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des débats
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Thursday 30 April 2009

Jeudi 30 avril 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 30 April 2009

Jeudi 30 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POVERTY REDUCTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION
DE LA PAUVRETÉ

Ms. Matthews moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario / Projet de loi 152, Loi concernant une stratégie à long terme de réduction de la pauvreté en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Jeff Leal: One of the best.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: "One of the best" is right.

It's a great privilege for me to rise today to speak in support of Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act, 2009, which I introduced in February and which is now before the House for third reading. If passed, this act will take Ontario a major step forward in our fight against poverty. It would bring about a fundamental shift in the way we approach poverty and poverty reduction. It would ensure that all who serve in this House in successive governments are focused on this issue and take steps to reduce poverty, and it would ensure that those people who are living in poverty and who are working in this fight to reduce poverty in Ontario have their voices heard.

It was the voices of all of these organizations, groups and individuals that informed the development of Ontario's first-ever poverty reduction strategy, Breaking the Cycle, which we released last December, and it was these voices that we recently heard at the public hearings on this bill and to which we have carefully listened. The amendments in the act respond to the constructive suggestions we heard. They make this bill even stronger. The hearings confirmed for me what we already knew: that now is the time to enshrine in law our commitment to an ongoing poverty reduction strategy in the province of

Ontario, and that setting an initial target specifically to reduce child poverty in Ontario is both the right thing to do and the smart thing to do.

Many, many groups came before the Standing Committee on Social Policy or took time to write down and submit their ideas. We received thoughtful suggestions from all participants. I want to thank all of the people and organizations who have participated actively in the democratic process this way. We are better for it, and so is this bill. We had time to consider the constructive suggestions that were made, and we're pleased to have responded to requests for amendments. The amendments we've made reflect the all-hands-on-deck approach that is needed to create opportunity for all Ontarians to achieve their full potential. We need everyone working together toward a shared goal to make the progress we can and we must make.

I sincerely appreciate the work of the critics of the other parties to improve this bill, and I especially want to thank Michael Prue for the commitment he has to poverty reduction in this province. I want to thank my parliamentary assistant, Maria Van Bommel. Her thoughtful, steady leadership, combined with her sense of humour and strong values, have really improved this bill. Thank you, Maria.

I want to tell you about what we heard and how the bill was amended coming out of the standing committee process. I won't speak to every change, but I do want to give you a sense of where we were and what progress we've made. We've heard that clearer wording would be helpful so there is no confusion that poverty reduction is to benefit all Ontarians, not just children. Our first poverty reduction strategy, Breaking the Cycle, does address poverty among adults, but certainly our primary focus is on reducing child poverty. This bill was specifically drafted to allow future strategies to have different priorities and emphases.

Let me be clear: We have not wavered from our initial focus on children and breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Our poverty reduction strategy has a principal target of reducing the number of children living in poverty by 25% over the next five years. It will raise the standard of living of all children living in poverty and move 25% of them out of poverty altogether. But we have ensured that there is a sharper focus on adults in the principles of the bill. These principles will apply to all future poverty reduction strategies. Reducing poverty involves improving opportunities for everyone.

We also heard that we needed to be clear in the bill about our overarching vision for poverty reduction in Ontario, so the bill now indicates that Ontario aspires to

be a leading jurisdiction in reducing poverty, something that was already a clear part of the strategy we launched last December. We're resolute in our leadership.

We heard that a greater level of detail would be beneficial in the principle that stresses the importance of the full participation of all Ontarians. We have responded by adding reference to race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status and disability. We believe that these additions further sharpen our attention on opportunity for all—because this bill must speak to all Ontarians and our shared goals.

We heard that it was not enough to talk about single moms as being at heightened risk of poverty; we needed to talk about women as a group. We listened to the presenters; we considered what they said; we agreed, and, as a committee, we made that change unanimously.

The bill envisions that we would report annually on the strategy and that the minister must consult on it regularly. At least every five years, the strategy would be assessed by the government and a new or renewed strategy would be developed. We have now amended the bill to specify certain groups who must be part of those consultations. On the matter of annual reporting on key opportunity indicators such as income levels, school success, health care and housing, we heard that reports ought to be tabled in the Legislature. I'm pleased to say that this is another positive change we've made to strengthen the bill, and it's in addition to the requirement that reports must be available on a government of Ontario website. The bill now includes a specific and very tight time frame for tabling annual reports.

We also heard that the bill needed to be clear about what we meant by involvement in poverty reduction, especially the involvement of Ontarians living in poverty. That was an area people felt quite strongly about. The response of the committee was to support an amendment that would clarify that Ontarians, especially people living in poverty, are to be involved in the design and the implementation of every new or modified poverty reduction strategy.

