from McMaster University, Corey Centen, Nilesh Patel and Sarah Smith.

Minister, what is the Ministry of Research and Innovation doing to ensure that life-saving innovations such as the CPRGlove have a chance to come to market and create the next generation of high-paying jobs here in Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for bringing this McMaster medical innovation to the attention of the Legislature this morning. I'm pleased to say that the Ministry of Research and Innovation has invested some \$500,000 in Atreo through the investment accelerator fund. The funding will help Atreo bring to market its award-winning CPRGlove.

The researchers at Atreo started with one question: If someone suddenly collapsed in front of you, clutching their chest, would you know what to do? Could you calmly and confidently perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation, knowing it requires 100 compressions a minute to a depth of five centimetres? Through the incorporation of multiple sensors in a wearable glove, they invented a device that collects sensory data and instructs the user on where to apply pressure, how fast and how hard to make the compressions, and reminding them to call 911 and to check for a pulse.

Atreo hopes to make—

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

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: In October, Dr. Martin James O'Donnell, an assistant professor at McMaster University, received a Pfizer Cardiovascular Research Award. In addition, McMaster recently announced Dr. Sonia Anand, a celebrated researcher and physician, as the university's first holder of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario and Michael G. DeGroote Chair in Population Health Research. The contributions of these members of our community speaks to the importance of medical research and innovation in our city.

Minister, what is the Ministry of Research and Innovation doing to support groundbreaking medical research and institutions such as Hamilton Regional Cancer Centre and Hamilton Health Sciences?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would agree with my colleague from Hamilton Mountain that there is world-class

research going on in Hamilton that we can all, in this House, be very proud of. I can tell you that our ministry is supporting a number of amazing projects. MRI has invested over \$1.2 million in groundbreaking research at Hamilton Health Sciences, including some \$589,680 in a project led by Dr. Ranjan Sur looking at photodynamic therapy and brachytherapy and palliation of advanced lung cancer.

We've also invested \$1 million in the Hamilton Regional Cancer Centre, including \$838,000 in projects led by Dr. Gurmit Singh for the development and testing of a biophotonic platform of in vivo assessment of tumour progression and treatment efficacy; and as well, some \$58,886, an investment looking at the treatment of thrombosis, arteriosclerosis, and osteoporosis at the Hamilton civic hospital research centre.

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

The House recessed from 1133 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Kuldip Kular: In the east visitors' gallery, I have a family friend, Mrs. Satwant Aulakh, who is visiting us from Seattle, USA, on a business and leisure trip. I want to welcome her. Accompanying her is my dear wife, Jessie Kular.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to welcome to this House Ms. Gilboord's grade 5 class from Eitz Chaim School—which means “tree of life”—in my riding of Thornhill. They will be joining us in the west gallery at 1:30, but I want to get their name into Hansard.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Tim Hudak: Andrew Lanese is a courageous 11-year-old boy in my riding; he lives in Pelham. He has been living with a progressive degenerative disease called Hunter syndrome since he was an infant. If left untreated, Andrew faces further damage to his tissue and organ functions and even, sadly, premature death.

There is just one medication available to help Andrew's condition, called Elaprase. If Andrew lived in British Columbia or Alberta, the cost of Elaprase would be funded by the public drug program. Unfortunately, here in the province of Ontario they have to pay for the treatments out of pocket. Through active fundraising efforts, overwhelming community support and significant financial sacrifices by the loving Lanese family, they have raised enough money to start Andrew on therapy privately this year. The results have been remarkable. Andrew's motor skills have noticeably improved, and he can now walk greater distances on his own.

Unfortunately, the money raised for Andrew's treatment will run out next month. In fact, the Lanese family is hosting a benefit in St. Catharines tomorrow to help replenish the fund for Andrew's treatment. Anyone interested in making a donation can please call 905-227-1521 or e-mail tbozza@cogeco.ca.

I understand that the Ministry of Health has recently approved funding for some Hunter syndrome patients—there are only about six in the entire province of Ontario—but, as of yet, not Andrew. I have called on the Minister of Health today to personally intervene to treat everyone living with Hunter syndrome in the province of Ontario and particularly Andrew Lanese.

UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise today in commemoration of the Holodomor. This was a purposeful genocide of famine perpetrated upon 10 million people in Ukraine who died in a very short period of time between 1932 and 1933.

I also rise in non-partisan support of my colleague Dave Levac's private member's bill and urge the government to pass it, recognizing November 22 as a day of commemoration for the Holodomor.

I also keep in mind a person from my riding, Anne Romaniuk, who passed away not too long ago, who as a small child who lived through the Holodomor remembered her grandmother starving to death.

This is an incredible oversight in genocide studies. We certainly also urge the Minister of Education to make sure that it is commemorated in the curriculum of all students across Ontario who study genocide.

In particular, I want to acknowledge that there was a commemorative service out on the front lawn of Queen's Park today. With the Canadian Congress of Ukrainians, we in the New Democratic Party add our voices to all of those of Ukrainian decent and all of those who are concerned about civil rights and human welfare for this Saturday, November 22.

DEFIBRILLATION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand in the House today and recognize the “thousand defibrillators” program launched by the Heart and Stroke Foundation last Friday. I attended the installation of another of these defibrillators at the Kiwanis seniors centre. The centre received one of the 20 defibrillators distributed throughout London.

The McGuinty government is providing \$3 million towards this project and distributing 1,000 defibrillators across Ontario to recreation centre facilities.

I want to tell you, approximately 6,500 people in Ontario suffer from cardiac arrest outside hospitals, with 20% of all cases occurring outside the home. These devices are a great resource for the people of Ontario because they can improve the survival rate by 50% when combined with CPR.

At this event, I met with seniors from the London community who were pleased with the initiative, and also representatives from the city of London, from Fanshawe College, from the EMS society. All these people welcomed the initiative because it's a great way to save lives and protect people.

This is one of many ways the government of Ontario is improving the lives of citizens. We are committed to working hand in hand with people to ensure they are living healthy and productive lives.

I wish you all the luck, and I thank all the people from London who participated in this event.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Ontario, the land of my birth,
For decades the centre of fortune and mirth,
Where hard work and sacrifice defined our self-worth,
Where none could imagine dependence and dearth.

It still looks familiar but in status it's changed,
From "have" to "have-not," our role rearranged,
From the core of the country, our position's ex-
changed,
Now near the bottom, the fisc'ly estranged.

What is their plan to make the pain stop?
What bills on the books to avoid further drop?
What bold new ideas will put us back at the top?
What reprieve from the damage of the five-point flop?

Nothing new, says the Premier, just continuous blame,
Just the same old McGuinty publicity game,
More taxes for all, more bans to proclaim,
And phony debates that make critics cry "shame!"

More smiles for cameras, more smug condescending,
More wasteful bureaucratic spending,
More government hands overextending,
Everywhere but in sectors that really need mending.

They won't listen to reason, they don't answer our
questions,
They refuse to admit their unending obsession,
With spending announcements that march out in pro-
cession,
Along the dark road that leads straight t'wards re-
cession.

They have left us exposed and economically prone,
Through short-sighted vision and mistakes all their
own,
They still only blame others, abdicating their throne,
Ontario, now we stand alone.

FRONTLINES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to bring attention to our youth and to how important it is to

provide them with a positive and safe place in the community. One such place is Frontlines, an organization with strong ties to the community of Weston in the riding of York South–Weston that I represent.

The centre, which first opened its doors 20 years ago, offers a variety of activities, including English as a second language classes, a homework club and a special cooking class. Under the direction of Kristy Grisdale, Frontlines staff and volunteers build genuine relationships with each and every person who walks through their door.

This government understands that it is organizations such as Frontlines that create a safe space for children and youth. That is why it established the youth challenge fund in partnership with the United Way. The province of Ontario has invested \$15 million and provided another \$15 million, in matching dollars for the fund. These matching funds have been set up to encourage donations from the private sector and individuals, bringing the total potential investment to \$45 million over three years.

Frontlines serves as a prime example of the good investments which have been made by the youth challenge fund, and I look forward to more investments in our children and our youth.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: In recognition of National Child Day and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, I will be introducing this afternoon the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act.

As a society, we've unfortunately moved beyond only protecting Ontario's most vulnerable kids. Today, even children in stable loving homes need greater protection from the dangers on our streets, and that's why this bill includes sweeping measures that speak to families across the province, including my own.

In fact, Chatham-Kent police told the Chatham Daily News earlier this week that studies show that the reported cases of child abuse only represent 10% of the actual abuse cases in Canada. That's why the measures I propose will expand awareness and education opportunities for youth, in terms of prevention; enhance accountability and transparency in our existing systems; and build in more tools for parents and the justice system.

1310

I'd like to thank Agnes Samler, Charlie Coffey, Les Horne and Audrey Rastin, and our provincial child advocate, Irwin Elman, for joining me this morning and for all their tireless work on behalf of Ontario's children.

I'd also like to thank Tim Hudak, Christine Elliott and Sylvia Jones for their efforts and their support of this bill. Above all, I would like to thank Megan Boyle and Jad Haffar, on my staff, who made this bill a reality.

I appeal to all members of the Legislative Assembly to put aside their team jerseys and political ideologies for the greater protection of children and youth in this province.

WILLIAM OSLER HEALTH CENTRE

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today to recognize a transformational gift that was announced last Friday night at the William Osler Health Centre Foundation gala. Metrus Development pledged a total of \$10 million to the Brampton Civic Hospital. I'm told that this donation is one of the largest private donations ever given to a non-teaching community hospital in Ontario.

Mr. DeGasperis and Mr. Muzzo from Metrus have always taken a leadership role in our community, being one of the largest land developers in Brampton. This donation, though, demonstrates their commitment to more than bricks and mortar. They're valuable contributors to the social fabric within the communities they build.

To recognize the generosity of these families, the William Osler Health Centre has named its expansive three-storey-tall atrium in the hospital the DeGasperis and Muzzo Atrium.

I'd like to take this time to thank Mr. DeGasperis and Mr. Muzzo and the entire Metrus family for their generous gift. This gift has paved the way for other business leaders to join them in investing in essential health services and ensures that Brampton remains the envy of other municipalities.

Nothing is more important to a community than its hospital. Clearly, Metrus Development shares our government's opinion that this state-of-the-art facility has a very bright future. Soon, the foundation's fundraising goal, which was once thought of as unachievable, is within striking distance, thanks to the support of companies like Metrus—they and other community leaders who believe in this hospital, the people who work there and the kind of care they will provide for decades to come.

REMEMBRANCE DAY CEREMONY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Last week during constituency week, I was pleased to once again attend a number of Remembrance Day ceremonies in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore to commemorate and honour those fallen heroes who gave their lives for our country and for peace around the world.

One such ceremony took place at David Hornell Junior School, built in 1961 and named after World War II flying ace and posthumous Victoria Cross recipient, Flight Lieutenant David Hornell.

David Hornell grew up in the Mimico neighbourhood in my riding, so Remembrance Day at his school has always been a very special occasion to honour David's memory.

This year's service included three former principals and two superintendents, veterans from my riding's Royal Canadian Legions, as well as a cadet guard. The students of David Hornell Junior School, in song, presented thoughts about the futility of war and the importance of peace, both in their own lives and throughout the world.

Principal Virginia Field shared the significance of the RCAF sweetheart pin she wore, handed down by her mother, who had received it from her father, Arthur Field, an RCAF officer who in fact knew David Hornell's brother Bill.

David Hornell Junior School serves a diverse population of students, many of them new Canadians experiencing their first link with Canadian culture. Through this wonderful annual remembrance, as well as a memorabilia gallery within the school, students learn about this local hero and acquire a sense of what the war meant within their own community 75 years ago. They also understand the sacrifices that brave young men and women like David Hornell made for our future peace and prosperity.

NDP LEADERSHIP

Mr. Jim Brownell: Last Friday, my riding was graced with a visit by the candidates vying for the leadership of the provincial NDP. They were kind enough to share their opinions of my performance, although they neglected to mention the fact that through my advocacy working with the government, our hospital boards, community and union leaders, we now have three hospital redevelopment projects under way, not to mention a new hospice and a new community health centre.

I have always believed it important to work with my partners, both here at Queen's Park and in the riding, to foster a positive relationship and achieve a positive result for all parties involved. It is a hallmark of this government to do away with the animosity of the past and build a better future for Ontario with our partners. That is our vision.

I think it is important for me to share with the viewers at home what vision the NDP leadership contenders have in mind for Ontario. In one fell swoop, they disparaged the local city council, of which one councillor is president of the local NDP association; had biting remarks for the hospital board that has worked hard to ensure that redevelopment happens; and inflamed a situation that I and others have been trying to resolve in a rational manner.

I never thought I would have cause to make this comparison, but it seems that the NDP want to take Ontario back to the days of Mike Harris, creating division between parties in the province, when our work could be accomplished in so many other, good ways.

Personally, I will continue to work in a positive manner with all my stakeholders, delivering real, positive—

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

ANNUAL REPORT, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table the 2007 annual report of the chief medical officer of health.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND PROTECTION RIGHTS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES DROITS DES ENFANTS EN MATIÈRE DE SÉCURITÉ ET DE PROTECTION

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts related to the safety and protection of children / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la sécurité et à la protection des enfants.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

It's carried.

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I will beg your indulgence, because it is quite a lengthy act and there are several things I will have to read from the explanatory note.

The bill amends various acts in relation to children. Currently, Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000, requires individuals convicted of certain sexual offences to register with the police. The bill amends the act to provide for a child abuse registry which will be available to the public. The child abuse registry will contain information about persons who have committed sexual and other violent acts against children. The title of the act is changed to Christopher's Law (Sex Offender and Child Abuse Registries).

The bill amends the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, to prohibit advertising that contains images of a sexual nature to a person who is or appears to be under the age of 16. The act is also amended to prohibit advertising that is directed at persons 16 years of age or under that contains clothing, images or other material that encourages sexual activity or creates sexual awareness.

The bill amends the Education Act to establish November 20 in each year as Children's Day in schools and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

The act is amended to require principals, teachers and all other board employees to report incidents of violence or abuse committed against a student to the student's parents, the school board, the police and, where the child is receiving services from a children's aid society, the society. The act is also amended to prohibit the use of corporal punishment on students.

The bill amends the Ombudsman Act to allow the Ombudsman to investigate any decision or recommendation made, or any act done or omitted, in the course of

the administration of a children's aid society, a school board or hospital.

The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007, is amended to allow the advocate to provide advocacy to students in schools and to children in hospitals.

The act is also amended to require the advocate to report annually to the Legislative Assembly on the implementation by Ontario of the principles expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The provisions related to a show-cause hearing in section 150 of the Provincial Offences Act are amended in respect of defendants charged with child abuse offences under the Child and Family Services Act.