0910

We heard about the importance of the non-profit, charitable and voluntary sector organizations to poverty reduction. All members of this House know how significant the non-profit, charitable and voluntary organizations are in strengthening communities and making a positive contribution to the economy. We listened and we acted by passing an amendment that provided this important recognition. As you can see, this government welcomed advice on how to improve this legislation, and we act when we are informed by the thoughtful advice of the people of Ontario, who are every bit as determined as we are to reduce poverty in this wonderful province. Overall, we now have a strengthened bill which will provide a continuing and powerful focus on poverty reduction over the life of successive generations.

If passed, this historic bill would propel us into a new era of fighting poverty. With its passage, we would be

taking another major step forward in supporting children, adults and low-income families, especially in these challenging economic times. It would help Ontario emerge from the current economic crisis stronger and more prosperous. With the momentum we are establishing now, the engaged support and commitment of countless Ontarians and the power of this bill to ensure political accountability, Ontario is firmly positioning itself as a leader in fighting poverty.

This legislation is about providing hope and securing opportunity. Eliminating poverty will not happen overnight; it will take years. It will take an ongoing collaborative effort as well as an ongoing commitment and political will. We know the effort will be worth it, because when Ontarians succeed, Ontario succeeds. For all of these reasons, I call on my colleagues in the House to join me in supporting passage of this historic legislation.

Before I pass over to my parliamentary assistant, I do want to especially thank the members of the cabinet committee on poverty reduction, who really drove this strategy. I'm so proud of the work that was done. I first want to thank the Premier for having the wisdom to make this a priority of our government; my co-chair, George Smitherman; Dwight Duncan, Kathleen Wynne, John Milloy, Madeleine Meilleur, David Caplan, Chris Bentley, Michael Chan, Margaret Best, Jim Watson, Bas Balkissoon, Lou Rinaldi, David Oraziotti, Carol Mitchell and Bruce Crozier, all members who were anxious to be part of the process of reducing poverty. Thank you to every single one. Everyone made a contribution; together we have done something quite special.

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I too am pleased to rise today to join with my colleagues and speak in support of Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act, 2009, which was introduced in February by my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Services, Deb Matthews.

If passed, this legislation will enshrine in law a long-term commitment to reducing poverty in Ontario for successive governments, in good times and in bad. It builds on Ontario's first-ever poverty reduction strategy, launched last December, a plan that will, for the first time in the history of our province, set a hard target to reduce child poverty by 25% over the next five years, lifting 90,000 children out of poverty and giving low-income parents the support they need to build better lives for their kids. Not only does this hold future governments accountable for setting strategies and targets for reducing poverty, but it ensures that the voices of Ontarians will continue to be heard.

Our government is already making good on this promise. To support low-income families facing these challenging economic times, the government is proposing to increase the Ontario child benefit this July from \$600 to a maximum of \$1,100 per child per year. That is two years ahead of schedule. The Ontario child benefit helps 1.3 million children by giving monthly support to their families. Ontario is also planning to increase its investment

in social and affordable housing to create short-term jobs in construction and renovation while improving the lives of people with low incomes.

When this benefit is fully implemented, the total income for a single parent with two children under the age of 13, working full-time at a minimum wage, would be 54% higher than it was in 2003, and that's with no new federal investments.

Taken together, our Breaking the Cycle poverty reduction strategy and this legislation, if passed, would provide children, adults, and low-income families with the opportunities and the supports they need to reach their full potential. In the current economic climate, tackling poverty is both the right thing and the smart thing to do. We're going to need everyone at their best, everyone contributing and everyone working together.

Tackling poverty in tough economic times makes more sense than ever. The poor are the first to feel the impact of an economic downturn and they are the last to see the benefits when the rebound comes and prosperity returns. Failing to act now is simply not acceptable. Our recent budget lays out a plan to help families affected by the global economic crisis and positions Ontario to become more competitive for a more prosperous future. It reaffirms our commitment to supporting families by accelerating the phase-in of the Ontario child benefit two years ahead of schedule, as I said earlier. It increases social assistance rates and invests in social housing infrastructure. It also proposes a comprehensive tax reform package that includes moving to a single value-added sales tax, effective July 2010. The tax reforms are the single most important thing we can do to strengthen our economy. They will lead to more investments and more jobs for our families. Together with poverty reduction, these initiatives will help Ontarians and our province emerge from these challenging times stronger and more prosperous.