In these types of cases, detention and custody may be justified to ensure the defendant's appearance in court, to protect the public safety or to maintain confidence in the administration of justice. Also, in these types of cases, an order for release may be conditional upon the defendant abstaining from communicating with any victim, witness or other person identified in the order.

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Ramsay moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to retailers of electricity and gas marketers / Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario à l'égard des détaillants d'électricité et des agents de commercialisation de gaz.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

1320

Mr. David Ramsay: This proposed bill would provide improved consumer protection from predatory door-to-door electricity and natural gas retailers. This bill is a result of dealing with hundreds of cases in my constituency where people have lost their power and, in some cases, have had their children taken away because they could no longer heat their home. By selling consumers higher-cost energy as well as triggering cancellation fees on existing contracts, consumers are incurring debt, which often leads to the disconnection of service. This, in turn, leads to deposits having to be required when reconnection of service comes afterwards. In many cases, our social service agencies have had to intervene on behalf of clients, causing undue financial stress on government coffers.

This bill, if passed, would require retailers of energy and marketers of gas to provide a reaffirmation letter to the consumer that must be signed and returned to the

retailer. This letter would have to have the new cost, the present cost, the cancellation fee, if any, to the consumer, and also what they could get from the utility.

The last thing it's also going to do, if passed, is ban the allowing of retailers entering people into contracts upon cashing of a cheque that they receive through direct mail contact.

LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT ACT
(FRUIT WINE), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL
(VIN DE FRUITS)

Mr. Runciman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act /
Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis
d'alcool.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The bill amends the Liquor Licence Act to establish a licence to enable manufacturers of fruit wine to sell the fruit wine at farmers' markets if the fruit wine meets the standards for sale at government stores.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have a petition from the students at York University.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the strike by CUPE Local 3903 at York University has resulted in classes being cancelled, affecting more than 50,000 students across the greater Toronto area; and

"Whereas the members of CUPE Local 3903 show an unwillingness to bargain in good faith and bring an end to this strike; and

"Whereas York University has offered to resolve this labour dispute through binding arbitration;

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

"Enact back-to-work legislation requiring the termination of any strike or lockout action and requiring this labour dispute to be resolved through binding arbitration."

I fully support this petition, I affix my name to it, and will give it to page Brittney.

POVERTY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This petition is addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, are writing to ask that the province of Ontario's proposed poverty reduction strategy include measures to address the extreme poverty faced by many single adults and couples without children in our community.

"A single adult on social assistance living in Toronto must now survive on \$560 a month, yet the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto is more than \$919. Adults without children must be given the same opportunities under the plan as adults who live with children in poverty."

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL
FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mike Colle: This petition is from the Eglinton Flats social club.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government gives more support for economic development, health care and infrastructure to other parts of Canada, and unemployed workers in Ontario get less employment insurance support than in other parts of Canada;

"Whereas the federal system of taxes and equalization extracts over \$20 billion from the people of Ontario every year above and beyond what Ottawa invests in Ontario;

"Whereas laid-off workers in Ontario get \$4,630 less in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada;

"Whereas federal health care money is supposed to be divided equally ..." yet "Ontario residents are short-changed by \$773 million per year;

"Whereas the federal government provides economic development support for people living in" other parts of Canada but none in southern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the federal government stop gouging the people of Ontario and treat them fairly."

I support the petition, and I'll affix my name to it.

TUITION

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

"Whereas undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have increased by 195% since 1990 and are the third-highest in all of the provinces in Canada; and

"Whereas average student debt in Ontario has skyrocketed by 250% in the last 15 years to over \$25,000 for four years of study; and

"Whereas international students pay three to four times more for the same education, and domestic students in professional programs such as law or medicine pay as much tuition as \$20,000 per year; and

“Whereas 70% of new jobs require post-secondary education, and fees reduce the opportunity for many low- and middle-income families while magnifying barriers for aboriginal, rural, racialized and other marginalized students; and

“Whereas Ontario currently provides the lowest per capita funding for post-secondary education in Canada, while many countries fully fund higher education and charge little or no fees for college and university; and

“Whereas public opinion polls show that nearly three quarters of Ontarians think the government’s Reaching Higher framework for tuition fee increases of 20% to 36% over four years is unfair;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to immediately drop tuition fees to 2004 levels and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce a new framework that:

“(1) Reduces tuition and ancillary fees annually for” all “students.

“(2) Converts a portion of every student loan into a grant.

“(3) Increases per student funding above the national average.”

I agree with this petition—it’s asking to lower tuition fees to Mike Harris levels—and I certainly will sign it.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition 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 relations between the children and their grandparents; and

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act” as above “to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

As I agree with this petition, I’ll sign it and send it to the Clerk’s table.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition. I’m glad to sign it and pass it to the page.

1330

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

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

“Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

“Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

“Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

“Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

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

“That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians.”

Since I was the health minister who got rid of the sex change operation funding, I certainly agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario about Milton District Hospital.

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition, and I’m pleased to sign my name to it and pass it to my page.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with Bill 119, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act.

“Whereas the McGuinty government has introduced Bill 119, Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act, 2008, which makes WSIB mandatory for independent operators, partners and executive officers in construction; and

“Whereas this bill will cost the average business owner about \$11,000 while doing nothing to catch cheaters in the underground economy; and

“Whereas this bill will do nothing to make workers safer in the workplace; and

“Whereas there has been insufficient consultation with construction companies and stakeholders to discuss the impact of this bill or other alternatives; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government refuses to allow discussion of this bill with the affected parties through the committee process;

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

“To revoke Bill 119 or to require the Standing Committee on Social Policy to travel across the province of

Ontario in order to provide an opportunity for consultation with affected businesses.”

I support this petition.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a 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 agree with the petition, I sign my name, and I pass it to my page Courtney.

LOGGING ROUTE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with logging through the village of Restoule.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Nipissing forest management plan proposes to use Hawthorne Drive in Restoule, which features a single-lane bridge and narrow and steep sections; and

“Whereas area residents have grave concerns about community safety, traffic speed, truck noise and general wear and tear of Hawthorne Drive and the bridge in the village of Restoule; and

“Whereas the proposed route travels past the Restoule Canadian Legion and two churches; and

“Whereas alternative routes are possible via Odorizzi Road and Block 09-056;

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

“That the government of Ontario put the safety and concerns of the people of Restoule ahead of logging interests and ensure an alternate route is selected for the Nipissing forest management plan.”

I support this petition.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this, and I've signed it.

EMERGENCY DISPATCH SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with emergency communication services in Parry Sound–Muskoka. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is considering relocating emergency ambulance and fire dispatch services currently provided by Muskoka Ambulance Communications Service to the city of Barrie; and

“Whereas up to 40% of all calls received are from cellphones from people unfamiliar with the area; and

“Whereas Parry Sound–Muskoka residents have grave concerns about the effect on emergency response times if dispatch services are provided by dispatchers who are not familiar with the area; and

“Whereas 16 Ministry of Health and Long-Term-Care-funded jobs, held by qualified communication officers from local communities, may be lost as a result of the relocation of dispatch services to the city of Barrie,

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

“That the government of Ontario put the safety, health and economic concerns of the people of Parry Sound–Muskoka ahead of government efficiency interests and ensure that emergency dispatch services continue to be provided locally by Muskoka Ambulance Communications Service.”

I support this petition.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government must increase immediately the number of long-term-care—nursing homes, homes for the aged, charitable homes—beds in the county of Simcoe and Grey so as to eliminate the waiting lists of people who can no longer stay in their own homes and/or are stuck inappropriately in a hospital bed through no fault of their own.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the 19,000 seniors in my riding of Simcoe–Grey who make up 15% of the population of my constituency. A rising number of these seniors are growing increasingly dependent on services funded in large part by the province of Ontario to allow them to live with comfort and dignity in their elder years.

Before I get too far into my remarks, I want to acknowledge and thank the people who fulfill both administrative and front-line duties in my local nursing homes. I visit nursing homes regularly in my riding, and I know that the staff makes every effort to make life comfortable and pleasant for the residents in their care. I must salute Ed Ozimek and family, and the staff who operate Errinrunc Nursing Home in Thornbury; Karen Milligan and all the staff at Bay Haven Nursing Home in Collingwood; Peter and Robert Zober and their staff at Collingwood Nursing Home; Paula Rentner, the administrator, and Sherry Lee, the director of nursing, and their employees at Creedan Valley Nursing Home in Creemore; Lorraine Baker and the workers at Stayner Nursing Home; all the staff at the county of Simcoe who operate Simcoe Manor in Beeton and Sunset Manor in Collingwood; the terrific people, like Karen Locke, who is the programs manager, at Sara Vista Nursing Centre in Elmvale; and of course Linda Weaver and all the great people at Good Samaritan Nursing Home in Alliston.

I could use up my entire 12 minutes naming all the nursing home staff who have been so very kind to me over the years and who provide such excellent care to their residents, but I'll stop here because I want to get to the point of my resolution being debated this afternoon.

1340

Without question, long-term care is one of the biggest issues that I deal with in my constituency offices. That's partly why I'm so familiar with all of the homes and the staff and residents in them. There is such a huge waiting list to get into local homes that most seniors are forced to travel out of their own home communities to find space. In fact, it's so bad that one of the attending physicians—and he's been an attending physician for over 14 years—in one of our local nursing homes can't even get his wife,

who is stuck in Collingwood hospital, a bed in that home. So many pleas for assistance and complaints about the lengthy waiting lists have come into my offices that I took it upon myself to write to the Minister of Health to plea for urgent action to build more beds in my riding. Sadly, the response last April from the former minister, Mr. Smitherman, was less than pleasing.

He wrote: "My father's experience reminds me to always keep the issue of dignity and respect when it comes to providing our most frail and vulnerable with the care they need. I agree with your constituents on taking steps to ensure that seniors are getting the care they deserve." While I agree with that, the minister unfortunately went on to tell me about a number of government initiatives that don't relate to building any new beds in my riding. So here we are today.

I suspect that some of the government members will get up during this debate and say to the people watching at home in my riding, "Don't worry, we've got a few beds on the go in Midland and a few more in Barrie." But that doesn't do much good because those beds are outside of my riding, which doesn't help my constituents very much at all.

Obviously, those responses are discouraging for me, and the seniors and their families whom I've been trying to help. Seniors deserve to be cared for as close to home as possible. Family members who are able to lend a hand with the care of their loved ones often find it impossible to travel long distances on a regular basis to provide care, love and support. They worry about the emotional well-being of their loved ones when they are so far away from home, and the support network they need. I certainly understand that and can speak from my own experience. Many of you know that my father passed away last month. Had he been able to hold on much longer, then there is no doubt that he would have had to go into a nursing home for around-the-clock care. The closest, I think, we could have got him a nursing home bed was in Orangeville or perhaps Newmarket. My father lived with my mother in their home in Alliston, and I don't know how we would have gotten mom out to see dad in Orangeville or Newmarket if that's where he had had to go. I live in Wasaga Beach, but I'm also required to be here in Toronto at Queen's Park during the week. My sister lives in Barrie and travels extensively in her job, as does her husband, John Spencer. My brother Joe and his wife, Catherine, live in Woodbridge and my older brother John and his wife, Ing, live in Buffalo. I don't know how we could have done it, and I really do sympathize with those who have to travel those long distances on such a regular basis just to see and care for loved ones since there aren't enough supports available in their own home communities.

The current critical shortage of beds is, I must say, in stark contrast to my days in government when we approved over \$2.1 billion of new money to build 20,000 nursing home beds or long-term-care beds and to rebuild the 16,000 beds found in the province's oldest facilities. We were building so many beds back then that the oppo-

sition Liberals at the time criticized us often for overbuilding. But the need was really there, much like it is today, because in 1995, when the Progressive Conservatives came to office, we found that no new long-term-care beds had been built in this province since 1987. Now we are starting to slide back to where we were in 1987, and we certainly shouldn't allow that to happen.

The fact is, Ontario's long-term-care facilities are 99.9% full 100% of the time, and that statistic certainly rings true in my riding. For example, in the North Simcoe-Muskoka catchment area, which is huge—it runs from Maxwell and Feversham all the way over to Brechin and up to Penetanguishene and Huntsville, and in my riding it includes Collingwood, Clearview, Essa, Springwater and Wasaga Beach—there are 1,700 people waiting on the list for a long-term-care bed. If you live in central region, which is also huge, it runs from Glencairn down to Hockley and Woodbridge and over to Markham and up to Keswick, and in my riding it includes New Tecumseth and Adjala-Tosorontio. In this catchment area, there are 2,225 people on a list for a nursing home bed. While those are some pretty astonishing waiting lists, they don't necessarily reflect the true picture of the waiting lists at my local homes.

Let's look at Simcoe Manor in Beeton. There are currently 124 people waiting to get in there, while another 85 are anxiously awaiting admission to Good Samaritan nursing home in Alliston. Looking north to Collingwood, there are 108 individuals on the waiting list at Bay Haven and there's a minimum of 45 people in the same boat, trying to get into the Collingwood Nursing Home, and another 45 waiting to get into the Stayner Nursing Home, and an additional 60 who are attempting to get a spot in Elmvalle at Sara Vista.

Over in Grey county, at Errinrung Nursing Home in Thornbury, there are eight people waiting for a bed, which may sound low until you consider that that's a waiting list of at least three months. While these numbers are always fluctuating, in Grey Bruce alone, there are about 300 people waiting for a nursing home bed, either just to get in or for a more private room, which can translate into at least six- to 12-month waiting times in the Grey Bruce area alone.

It's not that these nursing homes don't want to expand and provide more beds; they do. One local home told me that they could easily double in size and still remain full, but each time they try to get additional beds, they're turned down. One home even told me they tried to enter into an agreement to assist area hospitals by alleviating their alternative level of care bed issues, and they were just ignored by the ministry and given the feeling that they need not bother to even try to help out.

You can see that if we don't increase the capacity locally, we're going to continue to have individuals who are in alternative level of care beds in hospitals—they used to call them "bed blockers." Through no fault of their own, these people will still be stuck in hospital. I understand there are some 450 in my riding who are stuck in hospitals. That also includes Barrie and Orillia

hospitals that are just outside of my riding but serve my constituents. This isn't good for those elderly people; most of them are very, very elderly. They don't get any programs in the hospital because the nurses don't have time to play bridge with them or socialize with them. They're literally stuck there, in many cases, without the programming that is available in our nursing homes and the tender, loving care that nursing homes are so wonderfully known for in this province.

If we don't get help soon in my riding—and this debate, in principle, is for everybody's riding here, so I hope you'll support it—people in my riding are going to continue to have to try to get into Orangeville, Newmarket, Markham or Huntsville, and that's clogging up someone else's riding. We need to build new beds. It's a serious, serious matter; it's becoming one of the largest issues in my riding. It certainly was in the campaign last year, and I pledged to do what I could. I've been doing it quietly behind the scenes and talking with the ministry and writing the minister, so far to no avail.

I will conclude by imploring the members of this House to support this very simple resolution that merely calls upon the government to act on behalf of the seniors in my riding and, as I said, the seniors in your riding too, who are growing increasingly dependent on the services funded in part by the province to allow them to live with comfort and dignity in their elder years.

Let us resolve today to do our best as legislators to bring hope to those on the waiting lists for long-term-care beds, who need our help and who are asking us to do the right thing and support this resolution. I implore all members to set your partisanship aside to build some nursing home beds since the 20,000 that were built or started construction under our government. You will get up, I'm sure, in your debate, and claim 8,000. I heard that in some debate last week. Those are beds that Elizabeth Witmer announced as Minister of Health. You were just finishing off what we had already announced and started to build. You've not been able to claim any new builds for yourselves. Get up today, support this resolution and encourage your Minister of Health, your Premier and your finance minister. Even though it's tough times, the elderly deserve our support, and they need to be a priority. Even if it is tough times, you still have a record budget of \$96 billion, \$98 billion, up 26% since you came to office. Surely that money should have been put into long-term-care beds and dignity and respect for our elderly.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to be here to support this resolution. Clearly, there is a need for long-term-care beds all over the province and in particular, in this member's riding, where 1,500 people are waiting for long-term-care beds. So the need is there. Across the province, I think we're short—22,000 people are waiting for long-term care. So it's a need.

Is that the only answer to the problem of what we need to do with senior citizens? I say no. We have to look at

something else. We have to look at better ways to take care of our seniors. In the next 10, 15 years, we're going to have more and more seniors to take care of—unlike what we've ever seen before.

1350

I've got to tell you, I for one don't want to be in a long-term-care facility if I can avoid it and I'm going to do my best to avoid it as long as I possibly can. When you read the articles, whether they're in the Toronto Star or the Globe or other papers, on how seniors live in long-term-care facilities, I quite frankly don't want to be in one of them. If I have the money, I'm going to try to get the best possible care, and at home if I can.

Those who have \$4,000 or \$5,000 a month to be able to be in a nice long-term-care facility, God bless—but those of us who are normal human beings can't afford that kind of care. Those who've got the pecunia will be okay. Those who happen to be rich—and there are a few of them in this place—will be okay. But the majority of humble MPPs are going to have to worry about our care.

So, as I say to you, we need to look at many, many issues connected to the care of seniors.

That's why I, along with the current Speaker and many other members, including Cheri DiNovo from Parkdale–High Park, have been speaking about the need to have the Ombudsman get in those facilities and check them out and do a report and embarrass us all—not just this government, but each and every one of the MPPs—about how seniors live in those homes. I, for one, want Monsieur Marin to get into those long-term-care facilities and check them out, because he would reveal, as he has revealed on any other matter that he has investigated, that there are serious problems that need to be addressed. I know that governments are very wary when they're in there. When they're in opposition, it's a different story. When they're in government, they say, "We can't have a person like Monsieur Marin embarrass us." I understand that. But if he reveals problems that each and every one of us, no matter which political party we belong to—problems about the care of seniors, we should all care, and we should all be moving fast to address those problems. This Liberal government has denied every initiative brought forth by Andrea Horwath, the member for Hamilton Centre, on the need to have the Ombudsman do a proper investigation of long-term-care facilities, something that he has been calling for for a long time, something that every other province across Canada can do. Yet, every time we ask, every time we push this government, they say no. It's an embarrassment. We need to know. We already know, but it would be nice to have Monsieur Marin finally confirm it once and for all for all of us.

We know they need more care. That's why we New Democrats have been pushing for 3.5 hours of daily care in order to be able to give them a little extra time.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from London–Fanshawe says, "We are doing that." No, you're not. You know it, they know it. Everyone seems to know it.

Everyone seems to know it except every Liberal who wants to deny it.

More care is essential. Better care would be better.

I don't want to live in one of those places. If you look at the kind of food they serve these poor seniors, that would be one reason why I wouldn't want to be a senior in one of these places.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You can't drink wine with dinner.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And evidently, whereas in Sweden and Denmark you can have your glass of wine at the dinner table, here you can't. If you want a glass of wine, maybe they'll bring it to you in your room, but you've got to ask. Imagine, you can't have a glass of wine if you're a senior.

If you are a senior citizen in one of these buildings, what do you think you get? You get more drugs than you'll ever get glasses of wine. They drug you till you drop. Seniors are overmedicated. Sure, we need more spots, but you've got to look at the care that you get. I don't want any drugs in my system. I try to avoid them as much as I can, because I believe the side effects from those drugs kill us, and nobody seems to care about that.

I read the stories presented by Judy Steed in the Toronto Star, a good series of five long articles about what they're doing in other places—innovation in how you take care of seniors. She discovered that there are some great things happening, not here, not in Canada but in other countries.

We always look to America as our comparator. Why would we look to America as the only comparator of any good stuff that happens? The good stuff doesn't happen there, and it's not happening here. It's happening, yes, in Sweden and Denmark, the best places to grow old. If I've got a couple of bucks, I'd rather go there and have a glass of wine than be here and be drugged to death.

I'm looking forward to the day when we have a government that has a little bit of a—but I've got to tell you, most of us are in our 50s. We've got to worry. You have to worry. There are a lot of Liberals who are over 50. You should be worried about this.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know; me too. We should be studying innovative ways of keeping ourselves healthy.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Exercise.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly. That's what I'm saying—exercise. There are other things we need to study.

I look at the kinds of things that they're doing in Sweden, and what they say is when these seniors can no longer live at home—because the commitment is to live at home as long as you can; that's where I want to be—they move into small homes that provide a shocking contrast to far too many of the long-term-care facilities we have in Ontario.

This series should be a wake-up call for Ontarians that to adequately respond to what Steed calls the “boomer tsunami,” we need innovation and bold policy. She talks about an immediate increase in support of geriatricians.

We have, I believe—I can't recall the number—only five geriatricians here in Ontario. We need people who have an expertise, who understand seniors and propose ways to keep them healthy.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know. As you get old, you're going to get more tired. If you're tired now, imagine in 10 years from now, and then imagine in 15 years from now, and then imagine the drugs in your system. Just think about that. If you're tired today, think about it. And we have no pension, David; remember that. Think of that.

So we have to have a better understanding of the commitment to the social determinants of health, as we look at what it is we should be doing. We should be talking about physical and mental exercise, which is what they do in Sweden and Norway; a sense of belonging and purpose and community; a rethinking of our home care system, in terms of the supports we should be providing; and a commitment to properly staff the long-term-care facilities.

Look at this quote from Tine Rostgaard, a senior researcher at the Danish National Centre for Social Research and a policy expert in the care of the old people, who emphasizes that “the philosophy of the Danish government is to integrate elderly people, to keep them active in the community as long as possible, to not do things for them when they can do for themselves.”

What you read in those articles is that every senior citizen, if they can move, should be active, and if they can be active, they should do everything they can on their own, which includes sweeping if they have to, which includes cooking if they want to, and they do—everything that has to do with keeping this alive and the body active. And they do that.

Mr. Dave Levac: And being at home.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to be at home, David.

They say, “Here at Torndalshave, the mood is light and bright. Partly it's the architecture. The one-storey building is new and modern, with a courtyard garden in the centre. The surrounding inner walls are glass, floor to ceiling. Light pours in. Flowers and tomato plants thrive in the garden, where residents help with gardening.”

There are only 12 residents there. We have long-term facilities that are packed to the core, with few workers, who are overworked and underpaid and can't get to address the needs of seniors, and in many of those facilities they have 12 people that they look after.

1400

This is serious stuff. It's serious for us, because that's where most of us are going to be in 15, 20 years, and some of you are close to it already. You've got to worry about this; you have to. We've got to look at staff, along with residents. We've got to be innovative; we have to. We can't just keep on going the way we have.

Yes, member from Simcoe–Grey, I support your motion—it's fine—but we've got to look at other ways to keep seniors healthy. Maybe you'll speak to that in the time remaining. But as I support that motion, I am telling

you that we've got to do so much more to keep ourselves healthy, as we and more and more people age in the next 10, 15 years.

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

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I want to start by expressing, on my behalf and on behalf of many of my colleagues, condolences to my friend opposite on the loss of his father. I know that his dad would be watching him very much as he debates and talks about this important issue in all of our communities.

I know that the member from Simcoe–Grey has the best interests of his community at heart as he raises this issue, as we all do when we visit homes in our communities, when we work with those organizations that support seniors to help them stay in their own homes, and as we do bring innovative thinking, especially in light of our aging population.

A number of years ago when I was first elected to this Legislature, at the time of a number of very deplorable and unacceptable stories being out in the media with respect to the care being given to seniors in various communities across the province, I attended the homes in my community, unannounced and unexpected, to observe and have an understanding of what life was like in those homes across my community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I have to say that I was so proud to go into organizations like Lakeshore Lodge, Wesburn Manor, Ivan Franko or Labdara and see, on that occasion and on many occasions since, the wonderful care that is given to seniors who, by the choice of them and their families, have decided to spend the remaining days of their lives or a portion of their lives in seniors' homes across the province.

In those homes, there are many, many new kinds of thinking being brought to bear. I can contrast the modern homes that have been built in my community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, such as Wesburn Manor—it has that central courtyard and a great deal of activities, exercises, cultural organizations and much diversity of choice for the residents of the home. I contrast that with, as a young child, visiting my grandfather in the home he lived in and think that in those instances there was very limited individualism brought to allow individuals to make decisions with respect to their own lives and life circumstances, to give them privacy and dignity when they could no longer live in their own homes.

My grandfather passed away a number of years ago. My grandmother, still living in Saskatchewan at 88 years old, lives independently in her own apartment. I think she, like so many other seniors, is very appreciative, and what they want is to be able to live in their own homes.

For me, as a member of this government, one of the things we're doing that I think is a critical health care investment is the investments we've made that will allow people to live in their own homes and the investments we've made in home care. The groundbreaking aging at home strategy, which will help us meet the needs of our aging population, is a \$1.1-billion strategy over four years. It will provide support and services to seniors to

allow them to stay in their own homes with dignity and independence. It is part of our strategy to reduce ER wait times by increasing home care hours, personal support and home-making services.

The organizations in my community, such as Storefront Humber and Etobicoke Services for Seniors as two wonderful examples—when I have an opportunity to speak to those care providers and personal support workers, what I say to them is, I thank them for the love that they provide to individuals in all of our lives to whom we would like to be able to provide that level of support. But because of our lives, the responsibilities that we each may have with respect to care of our own children, our own profession, our work life, families depend on others to provide loving, compassionate care to allow seniors to be able to live for as long as they want in their own homes. It makes a significant difference, the amount of funding and resources available in terms of home care investments. That's something that I'm very proud of that we have done as a government.

I also want to speak briefly to what we have done with respect to long-term-care homes. It is important to note on the floor of this Legislature and in the context of this debate that we've increased funding for LTC by over \$1 billion, or 50%. It has increased by \$300 million in this year alone. We've opened 7,712 new long-term-care beds. We have invested, this summer, \$23.5 million for 873 personal support workers. Those investments make a concrete difference in terms of the bed space available in long-term-care homes when that is the choice that the family makes with respect to where and how they will care for those who are aging in their family, and the investments in home care actually allow them to have options and to be able to determine if they choose as a family that those aging should stay in their own homes.

In the community of Simcoe–Grey, I understand that it is a growing part of our province and that there are some challenges with respect to the immediate capacity in long-term-care beds, but I do know that since 2003 we've added 242 new long-term-care beds to serve the riding of Simcoe–Grey and area. In June of this year, we began building a 160-bed long-term-care home in Barrie that will also serve the residents of Simcoe–Grey, with the first admission expected to be in February 2010. In 2007, we announced a \$7.2-million investment to allow for the construction of 96 new beds in Bradford Valley, slated to open in 2009. We've increased funding to the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital by nearly 40% since 2003. Those are just some of the investments that will benefit the community of Simcoe–Grey.

Is there more to do? Of course. Do we need to see these beds constructed? Obviously, yes. But I think we are moving well forward in innovative thinking with respect to long-term care and the care for those who have come before us.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to support the resolution that has been put forward by my colleague

the member for Simcoe–Grey, that the McGuinty government must increase immediately the number of long-term-care—nursing homes, homes for the aged, charitable homes—beds in the counties of Simcoe and Grey so as to eliminate the waiting lists of people who can no longer stay in their own homes and/or are stuck inappropriately in a hospital bed through no fault of their own.

I would like to congratulate my colleague, a former Minister of Health, for his commitment to doing all he can—and he has done so ever since he was our Minister of Health—to ensure that people, in this case particularly those older people, have access to the health services and the living space that they require as they get older. I think he's made the case that, certainly in his community, there is a dire shortage of beds. In fact, there is a dire shortage of beds in the province of Ontario. As of August 31, 2008, we had 24,099 people on long-term-care waiting lists. In my own community of Waterloo–Wellington, there are 1,544.

My colleague has indicated that these people who are older deserve to live with hope and with dignity and certainly in a safe, secure residential environment. We are, unfortunately, today not able to do that. As a result, many of them are being forced to move far from family and far from friends. The quality of life is simply not the same, because those people are not able to receive visits. There's nothing more important in your life than having the opportunity to continue to see family and friends on a regular ongoing basis.

1410

This is an issue that my colleague has raised and that I would say to you has reached crisis proportions. Unfortunately, this government took a holiday when they were first elected. They recognized that we had built 20,000 new long-term-care beds. Those long-term-care beds have been coming on board ever since 2003. This government simply has not, to this day, put a plan in action—a comprehensive, long-term strategic plan—in order to identify where future homes are going to be necessary and then communicate that to the people in the province of Ontario.

The other thing this government has not done is, they have not continued with the rebuilding of the older homes. Although we did rebuild 16,000 homes, as my colleague has mentioned, there are 35,000 seniors today who still live in homes that certainly some of us would be embarrassed of and would have difficulty putting our aging parents into them. They are homes that have three and four beds in a room. They don't have ensuite wash-rooms. They're not wheelchair accessible.

The one thing I can tell you about long-term-care homes is they have dedicated, hard-working staff, and regardless of the physical environment, anybody I've ever met working in a home has been extremely dedicated and trying to do all they can for the residents. And that's another part of the problem. This government promised \$6,000 in 2003 for additional personal care for each long-term-care resident. I am sad to say today that that \$6,000 has never been delivered, and as a result, we haven't seen

the increase in personal care that's required, because the difference today compared to 10 and even five years ago is that the people in long-term-care homes are older, they are more frail, and they have more complex care needs.

I also want to put on the record the fact that Ontario, today, funds each resident the amount of personal care at a smaller number than Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick. That's because they didn't keep their 2003 election promise to provide an additional \$6,000 in personal care to each resident. As a result, the long-term-care homes are short-staffed. I probably have more people knocking on the door of my constituency office today than ever, ever before, concerned about the level of care that their loved one is receiving.

As I say, the staff work hard. They simply can't do any more, and there is an immediate need for 4,500 full-time positions this year within the homes to meet the needs. We are looking for an average of three worked hours of personal care per day within a year, and that's not paid hours, because when you talk about paid, that refers to people going out on maternity leave, holidays and everything. What we want and what these people deserve in the homes, and what is absolutely necessary, is to achieve an average of three worked hours of personal care per day this year.

My colleague has correctly identified that we have a serious problem in the province of Ontario. Our older residents certainly deserve to live with dignity, in safety and security. Right now, I can tell you one of the things I hear from my own mother, who's 87, is, "Maybe I should get on some list somewhere because people in our community aren't going where they want to go and they're having to live in homes that are too far away to enable them to keep in touch with family and friends." It is a fear of the elderly today, and I say, "Mom, don't do that. You're still healthy." But it's too bad that the fear is there.

So I applaud my colleague for bringing forward this private member's bill. I applaud his commitment to people in the province of Ontario, which he's always demonstrated, and I hope that all of us will support his resolution.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to thank you for allowing me to speak on this very important matter brought forth by the member from Simcoe–Grey. Long-term-care issues in the province of Ontario, especially in his riding of Simcoe–Grey, are important to us. It's always important to speak about this issue wherever we go and especially in this place.

I still remember when we addressed this issue as a government because this issue is important to us. I was a part of the committee that travelled the province of Ontario to listen to many long-term-care facilities and homes and also constituents and people affected by this issue and passionate about it. We learned a lot. I learned a lot on this tour.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo was with us, and she was listening to all the people who indicated to

the committee back then how they were treated when they were in government, especially when she was Minister of Health. The honourable member from Simcoe–Grey who brought this motion before us today, was a Minister of Health. He is talking about how many long-term beds increased in the province of Ontario, but he does not mention that they were for-profit homes.

It's important to focus on this issue, and I am proud to be a part of the government that put attention and focus on the issue and tried to improve the health of the people, especially when they get old. I remember there was no standard in place when we were discussing this issue. It varied from one long-term-care home to another long-term-care home, but the average was 2.6 hours. We increased it to 3.26 hours, and hopefully by 2011 it will be 3.5 hours. That shows our commitment to this file and shows our commitment to the people who worked hard in their lifetime to build this province, to pay taxes and to give us the chance and ability to live comfortably these days.

As my colleague from Trinity–Spadina mentioned, all of us are getting old. One day we're going to end up in those facilities or homes. We have to create the rules and laws to comfort people today and in the future, because we will be part of the future. It's important to talk about it and, as I mentioned, important to address it. I am pleased to say our government has been working for a long time to address this issue, whether it's increasing the hours for care or increasing nurses and personal support for the people who live in long-term-care homes.

Another component to it is the community care access centre. They're working in conjunction with hospitals, with long-term-care facilities and homes across the province of Ontario to accommodate all these people, to find a place for them where they get the support they need. It's very important to mention today that many people, especially elderly people, don't want to move to long-term-care homes. They prefer to stay home with support from the government or from the communities where they live. They want to stay home among their families. They want to stay in the place they grew up in or built or where they've been living for many different years. That's why the community care access centre facilitates supporting them, gives them the support they need and assists them to remain in their homes, which is better for them, among their families in the place they love and care a lot about.

I think it's an important issue, and I want to commend the member for bringing it to this House. Hopefully it will be addressed in a professional manner. We care about this issue. We have been working since we got elected in 2003. As I mentioned, I had the chance and the privilege to serve on the committee that addressed this issue, had a chance to travel the province of Ontario to educate myself and to learn more about this issue. I had the privilege and honour to speak about this in this House and also to pass a bill to transform the long-term-care homes in the province of Ontario and support our elderly and our seniors, who deserve all our support.

Thank you for allowing me to speak, and I wish the member good luck—and all the people who spoke on this issue, because it is important.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm happy to join the debate of our private members' public business this afternoon, the resolution brought forward by my colleague from Simcoe–Grey to increase the number of long-term-care beds in his counties of Simcoe and Grey. He has certainly been a strong advocate for health care and long-term care in his riding, something he has done for the some 18 years he has been elected—a former Minister of Health—and that's a great record to have.

1420

I remember that in April last year he brought in a private member's resolution with respect to the birthing unit at Stevenson Memorial Hospital, which was being closed down. He had 150 to 200 people from his riding in the galleries supporting his work. He brought the case to the Legislature—petitions, resolutions, debate—and he now has been able to have that birthing unit there helping the women in his local area.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Reopened and better than ever.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Reopened and better than ever. That is a great accomplishment for him and for the people of his riding.

The motion before us today speaks directly to the need for long-term care in all our communities. We're specifically discussing Simcoe and Grey counties, but in all our local communities we certainly have had people come to us with long wait lists for long-term-care beds.

I was nursing for over 20 years and saw what happened when there weren't enough long-term-care facilities available and people were really stranded in hospitals. As much care as they received in the hospitals, which was good, it wasn't appropriate care that they received. I know that my own dad was in that limbo time when the previous PC government had put the dollars forward but the new beds hadn't been built—certainly in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—and how badly I felt that he was actually holding up a hospital bed and wasn't getting the appropriate care, and the stress it created, not only on our own family, but on everyone involved in trying to give him the care he needed, and the change that came about when he was able to get into a long-term-care facility, because there was appropriate care there. They were able to handle those situations, and it made such a difference.

We've known the demographics in Ontario have been changing for a long time. The Liberal government has been in for five years now. There has been a large increase in the demand for long-term-care beds that has not been addressed. It has doubled—like 24,000 people on the wait list—really nothing to be proud of. I know there have been slogans about this government in the paper, saying, "For long-term care, the cupboard is bare." That is truly what is going on in our communities across the province, and certainly in our ridings. I have 15 long-

term-care centres, and keep in touch quite often. Their wait lists have gone up so fast in the last year and a half. But, as I said, we all knew the demographics were coming.

I represent a riding with a high proportion of seniors who are retiring there, but they're also bringing their moms and dads with them for the long-term-care beds that are available there so they can be close at hand—we all want to be available to take care of our loved ones when they need us. This is what is happening, and I think we did not predict how much the demand would be in my riding, because we didn't realize how many people would be retiring and bringing up mom and dad. We welcome them, but we also have to have the facilities there to take care of them.

When they brought in Bill 140, the Long-Term Care Act, which was debated during the last Parliament, I know that one nursing home in my riding, Bon-Air, in Cannington, brought in nine recommendations. They are really advocates, out there looking to change the long-term-care system. As we have said and from what we've seen, the people who work in the long-term-care homes in all the ridings care. They are trying to take care of the residents as best they can; they try to treat them as their own. The changes we'd like to see: increasing operating costs for long-term-care homes to reflect the minimum increase in inflation, hiring 4,500 full-time staff—the Liberals made a promise that they would increase the level of care by \$6,000 per resident; we have not seen that. We're saying that worked personal care time for residents needs to increase to three hours per day.

As a nurse, you try to give care directly; I can speak to that from experience. But when there are 400 regulations that you have to abide by, you're taking time away from the patient and from delivering that care. It's just unacceptable that so many regulations are out there hampering the care that is delivered by these health care workers. I hope everyone today supports the resolution of the member from Simcoe–Grey.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I believe it's time for the member who moved the motion to make a two-minute response.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to begin by thanking all members that spoke this afternoon. It's quite pleasant to hear the support from all parties: the members for Trinity–Spadina, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Kitchener–Waterloo, London–Fanshawe and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I certainly thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for the personal comments and thank you for the best wishes of condolence.

I tried to word the resolution this afternoon in the private members' time that I have this year in a way that was non-partisan. Thank you for looking at it that way. It's time, obviously, in all of our ridings that the government got going again and restarted a program to build long-term-care beds. It has been five years of the Liberal government and you don't have too many beds that you can call your own. You did build some in the first year in office. You were completing the 20,000 and the \$2.1 billion that Mike Harris and Ernie Eves had set aside.

I ask you to not only express your support today and in the vote, which will take place in about 100 minutes from now, but also to plead with the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health and the minister of infrastructure renewal to actually act upon this resolution, not just for my counties of Simcoe and Grey but also for your own ridings because I know that—I have no idea what time it is. Thank you to all who spoke today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. I appreciate the patience of the members with the little bit of problems with our clock this afternoon. I'm sure we will get that figured out very quickly.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Bill Mauro: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the federal government should help make Ontario communities and families safer by providing sustainable, ongoing funding through its police officer recruitment fund, as Ontario does with both its 1,000 officers programs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Mauro: It is my pleasure today to have an opportunity to speak to this motion for about 10 or 12 minutes. It's obviously a topic that has seized, at one time or another, most members in the Legislature here today of all parties, and I would expect most members of all provincial parliaments and the federal government, all parties there as well. It's obviously something that we have all had to deal with at one time or another.

Also, I think it's very topical and appropriate that we're speaking about it this week. I'm sure most members here in the Legislature just this week had an opportunity to meet with members of the police associations from across the province of Ontario. I certainly did. I was pleased to have had an opportunity to meet with Greg Stephenson from the Thunder Bay Police Association, as a member of the Police Association of Ontario. Greg's doing a great job in Thunder Bay. I should also mention that we have a new incoming president in Thunder Bay, Keith Hobbs, and we look forward to working with Keith in the future.

I think the importance of policing in Ontario and in Canada is obvious to most members of the Legislature. I think the importance is obvious because I think it's the only mandated service that municipalities have to provide, if I remember my municipal experience correctly. Fire service is not mandated—nothing else. Not garbage pickup, nothing of the like, but policing certainly is and I think it's self-evident as to why that is the case.

In 2006, the federal government of the day announced the following: “Canada needs more front-line enforcement. According to Department of Public Safety documents, there is currently a shortage of 1,059 RCMP officers in federal, provincial, and municipal policing roles. In addition, many provincial and municipal police

forces are underfunded and overstretched. It is time to reinvest in front-line law enforcement in Canada.”

The plan goes on to say, “A Conservative government will reinvest savings from cancellation of the ineffective long-gun registry program into hiring more front line enforcement personnel, including filling 1,000 RCMP positions” and it will “negotiate with the provinces to create a new cost-shared program jointly with provincial and municipal governments, to put at least 2,500 more police on the beat in our cities and communities.”

1430

Crime, as I’ve said, is something that’s at the forefront today. When any of us turn on the television or turn on the radio or read a newspaper, it’s something that none of us can avoid having to deal with anymore. We are inundated with messages, visually, in print, and on the radio, that would have many of us believe some days that the sky is falling. Crime is right there, front and centre, in our face at all times. It’s always interesting, because as the media does what the media does, there is an explosion in the media. There are more outlets all the time, so we get this recurring message.

When we think about it in the context of war, on a global basis, never before in the history of the world have there been fewer people dying in armed conflict in the world, yet I’m not sure that people have that sense. I make that point because, when we’re talking about policing at local levels, in our communities in Ontario and across Canada, people certainly don’t feel safer. In fact, if you talk to criminologists or sociologists or governments at any level or neighbourhood associations or police associations, many of them will have a different take on this. They’ll all have different opinions and different theories.

That’s not the point of the resolution today, though. We’re not here to debate statistics. I think most people would agree that the crime we’re seeing seems more severe. I think more people would agree that we’re seeing different types of crime—more egregious. I think what probably bothers people the most is that some of the crime that’s going on seems to be of a very random nature. Of course, guns are playing a bigger role in the crime that we’re seeing all the time.

In Ontario, we’ve got two programs that I think are wonderful.

On the first program, I tip my hat to the former Conservative government. When they were in power, they brought in the community policing partnership program. That program was intended to supply 1,000 police officers to the province of Ontario over the course of five years. It was a cost-shared program between municipalities and the province of Ontario to focus on front-line policing—boots on the streets, as we like to say. Of course, all municipalities were going to be eligible to participate in that program.

Initially, the community policing partnership program was to sunset. The funding that was going to be allocated to the municipalities through this particular program was going to end after five years, and any municipality that

had become a partner in the program would then have had to fund those policing positions on their own on a go-forward basis at the end of five years. Thankfully, and I think very wisely, in 2000 or 2001, the former government decided that they were going to annualize that funding. I think they brought in an extra pot of about \$35 million to provide funding for those officers who were hired under that program.

So we’re very pleased and we’re very supportive of that program that was brought in in 1998 for five years under that government.

In November 2005, our government brought in a program as well: the Safer Communities program, which brought 1,000 more officers into the province of Ontario. Under our program, 500 of the 1,000 new officers would be deployed to community policing and 500 would be deployed to six key areas of serious crime: youth crime, guns and gangs, organized crime and marijuana grow ops, dangerous offenders, domestic violence, and protecting children from Internet luring and child pornography.

I was especially proud, within this Safer Communities program of 1,000 officers, that we set aside 60 officers for specific northern and First Nations communities and provided a special financial allocation to those communities of up to \$70,000 per year for officers in those communities in perpetuity. What that has meant in my community of Thunder Bay–Atikokan is that eight officers who were hired under that particular program will be funded by our government in perpetuity for up to \$70,000 per year. Under the former program brought in by the Conservative government, there were five officers hired in Thunder Bay. So between these two programs, we’ve brought 13 new officers into my riding out of the 2,000 in the province. I think it’s a tremendous collaboration between the two programs and speaks to what we can do.

The key to these programs is long-term sustainable and predictable funding. As I said, in my riding, 13 new officers have been hired. As a former municipal councillor—and I think many people in this Legislature bring that kind of a background to this place, and we all know the importance of long-term sustainable funding when we’re sitting around a council table, trying to budget for incoming years—as well as the community safety issue. We all know that it’s extremely important to have long-term sustainable funding.

I should say again that especially in northern, small rural communities, even in southwestern Ontario where municipalities are very small—and most municipalities in the province are small—many of them don’t have the fiscal capacity to even begin to apply to these programs. That’s why I think it’s important that the funding commitments be long-term and sustainable. We may be precluding small communities from applying to the program, and they may be excluded just based upon the fact that the funding isn’t there at the end of the five years.

We’ve done many great things. I want to highlight a few associated with crime that we’ve done: the expansion

of the guns and gangs task force; more crown attorneys; more probation and parole officers; major crime courts; mandatory reporting for gunshot wounds; more prosecutors instructed not to plea bargain on firearms-related offences; reverse onus bail on hearings for gun crimes; and on and on the list goes. This, in concert with our 1,000 officers program and the 1,000 officers program from the previous Conservative government, speaks to the importance of this issue to all governments.

Our concern as a government is with the federal government program. As I said at the beginning, they brought in with some fanfare in 2006, or at least they announced, the commitment to 2,500 officers in Canada, roughly allocated to Ontario about \$156 million out of about a \$400-million commitment, which represented about 40% of the capital program for these officers. That \$156 million is going to allow the province of Ontario to hire approximately only 330 officers. If you take the per capita funding formula and apply it to the 2,500 officers, we would expect that in Ontario we'd get about 1,000 officers through the federal program. But at \$156 million, we're only going to be able to hire in the order of magnitude of about 336 officers. This is a far cry from the 1,000 you would have expected we would have been able to get out of the 2,500.

The second problem with the program as we see it, as I've said consistently throughout my remarks today, is that there is no long-term funding to go along with these officers. The funding is intended to sunset after five years. As I've said, there are communities that can take on this financial responsibility long-term, and there are many in this province—small northern, southwestern, southeastern, rural communities—that do not have the fiscal capacity to take on that financial obligation long-term. So there are two pieces that we're interested in with the federal government. We're all happy that they made the commitment to 2,500 officers across Canada in 2006, but we here today express a concern that that commitment is not going to be lived up to, at least on the numbers we're seeing so far, that Ontario appears only able to afford to hire 330 officers out of what we would have expected to be in the order of magnitude of about 1,000.

Even if we are able to get to that number, and hopefully that will change, as we go forward in concert with the federal government as we work with them to try to enhance this program, and they will come to realize that as the funding is set to sunset in five years on this particular program, there are many municipalities that I believe, in my personal experience of having done this for about 11 or 12 years now, will not be able at all to even consider participating in the program.

There are two main pieces here that I'm trying to speak to today. I look forward to listening to the remarks from those who have chosen to speak on this resolution today. I thank them in advance for their comments and hopefully their support. We see this as a non-partisan issue. We thank the federal government for its commitment on the 2,500. But we are hoping, moving forward, that they will see fit to increase that amount of money so

that it will be long-term and sustainable in perpetuity for these officers, and the volume of fiscal resource provided to the provinces will increase to the point where we'll be able to hire up to what we think would be about 1,000 officers in the province of Ontario.

I see my time is up. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Ontario's police officers and all the law enforcement people on the front lines. They work hard and put themselves in danger in order to keep us safe, or as safe as they possibly can with their numbers.

1440

This week, you will remember that the Ontario police association was at Queen's Park to speak to the members. I had the privilege of being visited by five officers from the Oxford Community Police to talk about what was needed and what could be done to improve the law enforcement in our community and, conversely, across the province. I want to thank them for coming here and helping us to understand the needs out there on the front lines.

I want to speak to this resolution and I want to tell the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan that, in fact, I will be supporting the resolution. I think anyone who looks at it realistically and says, "What is it that we can do to make our streets safer, to make our communities safer?"—it is to increase the ability to enforce the laws and to curtail crime in the community. The issue isn't so much about who's paying, but the fact that we're able to provide the services for our constituents. So I support the resolution that we need to do all we can to increase the number of police officers that protect us.

I'm a little concerned as to the implications of the on-going funding, that that's part of the—I'm not suggesting that that isn't what needs to happen, but I don't think that's the biggest issue today. One of the examples I want to use, and I think it so happens, particularly with the present government—we heard it just last week or the week before when the provincial municipal review came out, and they said they're going to fix the problem. One of the things that needs to go back up to the provincial government from local government is court security. That would increase the number of dollars available for front-line policing in our communities to quite a great extent.

We're talking here about long-term funding as opposed to solving the immediate problem. The federal government said, "We're going to put some money in to help with the cost of policing, to get people out in the street to protect us." The provincial government says, "We think long term is much better. We're going to help that front-line service starting in 2012, and not pay for that court security until 2018. Then we'll finally be able to use that money and let the municipalities have the ability to hire more police officers—or not even hire more police officers; the police officers who are presently responsible for court security will then be allowed

to go into the front line to help protect our community.” It seemed to me that it’s much more important to deal with the immediate problem, and then start working on making sure we have continued funding to keep it going.

My leader spoke to the police association when it was here at Queen’s Park. Relating to the comments I just made, I just wanted to put on the record some of the comments that he made to the police association. I think it’s so important that—and I don’t want to read the whole speech, obviously. It’s longer than the time that I have. I just wanted to go into the part about the continued funding.

He’s speaking to the police association: “I know you continue to have some concerns about the federal funding of additional police officers for Ontario over the next five years. I understand this concern, but I also understand any government wanting to be responsible when it comes to the length and breadth of the promises they make.

“Let me say two things. First, I want to commend the fact that Mr. Harper and his government have made a commitment to fund additional police resources, and a significant quantity of money has actually been made available to do just that.” We’re talking about a new venture. Up until now, policing has been the responsibility of the provincial government and the municipal government. This is the first venture into the federal government funding local police services.

“I believe the Ontario government is deliberately”—and the next is an unparliamentary word; it works fine in our society, but we’re not allowed to say it here. It’s leaving an impression different than the one that they’re actually saying—“the public when they posture and say they never expected to have to bear a share of the total cost. Mr. McGuinty and his government understood the criteria and signed on the dotted line when they took the money.” And again, we’re talking about what this money was supposed to do. The government is telling us now that in fact, “Well, no. We didn’t really understand that. We thought maybe the federal government was going to put money up and then fund policing from here on in, that percentage of the total cost.” The provincial government knew exactly what they were getting.

“Second, I will make this commitment to you as leader of this party and as Premier in three years ... I will fight for more.” I think that’s the critical part: “I will fight for more.” We will fight for more. I think that’s the message I just wanted to leave to the member in this debate, that getting the money in the first place is the important part today, fighting for more. Make sure we get that discussion over with, and the funding will carry on after that fact. Many times—in fact, I think at all times, all funding on projects like this—the funding is put out when the project is started, but it’s very seldom put on that we will never change this program; it will never stop. As the member mentioned in his opening remarks, the provincial government did that when we were government. We put the program in place for a period of time. It’s working well. We realize that to keep it working, which we all want, we put in more funding.

I think we collectively in this House, members on all sides, need to work to make sure that when these police officers are put on the front line and the time comes that they need to be funded further than what the program presently is, we are there to get that funding so that services will continue on. I don’t see that they should announce that it will be *carte blanche* forever, but I do believe we all need to work together to make sure that we have this money to provide front-line services through our police departments to protect our public.

I would like to thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s a delight to stand as a New Democrat in support of the member from Thunder Bay–Atitoken’s resolution. We in the New Democratic Party support any effort to increase the number of our front-line workers, and our front-line workers in the police force in particular. Many members may not be aware, but the actual number of police officers per capita has gone steadily down, so that although the numbers have increased, the net effect of their presence has diminished. So, absolutely, we support this.

I also have a personal interest in this. My husband used to be a police officer and is now teaching, as we speak, police foundations for Humber College. So he is hopefully educating a whole new generation of police officers that we in this House, and I think certainly federally, would like to see have jobs one day. So there is that.

I also want to give kudos to my own two divisions, 11th and 14th, who have done a phenomenal job in Parkdale–High Park. I had the privilege—I wouldn’t say pleasure—of going on a ride-along with 14th division. Certainly a shout-out goes to the head of that division, Ruth White, an amazing woman coming up to retirement—too bad; for us, not for her. The ride-along, as many members I’m sure have gone on ride-alongs, was incredibly eye-opening, and not in a positive way. I do remember that as we were driving around—and this was not at the most dangerous time of night, which is usually after the bars close, but around 9:30 to 10 o’clock in the evening—I witnessed the computer that sits between the passenger side and driver’s side in a policemobile light up. I said to the sergeant, “What are all those little flashing colours for?” And he said, “Well, you know, the red ones are the critical incidents where someone is being threatened that we have to respond to now.”

“What are all the yellow ones?” “Oh, well, those are crimes in progress, but don’t worry about them. We won’t have time to get to them tonight.”

There were 20 cars on the road that night: 20 cars for a riding of 100,000 people. I believe it was a Friday night that we were out. This is the state that we put our officers in daily. Not only do we put them in a situation where they are underfunded and understaffed, but we also put them in a situation where they’re in harm’s way. I want

to reiterate that, because one of the wonderful discussions I had yesterday when the Police Association of Ontario came to Queen's Park and lobbied all of us was around a bill that I will be bringing forth next week but I highlighted yesterday. Thank you to Sean of Global, who did a wonderful spot on this last night in the news, but the situation of all front-line workers—firefighters, police and paramedics—when it comes to post-traumatic stress disorder.

1450

Now, I know that we initiated a bill, under Andrea Horwath, extending presumptive diagnosis—or rebuttable presumption, as it's called in legalese—to firefighters for certain kinds of cancer. In other words, if a firefighter runs into a fire and gets a certain variety of cancer, it's presumed now that that is as a result of his or her job. Kudos to the government for acting on that and bringing that forth. The problem is that there are other diseases, not only physical, that are a direct result of front-line workers being put in harm's way, and one of them is post-traumatic stress disorder. Certainly we realize that front-line workers witness and experience trauma, and they shouldn't have to be retraumatized going through the process at WSIB to be able to receive benefits for something that is clearly related to their job function.

I was delighted when Larry Molyneaux, who is the president of the PAO, came forward and said that he supported my efforts on this and would support a bill, on behalf of his membership, that would extend coverage in rebuttable presumption, which simply means that the WSIB would have to prove otherwise—rather than that poor front-line worker suffering from PTSD would have to prove that they had it in the first place. So thank you, Larry, for that; thank you to the Police Association of Ontario.

But it highlights the issue; it highlights what we ask of our front-line workers. I think, certainly, in listening to my colleagues from the Progressive Conservative Party and my colleagues from the Liberal Party, that there is some blame to go around. We were promised 1,000 new officers in the province of Ontario, but the problem is that there were strings attached to that offer. They couldn't be used at the discretion of the divisions, but they had to fall into certain categories. Now, we know when that happens, the police forces still have to staff up on the front lines around them. So sometimes it's helpful; sometimes not so much.

So, in effect, we really didn't get 1,000 new officers here—and certainly federally, I'm sorry, Stockwell Day made a promise and he didn't carry through on the promise. He negotiated with the provinces. Whatever went wrong, there was a promise made; there wasn't a promise kept for those 2,500 new officers, and absolutely, that's why we support this member's bill. There's no question about it, this is absolutely critical.

I know my husband spent a very brief time with Waterloo regional before he went to university, but in his time there, he experienced first-hand, just as a traffic

police officer, what officers put up with on a daily basis. They put up with abuse, they put up with danger, they put up with overwork, all without an adequate level of support. We need only look at the rates, for example, of alcoholism. He said, in his own division, the divorce rate was around 75%. It's not only the police officers that we ask to put themselves in harm's way; we ask their families to put themselves in harm's way. These are families who do without their husbands or their wives, their mothers or their fathers, for long stretches of time, not knowing what situations they're walking into, not knowing what they are going to carry out from that situation in the way of trauma. This is an ongoing problem, and it really is one that needs to be addressed.

Certainly this is a first step. I hope it's not just a partisan exercise, I hope it's not just a way of shaming Conservatives, and I hope that my colleagues to the right are not just in this to shame Liberals. I hope that we can all come together on this issue and wherever we have any leverage, whether it's provincially or federally, use that leverage within our own political parties to press for, first of all, promises kept, of course; but also for this important initiative of 25 new police officers who, quite frankly, should be assigned without specific tasks associated with the offer, but left to the discretion of their own brass and their own divisions to be used where the need is greatest. That's absolutely what police on the ground level are looking for. There's no question.

One of the wonderful aspects of the lobbying days that came out of the PAO's presence here is that I hope MPPs of all stripes got a very good impression of what a police officer is today. A police officer, by and large, is a very educated member of society. Most of them have degrees now. Most of them provide services not only of enforcement but of social work, because of the problems of poverty, which increase for reasons that we've outlined over and over again in the New Democratic Party; and because of all of those causes of crime, as well as manifestations of crime, that are on the increase, including a worsening economy and job layoffs. We need these front-line workers more than ever; and more than ever, they'll be put in harm's way.

I notice my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, across the way, mentioned statistics, and we should all be aware of this: Crime statistics across Ontario, for the most part, have gone down. Certainly in my own riding of Parkdale—High Park, it has been a steady graph that shows a diminishing of crime.

However, that belies some of the lived reality of crime in our ridings. One of them is that issues like break-and-enters, issues like petty robbery, which at one time would have been reported, now a lot of citizens say, "What's the point?" Somebody comes and takes the report, and they know the report won't be acted on—through no fault of the police force; the fault lies in the lack of personnel. So, again, those statistics are not really an accurate version of what's going on in our communities.

As the member mentioned, crime is getting more violent in instances. The police had a great deal to say

about that and ways of addressing that. Certainly, mental health and addiction issues are top of the list in terms of what police have to deal with. We could help them by putting more money into rehabilitation beds and more money into mental health, which is a very, very insignificant, small part of this government's budget. There are all sorts of other ways that we could help front-line workers in doing their jobs.

When I come to table a bill next week about post-traumatic stress disorder, I'll ask all members to look at it again, not in a partisan way but as something that will help our front-line workers and something, quite frankly, that wouldn't even require new legislation, that could be done in regulations under the bill that has protected our firefighters a little bit more, that was originated, again, as I say, by Ms. Horwath, from the New Democratic Party. Just by simply extending the regulations, they could do all front-line workers a great service.

Suffice to say, and to wrap up, I absolutely do support this. I commend the member for bringing it forth. You have not only my support but, I'm sure, our federal colleagues' support in pressing for this in Ottawa, where, after all, we are the true opposition.

We will all work to see that the promises made by Stockwell Day are held, are kept. We will keep fighting until we see every single one of those 2,500 new officers delivered—really, a drop in the bucket.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further debate? The member for—

Mr. Monte Kwinter: —York Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): York Centre. Sorry.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am delighted to be able to speak in support of the motion by the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

I was intimately involved in the negotiations with Stockwell Day at a provincial-federal-territorial meeting, where he announced that the federal government would be providing 2,500 police officers for municipal policing in Canada.

At that point, my fellow ministers questioned how this was going to be done. Normally, policing is municipal and, by extension, at the provincial level, but there has been no precedent for the federal government to get involved in municipal policing.

They wanted to know the terms, the structure, the formula. He said, "Well, I thought we would do a 70-30." They said, "Well, 70-30. Now, that's ridiculous. We're not prepared to pay 30." He said, "No, no, no. You're paying the 70, and we're going to pay the 30." And they said, "Well, then it's your program; it's not our program. And you should be paying the whole thing." So that was left in abeyance, and there were many, many discussions. This went on for a couple of years. Just before the election, I met with Stockwell Day again and I said, "We've just gone through this exercise of our community policing program where we've worked out the formula to allot officers across the province. We have that done.

There's no reason for you to reinvent it because you don't have the background that we have."

1500

One of the biggest issues in police funding is that in most municipalities it's the largest single item on the municipal budget. You should know that every police service has a fixed complement of officers which they are empowered to hire. When people retire, quit, leave, they don't reduce the number. That number is immediately filled through that prescribed complement because the budget is there. The other things—retirement is covered differently through the pension plan.

So when this initiative was made, both by the previous government and our government from 2003 to 2007, this was additional police officers. These were in addition to the fixed complement that all police services have. When we decided to do this, we sought the advice of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police as to what would be the best way to implement it. They said, "First of all, we think that there should be some criteria as to where these officers are going to go." That was negotiated with the chiefs as to many of them going to neighbourhood policing and others going to very specific areas where they felt they needed that extra support. We came up with the allocation that was agreeable to the PAO and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and that's how it happened.

Now, the other problem that we had is that many municipalities couldn't—this is a shared program. The previous program, the community policing program that was instituted by the Conservative government, was at \$30,000 an officer, and ours was at \$35,000, to take into account inflation, but that's only the cost of a first-class constable. There's all sorts of residual and ancillary expenses. They have to buy them uniforms, have to train them, have to send them to Aylmer and provide cars so that they can drive them. All of these things add on. It is a very, very expensive item in any municipal police service budget. As a result, many municipalities said, "Thanks but no thanks, because we can't and do not want to come up with our share of the cost, the \$35,000 per officer."

To give you an example, right here in Toronto we had allocated the city of Toronto 250 police officers, and the mayor and the city council of the day said, "Thank you but no thank you. We're not taking any of them because we can't afford to do it." I had met with the chief, and he was quite unhappy about the fact that here was an offer from the province to fund half of 250 officers in perpetuity and the city council wasn't accepting it. As it turned out, the morning that I was making the announcement, they capitulated and said they would take them, but when I got through with the program, I had several municipalities that had agreed to take officers say, "Sorry, we're not going to take them because we can't afford to pay our share." I had to sort of scramble and find other municipalities that would take them.

We now have a situation where the federal government has come up with \$156 million over five years to

fund \$35,000 per officer for five years. That puts another additional strain on the municipalities because they're saying, "In five years' time, we have to, without increasing an officer, suddenly pay another \$35,000, and that's a challenge."

But when you get down to the actual facts of what happened, half of that \$156 million went to the OPP, and that's okay, because the OPP provides municipal policing to many, many communities in Ontario. They are the municipal police force. Twenty per cent went to aboriginal policing, and that's okay too because aboriginal policing has huge challenges, and they have a very great problem with funding.

So what that means is that only 30% of the funding that is coming to Ontario is actually being allocated to police services. In practical terms, what does that mean? The city of Toronto gets 36 officers, the city of Ottawa gets 10 and Peel region gets 11. Those are the largest police services in Ontario, and that is the total number of police that will be provided to them by this particular program.

What also happens is that when you go to outlying communities, where they have relatively little crime, it's very difficult for the reeves or the mayors or city councils to say, "Why are we hiring more police when all the statistics are showing that the crime rate is going down?" The perception in the large urban areas is that the crime rate is going up. You just have to look at yesterday: four homicides in one house. People say, "Oh my God, this is awful. What are you going to do about it?" You have this sort of enigma where the statistics keep showing that the crime rate is going down but the perception and the actuality that people feel is that the crime rate is going up.

So we have a problem where the delivery did not meet the promise. The federal government said, "We're going to provide 2,500 officers." What they should have done is taken a look, as we did, and ranked them in a way that said, "These are the municipalities that have the problems. That's where we should be concentrating our resources." To have Toronto getting 36, Ottawa getting 10 and Peel getting 11 is really inadequate.

I fully support the member's motion.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's a pleasure to speak to this, particularly after the former Solicitor General of Ontario had a few words to say on the subject, because he was able to frame the subject and talk about some of the nuances and difficulties people have when there is implementation of programs. I think that my impression, after listening to the member from York Centre, was that this is not an area of federal responsibility. When the federal government decides to launch itself into an area that is not necessarily its responsibility, one can assume that perhaps it won't work out the way it is intended. However, through much negotiation, there were some benefits to it.

The member also talked about that wonderful conundrum for politicians, in that we have a public perception

of increased crime on our streets and on the roads, increased bank robberies, increased crime in almost every facet of our society. I have rural areas in my riding of Halton where the crime rate is almost negligible; I have urban areas in my riding where the crime rate on a per capita basis is probably 15, 20, 25 times greater than in the rural areas. However, even in the rural areas, the perception, because of the press coverage of those kinds of things, is that crime is increasing. The statistics we have—albeit the comments of the member from Parkdale–High Park that people may not report minor crimes the same way they did in the past; I don't know if that's true or not, but that may be a mitigating factor—are that crime rates are probably dropping. I think most people would agree that the facts substantiate that crime rates are dropping.

So here we have public perception and the facts, and they don't line up, and that's a conundrum for politicians. However, it is the stuff that statesmen are made of. A statesman, of course, goes with the facts and isn't influenced by public opinion, whether it be right or wrong. Statesmen are eloquent enough—far more eloquent than I—to take the high road and put the situation into the parameters it should have.

1510

One of the thoughts, I think, behind the federal initiative was to allow municipalities to ramp up their policing requirements to where they might be five years from now, and therefore provide for safer communities. That's why it was a five-year program. Municipal budgets don't allow for that kind of flexible program that would allow you to ramp up today for tomorrow's needs. They're based on annual needs, and those kinds of things don't fit well into municipal programs. So, therefore, the program was probably destined for some problems.

I would also suggest that perhaps, when the federal government presented their case—I didn't hear the member from York Centre talk as to whether they were expecting to pay a portion of the money. It seemed to me that the federal government—it was not a 100% program; there was a 70-30 share, I believe. I'm not sure if that ever changed. If it did change, you didn't mention it, but—

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Fifty-fifty.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It changed to a 50-50 program? You lost ground on that one.

When one level of government is trying to implement those kinds of things, perhaps more consultation and more thought should have been put into it.

I'll be supporting the bill. It's a good bill, and when someone opens their mouth and makes a promise, they should fulfill it.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Madam Speaker, again for allowing me to speak.

First, I want to congratulate the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for bringing such an important issue to this House to be debated. We met with the police

association this week when they came to this beautiful place to update all the members on both sides of the House about their issues, and also to celebrate the retirement of my friend and constituent, the head of the association, Bruce Miller, who was here this week too.

I also want to congratulate the member for educating us about this issue, and also the member from York Centre, who was the minister at the time. He explained to the House what happened behind closed doors and about the details of this agreement. I hope the federal government fulfills their obligation and duty and hires 2,500 police officers, because we need them badly.

I want to allow my friend and colleague to continue the debate and explain our thoughts and support to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to start by commending the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for bringing this issue forward. Safer communities are a priority for all of us, all Ontarians, including our government. I welcome the motion that you have brought forward today.

I think that each and every one of us wants to live in a safe community, and each and every one of us wants to identify how we might better be able to provide the support and the resources our policing community needs to be successful in this common aim.

I have had the opportunity to speak in the House about how important community safety is to the residents of York South–Weston and how, over the past few months, in areas of my riding—although stats generally show that crime is decreasing, and other members have mentioned that crime is decreasing in their areas—the opposite has been happening. We have experienced a series of incidents of violence and shootings that have been very worrisome to the families, business, the police and the elected officials of York South–Weston. Residents are very concerned. They're looking for answers. They would like to see more officers on foot patrol, and they ask for a more visible public policing presence in the community. For newcomers to Canada—we have a lot of newcomers in York South–Weston—this offers also an opportunity to get to know the officers as members of the community and not as distant figures; as ones more involved in their everyday concerns. The community at large is looking for a common solution, although we realize that this will require time and effort.

Six city councillors in our area have formed the West Toronto Crime Task Force. They're taking a team approach to addressing the issues of crime that are affecting our community. But police play a vital role in making Ontario communities and families safer, and the federal government should help by providing sustainable, ongoing funding through its police officer recruitment fund. We have to have all the partners at the table.

On behalf of the residents of York South–Weston and on behalf of Ontarians in general—and the policing com-

munity, I should say—I really urge an increased support by all the partners involved and especially by the federal government so that together, we can restore the confidence that is needed and we can build safe, strong and vibrant communities. I believe that each and every one of us should have a right to live in a very safe community, as safe as possible.

I would like to again commend the member for bringing this motion forward, and I will be supporting this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan for a reply.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank all of the members who took the time to be here today to speak to this motion and for the indication of their support on the motion when it comes to voting. I do, however, have to make some comments in regard to the remarks that were made by the member from Oxford.

Unfortunately, I found his comments to be a bit unusual, shall I say. He chose an example that was a bit odd when he talked about court security costs and linked what he would suggest is not a fast enough uploading on court security costs to the lack of fiscal capacity for municipal police forces to hire more officers. It's an unusual example for him to raise given that in fact it was their government—I believe the member from Oxford might have been in cabinet at the time when the Conservative government of the day chose to download that specific service onto the backs of the very municipalities that he now wishes had more fiscal capacity. I found it a bit unusual that he would choose that as an example with which to try to paint and mark up our government a little bit.

He also talked about how the funding parameter of the program, at least in his opinion, seemed to be expressed as being less than important. I tried to consistently, throughout my remarks for 12 minutes, suggest to all members of the House that it's a very important part of the program because, if it's not there at the beginning, if we don't have the long-term sustainable funding going forward, in fact many municipalities will not choose to participate in the program. We heard in the remarks from the member from York Centre, who was there and involved in the program, how even municipalities as large as those that we find in the GTA were considering not participating in the program because there might not be long-term funding at the end of the five years. What could it mean if large municipalities in the GTA can't afford it? What does it mean to smaller municipalities in northern, rural, southwestern and southeastern Ontario? A couple of odd examples.

I want to thank those who spoke. I want to thank them for their support. We've got 2,000 officers through two programs—provincially funded, great programs. We're simply looking for the federal government to live up to a commitment that they made, even though it's not an area of responsibility—they made a commitment. We're looking for them to follow through on it.

RED TAPE REDUCTION
POLICY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA POLITIQUE
DE RÉDUCTION DES FORMALITÉS
ADMINISTRATIVES

Mr. Norm Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act to require consideration of a red tape reduction policy as a precondition for enacting bills and making regulations and to require a review of Acts and regulations from the viewpoint of the policy / Projet de loi 121, Loi exigeant de tenir compte d'une politique de réduction des formalités administratives avant d'édicter des projets de loi ou de prendre des règlements et exigeant l'examen des lois et des règlements à la lumière de cette politique.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity today to debate my private member's bill, Bill 121, the Red Tape Reduction Policy Act, 2008.

I was first prompted to present the Red Tape Reduction Policy Act as a result of a number of encounters with small business owners and out of my own past experience as a business person. More and more, I've heard about the crushing weight of red tape on small business across the province. I've also heard about the horror stories of businesses suddenly faced with the heavy hand of government inspectors, and I will expand upon that in a moment. The bottom line is that small business is vital to Ontario's recovery from have-not status.

1520

The TD small business survey results show that small businesses are worried about cash flow, making payroll, suppliers' bills and rising energy costs. The CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, says that two out of three businesses surveyed find that the overall burden of provincial regulations has increased in the past three years. Small businesses comprise 96% of all the businesses in the province of Ontario, so creating an environment that is business-friendly and that nurtures small business has never been more important. That is exactly what this bill will do.

The Red Tape Reduction Policy Act would require that all government bills satisfy a test related to the reduction of regulatory burden on persons or bodies. It would require that the government undertake a similar requirement for making regulations connected to a bill. Six months after enacting the bill, the government would undertake a review, within three years, of all public acts and regulations with a view to the red tape reduction policy, to be undertaken by the ministry responsible for each act. Ministers would report regularly to cabinet and the Legislative Assembly as to the progress of the review, and the government would report its progress every six months to the Legislative Assembly.

My private member's bill, if passed, would create a test which draft legislation must satisfy. That test comprises a series of questions that a minister must answer before presenting a bill in the House. These include:

(1) Does the bill set out the public policy that it seeks to address?

(2) Is the bill necessary to achieve the public policy?

(3) Has the government identified the regulatory burden that the bill imposes on persons or bodies?

(4) Has the government identified the amount of time and cost that persons and bodies on whom the bill imposes a regulatory burden would incur in complying with the burden?

(5) Has the government had a cost-benefit analysis done of the regulatory burden?

(6) If the bill imposes a regulatory burden on persons or bodies, do the public policy and cost-benefit analysis justify imposing the regulatory burden?

I would like to comment on that particular point. Yesterday, my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon asked the Minister of Labour a direct question on this very point. Ms. Jones asked Minister Fonseca to release the impact cost analysis that should have been prepared before the WSIB bill, Bill 119, was introduced and to make public what these changes would mean for small business owners. The minister's refusal or inability to answer the question suggests that no analysis was done. With the passage of this bill, that would not be acceptable.

Continuing with other provisions of this bill:

(7) Has the government consulted with the persons and bodies on whom the bill imposes a regulatory burden to determine if there are alternatives that will fill the public policy?

Again, we need only look at the WSIB bill, Bill 119, to see that the government's handling of this legislation would be in marked contrast to legislation created under the provisions of my private member's bill.

(8) Has the government assessed the effect that the bill could reasonably be expected to have on the Ontario economy and the economic competitiveness of Ontario, as opposed to other jurisdictions that are economic competitors of Ontario?

(9) Has the government compared the regulatory burden that the bill imposes on persons or bodies with the regulatory burden imposed on persons or bodies by legislation in other jurisdictions that are economic competitors of Ontario?

(10) To the extent reasonably possible, does the bill avoid overlap with requirements imposed by other Ontario legislation or by other levels of government?

(11) If there are existing requirements in Ontario legislation that fulfill the public policy, is it reasonable to eliminate the requirements once the bill comes into force?

(12) If the bill increases the powers, duties or burdens of any person or body in the public sector, is the government satisfied that there are no alternatives that fulfill the public policy but that involve less of an

increase of the powers, duties and burdens of any person or body in the public sector?

(13) If the bill increases the powers, duties or burdens of any person or body in the public sector, does the bill or other legislation or policy directives ensure that there are standards for delivery of services by those persons or bodies?

(14) Is the bill written in plain language?

By the way, this is a very common complaint that I hear from business people, not just about legislation and regulations, but about the endless number of forms that business owners are subjected to.

(15) Does the government have plans to ensure adequate explanation to the public of the regulatory burden that the bill imposes on persons and bodies?

(16) Has the government set a date to review whether it is advisable to continue the regulatory burden that the bill imposes on persons and bodies or to remove the burden?

(17) Has the government considered all other questions of a similar nature to the questions set out in paragraphs 1 to 16 that are prescribed by the regulations made under this act?

As I mentioned earlier, as small business critic, I have been approached repeatedly for help in dealing with the heavy-handed provincial inspectors in unravelling red tape. I would like to elaborate on a couple of those cases now to illustrate just how bad things are.

A Markham media production company specializing in videographing weddings and corporate functions contacted me recently about a retail sales tax audit. They have three employees. When the company started out a few years ago, they went to the chamber of commerce seminar and were told to use tax guide 901, *The Basics of Retail Sales Tax*. The guide did not list photography as a taxable service and therefore they never charged or collected retail sales tax. They have always promptly reported their monthly sales and remitted retail sales tax. Recently, they received an RST assessment and were advised that they have been doing it wrong for the past four years. They've been reassessed, all services, not just products. The assessor told them they should have been using guide 509 and didn't seem to know anything about guide 901. The preliminary assessment is \$47,000 plus interest and penalties, which could push the total to \$100,000. As it stands today, this business has been advised that regardless of the misinformation and the fact that the guide they were working off does not include photography and videography in the definition of taxable service, they will be charged the full amount. In fact, they will even be charged for contracts that have not received any tangible product because they have divorced or have not picked up their images or property.

They ask, "How can a company be charged back taxes on property that has never been received by the client?" It's a very good question. How can a small business be penalized for misinformation given to them straight from the Ontario government?

In September, I held a small business round table so I could hear first-hand about some of the challenges facing

businesses today. Things have changed little since I was in business. A resort owner told me how he was contacted by the Ministry of the Environment and was asked to provide copies of all his certificates of approval for each of his small waste water systems. He told the ministry official that all the certificates had been issued by the ministry and they should simply check their records. That sounds fairly reasonable to me. The ministry representative told him that they had lost some of their records and therefore the burden of proving that certificates had been issued now fell to the owner. How is that reasonable?

The lack of support for small business doesn't end with these examples. Not long ago, I met with a convenience store operator. He told me that times are tough. He has been in business for four years, and recently an inspector arrived at his business and wanted to see all the receipts for the past four years for cigars purchased. He was told that if he couldn't produce the receipts, he would be presented with a fine of \$10,000. At no time since he bought the business has anyone from the government come around to tell him that he should be hanging on to these receipts. In fact, at no time has anyone from the government come to give him any kind of advice or support on how to comply with your government regulations.

Now we have Bill 119, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act, before the Legislature. If ever there was a bill that would not meet the test of my private member's bill, this is it: no cost-benefit analysis, no consultation, heavy-handed regulatory burden. Even though this government has had lots of feedback from small business, the government is ploughing ahead with its agenda.

It is time that we all recognize that small business is important to our economy and that wealth creators are important to all of us. They make it possible to provide social services and to implement poverty strategies; they fund our health care and education programs through the taxes they generate and the jobs they provide, which also generate income taxes. We need to have regulations in Ontario that are easy to understand, that are communicated and explained clearly to business. We also need to have a change in attitude within our civil service in Ontario. We need the government to work with business to help them comply with the rules, not just act as the police coming down hard on business whenever it steps out of line.

The huge majority of businesses are not setting out to break the rules. It's just the government has created so many rules, it's impossible for small business to be aware of and comply with all the regulations.

1530

You may ask, how do I know this bill will really work? We need only look to British Columbia. In 2001, the government of the province of BC decided to create Canada's most small-business-friendly environment. They didn't pass a bill to do it. Instead, they partnered with small business and formed a strategy that has

informed every government ministry. Since 2001, BC has reduced regulatory requirements by 42%. They continue to strive for zero net increases in regulation. The result of that has been that in the past five years, BC has seen an 11% increase in the number of small businesses. We need to do the same to help small business in Ontario if we want to regain our place as the economic engine of Canada. It is long past due for the government policies to support small business. So I ask all members to support this private member's bill, Bill 121, and help reduce the red tape burden in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to be the small business critic for the New Democratic Party, and also, at one time, a small business owner. I'm intimately involved with the small business associations in my riding and came forward, in fact, to this assembly my first year of election to put forward a motion to rationalize the business education tax across the province. We had a number of business improvement associations here.

I can safely say that in my years of small business involvement, I've never heard, number one, complaints of small business as being too much red tape. Here's what you hear from small business: You hear problems with undercapitalization, cash flow problems.

If you want to talk about a bureaucracy they have a problem with, it's the bureaucracy of banks, the banks who refuse to extend lines of credit, who refuse to honour lines of credit, and as soon as there's a cash crunch—as is the case now—banks that pull lines of credit. That's what small businesses list as a number one problem for them. Number two is taxes and the unfairness, often, of the tax regime and the burden that they have to shoulder. So those are one and two in terms of concerns for small business.

When it comes to red tape—and honestly, when you talk to the people in this House—just on a very personal level, I think most of us have far more problems with Rogers, if that happens to be our cable company. You should talk to my husband about dealing with Rogers, just to get someone to come out and look at your system. It's the privately owned, large companies that we have problems with—not to get into the entire discussion about credit card companies. If there's one bureaucracy that we would love to see reformed, it's the banking industry and the credit card companies, who really are criminals in this particular economic crisis in the way they deal with people and treat people. These are private companies.

Quite frankly, as far as the civil service is concerned, kudos to them for shrinking budgets. They've done a pretty good job. And yes, we know in our constituency offices that most of the time our staff deal with a bureaucracy that has to do more with government than with private companies, but quite frankly, most of those interactions really aren't too bad and are pretty streamlined.

I remember, as a small business owner, the early 1990s, roughly—a time maybe not quite as bad as what we're facing now, but it was a recession, and we all felt the pinch. I remember the conversations with the bank about lines of credit, conversations that really were spread across the province and the amalgamated effort of small business to get banks to loosen up, to be patient with their capital, to hold off a bit, to trust in your receivables and your track record. This is something that small business really needs, and it needs it with a bureaucracy that's most onerous to small business, and that's the banking establishment.

Certainly, in terms of red tape where governments are concerned, the major red tape we had to deal with was with the federal government, quite frankly: It was tax time. I have had complaints as well from businesses in my riding about that retail sales tax initiative. But there it's a question of training. And again, whether you're dealing with Rogers or the bank or Visa, it's kind of Business 101. You write down the name of the person you talk to. You keep track of your conversations. You one-up it and ask to speak to the manager. This is true of all bureaucracies, whether private or public.

I think the real impulse behind this bill is really not this bill, Bill 121, but is the move by our colleagues to the right of us, in more ways than one, against Bill 119, against the amendments brought forward to the WSIB coverage. That's where we, as New Democrats, really have to part ways. We would like to see all workers covered. If we have a problem with Bill 119, it's that it's not coming in fast enough.

I have to comment that there has been quite a bit of scaremongering around this bill. I've had a number of constituents call who thought that all of a sudden they were going to have to pay WSIB premiums—and they're not even in the construction trades. That's our responsibility, to get the information out. They also didn't know that the bill is not going to be enacted for three years. I've done my bit to make sure that people understand what's actually in the bill.

But let's look at Bill 119 from a business perspective, even. What this is doing is trying to create a more level playing field out there in the construction industry. That's what's happening here, and the government needs to be doing that.

We in the New Democratic Party feel that government has a substantial role to play in the economy. If there was ever a time, if there was ever an era, when it was absolutely crystal clear around the world that government has a place to play in the free market economy, it's right now. When we see the likes of George Bush intervening in a free market economy, surely we get it in Ontario: Government has a role to play. Government must play a role. In fact, even our federal counterparts are talking about a potential deficit, because investment may be needed, because this is not the time for balanced budgets. We all get that government, I hope, plays a role. It plays a critical role.

The days of the robber barons, I hope, are gone. Unfortunately, they seem to be making a resurgence. When

the average CEO is making \$9 million a year and the minimum wage, in real dollar terms, has gone down since the 1970s, when the gap between wealthy and poor is growing and when the middle class is being emptied out, surely we get that government has a role to play in stimulating the economy, in regulating the economy, and in making sure that out there among businesses it's an even playing field.

If some construction companies have to pay WSIB premiums to cover their workers, then all should—end of story. All workers should be covered. All owners of companies should pay to have them covered, not just some against others. So, really, in a sense, this is government interfering in a positive way, in helping level the playing field and helping protect workers.

We wish they'd go much further. We wish they'd bring in card certification for all workers. We wish they'd make sure that the minimum wage was a living wage. We wish they'd stimulate the economy by building affordable housing, as was promised. We wish, of course, as social democrats, that government would play a more proactive role than it has in the past.

That's what's really behind this Bill 121. Behind it is the concerted effort on the part of the Progressive Conservatives against Bill 119.

But let's not fool ourselves. Small business has huge issues and needs our help, absolutely. Ninety-six per cent of the businesses, as you heard the member say, are small business. They also tend to provide most of the employment. I'm not talking about businesses that employ 30 to 50 people. I'm talking about businesses that employ four to six people. That's the bulk of small business across the province.

They need our help. Where? Well, first of all, as a Toronto resident, I can say that small business needs our help here in the city of Toronto by uploading some of the costs that have been downloaded to the municipalities, and at a faster rate than 2018, thank you very much.

The city of Toronto is in deficit about \$700 million a year for provincially mandated programs that the province doesn't pay for. That's now, and that burden gets shifted onto property taxes. Guess who pays them? In part, small business.

1540

We need to upload faster and take that burden off small business and off the municipalities. That would help small business in terms of their tax crunch. Also, it would help rationalize the business education tax. Some attempt was made, but it was an inch where we need a mile: 416ers pay way more for their share of that than 905ers. That doesn't make sense. We all have the same education needs. That's something else the government could do to help small business.

The other thing that government could do to help small business—we would all have to work with our federal colleagues on this—is to make sure that cash keeps flowing to them, to make sure that the banks don't tighten up on credit just because there's a recession. We have to ensure, for small business and homeowners alike,

that credit is available and that it's patient credit; that credit lines are extended where they're needed; and that all of a sudden, just because the bank is facing some cash crunches of its own, it doesn't take that out on small business, which has happened in the past and, I have to say, inspired quite a movement across Toronto in the early 1990s to organize small business to fight back, to fight the banks on that issue alone. They've made some concessions but not nearly enough.

We have to really be vigilant, on behalf of small business, to make sure that money keeps flowing. Again, that's something this governments could do that's real, that's practical and that doesn't slap our civil service in the face for doing their jobs—maybe not always perfectly, but then, who does? What bureaucracy does? As I said, the bureaucracies that most small businesses have the major problems with have nothing at all to do with government but everything to do with our lending institutions.

As I said, anyone who has ever made a call to a cell-phone company—to Rogers—to a credit card company or to a bank—tell me in all honesty that you get faster and better service from those institutions than you do from the civil service. I really don't think you do. So it's not about privatization; it's not about letting the free market have its way. It is about being a government that cares, that intervenes in ways that we New Democrats think are not enough, facing the current trials and tribulations, and a government that cares about what small business really asks for. Again, what do they ask for? Number one, credit and the flow of capital, and number two, a fair and equitable taxation system that relies upon the uploading of downloaded costs to the municipalities; the government could do way more on those two areas. But unfortunately, the red tape is not one of them. We won't be supporting it.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I rise today to recognize a turning point by Her Majesty's loyal opposition toward the government of Ontario and its vision of our province. However modest and tentative it may be, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has signalled a breakthrough moment. Although this is only private members' time, we all sincerely hope that he speaks for his leader and for his party.

For the first time, a member of the opposition has hinted that he gets it: Ontario's five-point plan to build the province's economy truly is the way to go. Let's quickly recap those five points: one, invest in skills and education; two, invest in infrastructure; three, support innovation; four, lower business costs; and five, strengthen key partnerships.

This proposed series of measures by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka is a brave attempt to support point four, lowering business costs. We want to be helpful. The member has seen the light, and we want to help him succeed. So let's do our best with this well-intentioned

bill; let's be positive and constructive in our evaluation of it.

What does this bill seek to do? Does it enable the government of the day to more speedily enact legislation? Does it serve to better empower those whom the electorate chooses to send to this chamber to serve Ontarians? Does it provide clarity in converting the will of the people into the laws of the land? Sadly, the bill does not seek to do these things.

Consider its title, a masterpiece of bureaucratism in itself. Let's just repeat it: An Act to require consideration of a red tape reduction policy as a precondition for enacting bills and making regulations and to require a review of Acts and regulations from the viewpoint of the policy.

Mr. Jeff Leal: They're bringing back the gas busters.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Egad.

And this means what, exactly? Before either legislation or regulation could be enacted, as envisioned in this well-intentioned bill, drafts would be subject to fully 17 ponderous, time-consuming and inflexible processes that must all be surmounted before any change of any consequence could be enacted, any time and under all circumstances.

What this means is that policy analysts—and not MPPs, certainly not businesspeople, and not career ministry professionals—would forever be in the driver's seat in the government of Ontario. Consider just a few of the things these analysts must do before anything could change or anything new could be enacted by any government now or in the future. These include identifying, estimating and quantifying regulatory burden, conducting detailed cost-benefit analyses, writing justification reports, writing economic impact reports, writing competitive reports, writing jurisdictional comparison reports, calculating cross-tabulations of extra-jurisdictional impact reports—whatever that means; public communications reports, writing review date reports, and heaven knows what else.

It sounds very much like a recipe for gridlock. This may not be the member's intention. He is a hard-working, effective member. Let's give him the benefit of the doubt. It is not his intent, but it is surely the outcome.

In truth, much of this analysis has been done for decades in such committees as legislation and regulation, which is chaired by my very capable colleague from Peterborough. I have been pleased to serve on that committee. In the way Bill 121 is set out, this proposed new and very probably large evaluation bureaucracy would overlap—or supplant, because it's not entirely clear—the existing and quite effective legislation and regulations committee.

It might make more sense to empower ministries to evaluate their requirements, to formulate specific plans, to modernize and to streamline. The member is, however, moving in the right direction. Let us continue to say we like the things he's saying. I think he and his colleagues will get the trust part of working with the public service as this project continues to evolve.

Instead of triggering this process proposed by the member only when the government wants to do something, and perhaps may need to do something, the member might consider empowering the very people in the public service who work daily with the regulations. Ask them to come up with a regulatory burden reduction plan that could be implemented in a systematic and coordinated fashion.

Consider, for example, how the proposed ponderous sequence of evaluation processes would fail Ontario, fail our people and fail our Legislature in the event of a crisis like, oh, SARS, the blackout, the TTC strike or today's economic—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Flood of Peterborough, 2004.

Mr. Bob Delaney: The flood of Peterborough, or today's world economic meltdown. The act of drafting and enacting legislation and regulation is about results and not process. Dedicated public servants, empowered and trusted to make things simple, can do the job—I submit, can do the job better than legions of otherwise disconnected policy analysts.

1550

I do not presume the will of the House today. Of course, in private members' time, members are free to vote as they see fit.

Consider our alternatives. We could pass this bill and ask the member to refer it to a committee. Its quickly apparent shortcomings would, of course, require extensive rewrites and stakeholder hearings before it could come back to this place for third reading debate. If the member chooses this route, as is his right should it pass, I am confident that the government will use its majority on that committee to change the short title of the bill to the Analysis Paralysis Act. Alternatively, we could defeat the bill and allow our colleague to redraft it more quickly. He might bring it back to the House himself or ask one of his colleagues, perhaps co-sponsored with a government member, to introduce version 2.0 of what's before us today, which I emphasize again is a good start.

Still, however we vote on this bill, let us applaud the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. He's a good man; he has grasped Ontario's need to lower business costs as part of this province's five-point plan for economic growth. The other four points are similarly sound. He and his party have finally seen the light.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join in this debate on Bill 121, which is basically saying, "Let's reduce the red tape."

I know that the member opposite is saying that this is not going to work, but a very similar bill was introduced in British Columbia, and they reduced red tape by 42%. We don't need to reinvent the wheel; if they are able to do it out there, then we should be able to do it here. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, our small business critic who has done an exemplary job in that role, was a former small business owner himself and his family still

is now, and for generations before, so he knows of what he speaks.

I would not be the only MPP that gets so many calls into my office about red tape—I know the Minister of Small Business over there is raising his eyebrows—because there is no question, there is a huge amount of red tape that is frustrating all the small businesses in our riding. Talk to the agriculture community: They live in fear that the Ministry of the Environment car is going to go by. There's just this culture of enforcement, and nobody is working with anybody and saying, "These are changes that are coming. This is how we can help you make those changes."

I spoke about the long-term-care resolution that was brought forward earlier this afternoon and how long-term-care homes have 400 regulations. My goodness, how can you look after a patient when you're worried about 400 regulations? There are appropriate regulations that are in place for everyone's safety, but when it gets to be so enormous and so burdensome that it's driving people out of business, then there is a problem.

In the spring budget, the government said: "Ontario's goal is to lead all Canadian jurisdictions with its efforts to measure and reduce the regulatory burden. Ontario's regulatory modernization will start with an aggressive cap-and-trade initiative for government regulations, which means that when new regulations are enacted, others must be eliminated."

So, this is a start. The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka is saying, "Here is a bill; please use it. Please pass it today. Help our small businesses that are struggling and strangled from the red tape." We've heard it all for so many years. Let us get on with it and get it done. We can help the bureaucrats. We are the front lines. We're hearing back from our constituents. They are there trying to craft appropriate regulations. As I said, there's just too much regulation and red tape that's out there. To drive away the small businesses that help our economy, provide our jobs, provide top-notch goods and services—there is no excuse that we have so much red tape. If British Columbia, in the example used here, can reduce red tape by 42%, why are we not looking to them and saying, "What did they do? This is what they've done. This is what we should do here."

I know some of the members of the Legislature were at the cement association luncheon earlier this week, and they were speaking about the frustrations, in certain examples, about environmental assessments that can go on for a decade, which does not make sense. We all have to be precautionary with the environment, but we should be able to get an environmental assessment done, I would hope, within a year, because we can't be competitive with, say, Quebec, who can get environmental assessments done quicker. We're driving businesses to other provinces because we're making it so frustrating. So we have to change this whole mindset that exists out there. We're cramping any pilot projects or new initiatives, especially in the environment, that could be tested as pilot projects. But when it takes six years to get a permit

for the same thing that takes six days to get a permit for in Quebec, there's a serious problem right there. I know this is not new to lots of the members in the Legislature.

Just look at MPAC. The assessments are out. This week in my riding I've got lots of e-mails already on the assessments that have come out. When they phoned MPAC, they basically had said to them on the hotline that MPAC is the fault of the provincial government. We have made some changes to MPAC and the people there are good. They're following rules and regulations, though, that some of them need to change. And that's from the hotline that they phone today.

I'm going to mention Camping in Ontario, which has trailer campgrounds in many of our ridings. They have MPAC issues, have had for a long time—ever since I've been in the Legislature, which is five years now. They're asking for MPAC to be removed, which MPAC probably does not have a problem with. They're asking for a tag system in which they can issue the tags and the municipalities get the revenues from the tag system. There's a whole business there, Camping in Ontario, that would see revenue generated in our municipalities and give people of Ontario the type of recreation that they want and reduce MPAC being involved at all. They don't have to come out and measure the addition to the trailers. That's a waste of their time and our taxpayer money. This is an example that I can say we can eliminate, and I certainly would be pleased to work on any committees that can help with red tape reduction.

Just for example, up in Oxtongue Narrows, which is in the northern part of my riding at Highway 60—and I share part of that boundary with the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka—they need a new bridge. Their bridge is going to close down. How is it going to impact the resorts that are there? Because it's the entrance into Algonquin park? But there are these rules in the MTO—again red tape and regulations—that don't say, "My gosh, if we close that bridge, then they can't have people staying in their resorts because of all the noise and that"—MTO says, "But this rule says that." They have done a great job in changing the speed limit there for safer roads, but really, you've got to get some practical common sense into situations like this. The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka has done a good first step in bringing forward this bill and I hope the government adopts it.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand up and speak and comment on the private member's bill brought by the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka about cutting red tape. I have been listening to both sides of the House talking about red tape and I don't understand what he was talking about. I know this similar bill came to our attention before. We defeated that bill. I don't understand whether he means we have to lay off inspectors, whether he wants to open the whole field to everyone to do whatever they want without any regulations. We saw what happened in the United States: Loose regulations

ended up with a big, huge catastrophe across the globe, a disaster across the globe in the housing industry, banking industry, financial industry. They all collapsed because they were open, with no regulation.

As you know, it is important for us in the province of Ontario to have some kind of regulation in order to protect the innocent people in this province, especially in small business. I've been in small business for many, many years. I don't see any barriers, objections or difficulties. The most important thing is to put a mechanism in place to protect the people, not to keep it loose, because people need protection.

We have with us here the minister who is in charge of small business. He wants to add his input to this issue and hopefully he can advise us and this House on his knowledge about cutting red tape.

I know our government were working hard as soon as we got elected in 2003 to eliminate many capital taxes, unify the forms, create a one-stop shop, have less forms, less requirements for many different businesses to do business and be successful in the province of Ontario, without jeopardizing our stability in business.

1600

Again, thank you, and I will allow my colleague the Minister of Small Business to continue the debate and advise the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka about the import on behalf of this province.

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

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, my colleagues from Mississauga–Streetsville and London–Fanshawe talked a little bit about this bill, but I really want to talk about some of the things we have already done to reduce the paperwork burden on small business.

We realized three or four years ago that we needed to reduce the burden on small business. We have worked very systematically to reduce the paperwork burden on small business. In the first phase, we reduced it by 24% in seven ministries. In the second phase, we reduced it by 25.6% per cent in eight ministries. In the third phase, we will achieve similar results. So, overall, paperwork will be reduced in all ministries by about 25%.

In addition to that, we have automated business forms so that people don't spend too much time filling in the same information again and again.

The Premier has taken a very keen interest in making sure that not only is the paperwork burden reduced, but the overall burden on small business is reduced as well. We have created a secretariat solely dedicated to that, and we are in the process of implementing cap-and-trade, which means that if somebody wants to bring forward a rule or regulation, they have to bring forward another rule or regulation that they will eliminate from small business.

We want to create an environment in which we are open for business and businesses are focusing their attention on doing business rather than filling out forms for the government.

The intention of the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka, who introduced this bill, is the right one, but the government is already working on it. It's not that we have been sitting here doing nothing. We realized a long time ago that we needed to reduce the paperwork burden.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you, Minister. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's interesting listening to this debate, on a couple of levels. If I may, I'll open with a couple of comments particular to my colleague from Parkdale–High Park talking about regulating large business and banks.

You know, the thing about small business—and I speak not so much as the member from Thornhill as a veteran of small business for about 15 years of my life—is that small business people try very hard to navigate the government-infested waters in dealing with regulations. The large businesses, the banks and so forth, also have to deal with these regulations, but they have the infrastructure and the resources to do it. Do you know what small business does? They pack up and they leave, and that has been happening in Ontario. And that, I believe, is the nub of why my colleague the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has tabled Bill 121. Today I'm proud to rise and support my colleague in his private member's bill. This bill seeks to eliminate that very red tape in government business.

The definition of red tape that we found calls it “a derisive term for excessive regulation or rigid conformity to formal rules that is considered redundant or bureaucratic, and hinders or prevents action or decision-making.” My goodness, that definition itself sounds like red tape!

Let's think about the performance of this government for the last five years, taking into consideration this definition. Excessive regulation? Check; it's there. Rigid conformity to rules, also known as lack of imagination? Also there. Redundant legislation? Check. And need I remind anyone of the ban on illegal handguns in cars? I remember bringing that one up. Did I mention a ban on illegal handguns in cars? Talk about regulation—this is government by regulation. Lack of action and decision-making? Check, and check again, so we're batting a thousand.

It is no surprise that my colleague felt absolutely compelled to introduce legislation that would reduce red tape. I believe that his bill will accomplish much more than that, because it really speaks to the government's need for three things, and I think these are three things that any government needs: transparency, accountability and responsibility.

What Bill 121 says is that it is not enough for the government to propose a solution to a particular problem if that solution itself causes additional difficulties. We debated, for example, the driving distractions bill this morning, and that very issue is basically about fixing something that, if it doesn't eliminate regulations or put in a minimum number of regulations, is no longer about driving distractions; it's about driving us to distraction

with a bill. It's a little bit like going back to school and learning to solve a math problem. It's not enough to provide the answer at the end, and no teacher worth his or her salt would accept that. You can't just provide an answer; you have to show how you arrived at the answer. That's when you catch the mistakes before it's too late. This is about the why and the how of a solution, not just the solution itself without any reason or any action to control.

This bill will actually force the government to stop and think—yes, think—before it opens its mouth with some superficial proposal that stops a small leak at point A but creates a flood at point B. Governments do this, and this one has developed a particular expertise.

I know that the terms “government” and “think” or “red tape reduction” or “cause and effect” are concepts that are somewhat unfamiliar in this chamber, and I urge everyone on the other side particularly to open up their minds and consider that this private member's bill is actually a proposal that would improve the work of government, the efficiency of the Legislature and the relationship this government has with Ontarians, very particularly the Ontarians who own and operate small business, the very same small business that drives this economy and on which we're going to depend more and more in the future.

The sad reality is that red tape has infiltrated and filled in virtually every crevice of government. It hinders the work of government, it hinders public servants and it is a burden on our citizens and on our small businesses. Unless we target red tape directly and make a conscious effort to reduce it in all the functions of government, it will strangle the province of Ontario. I've had personal experience, and I wish time permitted me to share it, but it's not unlike some of the issues that were related by my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka—there was just a lot more money involved, if I recall.

The unfortunate thing is that far too often, governments create red tape because it makes them feel they are actually doing something about a problem. That brings to mind the example of making a fire so we can put our firemen to good use putting it out. This is especially the case with this government. They have made a career of doing absolutely nothing to resolve any real challenges facing Ontario to improve this province's outlook for the future, but they've kept themselves busy. That's why I constantly talk about nanny statism and bans and the rest of it.

I applaud and thank my colleague for putting this bill forward. I hope everyone will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for a reply?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the members who spoke to my private member's bill today. I'll respond to a couple of the points made.

The member from Parkdale–High Park seems to think this bill has to do with Bill 119, the WSIB bill. I would simply point out that the bill was written prior to my knowing anything about Bill 119. I just used it as an

example of a bill that is not being consulted on and is going through without passing some of the tests this bill would provide.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville raised concerns about a new bureaucracy being created and said it should be done ministry by ministry. If he read the explanatory note, it says, “The review is done by the minister responsible for each act” and each regulation, so it is ministry by ministry. I might point out that this is modeled after BC. The text came virtually verbatim from what they are doing in BC. In what they've done in the last five years, they've seen a 42% reduction in the regulatory burden and an 11% increase in the number of small businesses. So it is working in British Columbia at this time.

I come from what I call a small business, running a resort, and I know that when you're in a small business you're trying to do the job of running the business: satisfying your customers. You're generally not a lawyer, and you don't have the time to try to figure out all the various government regulations. We need rules that are simple, that are in plain language that business can understand and that are communicated to business so they understand them, and we need government to help business comply with the rules. The great majority of businesses out there want to live within the law, want to comply with the rules and want to do the best job they can. This bill is all about reducing the burden on business so it can thrive in this province. Small business is 96% of the business in this province. We need it to survive; we need it to thrive. I ask you to support this private member's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The time for private members' public business has expired.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): We will first deal with ballot item number 55, standing in the name of Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson has moved a private member's resolution. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

We'll deal with this at the end. We'll go through the other motions first.

POLICE OFFICERS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The next item is ballot item number 56. Mr. Mauro has moved a private member's resolution. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Congratulations, Mr. Mauro.

RED TAPE REDUCTION
POLICY ACT, 2008
LOI DE 2008 SUR LA POLITIQUE
DE RÉDUCTION DES FORMALITÉS
ADMINISTRATIVES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Finally, the next item is ballot item number 57. Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 121, An Act to require consideration of a red tape reduction policy as a precondition for enacting bills and making regulations and to require a review of Acts and regulations from the viewpoint of the policy. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion carries.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Congratulations, Mr. Miller. Is there a particular committee that you wanted this to be referred to, Mr Miller?

Mr. Norm Miller: I would like to refer it to the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): So referred, to the general government committee.

We will now call in the members. This is going to be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1612 to 1617.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Mr. Wilson has moved private member's notice of motion number 62. All those in favour, please stand and remain standing while the Clerk records the vote.

Ayes

Colle, Mike	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Shurman, Peter
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael	Witmer, Elizabeth
Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing while the Clerk records the vote.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Hoy, Pat	Moridi, Reza
Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Best, Margaret	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony

Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES
À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 16, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 103, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and to make amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications à d'autres lois.

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

There being no further debate, Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 103. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): So ordered. Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

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

The House now stands adjourned until Monday, November 24, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1621.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Gilles Bisson, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
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Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
Peter Shurman
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
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**Red Tape Reduction Policy Act, 2008, Bill 121,
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**Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment
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