One of the biggest thrusts behind our Breaking the Cycle strategy is to continue building a strong, publicly funded education system. This bill, if passed, would help ensure that we deliver over the long term by mandating annual reporting on key indicators of opportunity. There is no better indicator of opportunity than access to education. Our plan includes a range of new educational projects that build on the signature investments we've made over the last five years. We're bringing together more supports for at-risk kids in schools, more summer job opportunities for students and disadvantaged young people, more after-school recreation programs in high-needs neighbourhoods and more help for parents to get involved in their children's education.

For example, we are tripling the number of parenting and family literacy centres to a total of 300 across the province. We're encouraging families to engage in children's learning, familiarizing them with school routines and linking them with resources for special needs, health and services. We will also launch a community hub program that brings together a range of community partners to better coordinate social and educational support ser-

vices so that they meet the needs of those who are using them.

One of the decisions we made early on was that setting a hard target was the best way to mobilize resources and focus people on a shared goal. That's why our strategy sets the ambitious target of reducing the number of children living in poverty by 25% over five years. We're committed to moving forward with our current poverty reduction strategy and we're proud of this act that, if passed, would hold our government and future governments accountable for the progress made on reducing poverty in Ontario. The act would require successive governments to act on poverty for years to come by setting a new poverty reduction strategy every five years.

The fight against poverty is difficult at the best of times. In a period of economic upheaval such as we are finding ourselves in now, the challenge is even greater and the need even more pressing. We have a long road ahead and we need to be realistic about the fact that global economic hardships will challenge all of us, every step of the way. Now, more than ever, is the right time to act. We need everyone to be part of the solution: all levels of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, and citizens across the province. We know we can't do this alone. Meeting our goal depends on having a willing partner in the federal government, and a growing economy.

If passed, this legislation would give Ontario, for the first time ever, both the concrete plan and a long-term commitment needed to break the cycle of poverty. It is a bold piece of legislation that speaks to our best values, to our commitment that Ontario remains a province of strength and opportunity, a province where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential, regardless of where they start in life, in good times or in bad. For the first time, we have an opportunity to legislate a plan for generations to come that will hold future governments accountable to poverty reduction. For all of these reasons, I call on my colleagues in the House to join me in supporting passage of this historic legislation.

0920

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise with questions and comments, in fact, for both the minister and the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. The minister thanked me during her speech, and I thank you for acknowledging that I have been here every inch of the way, pushing and prodding and making sure that the bill reflected what truly, in my view and in the view of many poverty advocates and those who live in poverty, is essential for it to work.

I thank the member from Lambton as well, in her role as parliamentary assistant and on the committee. A very rare thing happened. I think I'd like to share it with the Legislature. I have been around here for seven and a half years. In the NDP, we only get one member on the committee, so invariably it's me. This was the first time I was actually ever consulted on any bill—the first time. She

came to me on the last day, or the day that we were about to do the clause-by-clause, and indicated the government's willingness—we put in, I think, 25 amendments—to acknowledge five of them. Although it did not go nearly as far as I wish it had—I'll save that for my speech—it was the first time that we ever successfully put five amendments forward in any committee, at least to my knowledge. So I'd like to thank the members for what they had to say today. It is a better bill today than it was at second reading, it is far more encompassing, and they are to be in part congratulated for what happened, because I think the lion's share of the work was done by these two members. Thank you.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is an admirable bill to bring forward. Who is going to be against poverty reduction? We have some concern about the chances of success for this particular bill. The bill itself, of course, does not reduce poverty. It's rather heavy on the bureaucracy, with a purpose to establishing mechanisms, I suppose you could say, that would support poverty strategies. There are a few areas of concern that remain, after committee, that the bill does not actually penalize governments or institutions that fail to meet their goals. That penalty could be a reduction of fees, it could be a reduction of areas that they failed to meet, but if there's no penalty for not meeting a goal, perhaps there would be less enthusiasm to meet that goal.

The bill does allow the government to set targets. The problem with the government setting those targets: action towards those targets is dependent on a lot of other people. So the government doesn't have a lot of control over how those targets are going to be influenced or met. This bill is very dependent on the actions of other levels of government and non-government organizations, and that is problematic in coming to a successful conclusion to a bill of this nature. I guess for that reason, we think the bill is somewhat vague in the direction that it's headed, where it may not have success in accomplishing the poverty reduction that we all would like to see.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to speak to the Poverty Reduction Act. The other day, I was reading in my study at home and I came across an article that told the story of a person in a large American city on the Canadian border who had recently passed away. In the process of the city, the municipal authorities, cleaning up the person's small room where they had spent the bulk of their remaining years of their life—and it was a small room: a bed, a chair and a little table. They gathered up the meagre belongings and they found a diary. The person had made the last entry in the diary a few days before dying in bed. I guess the person knew that death was imminent, and the last entry in the diary was, in effect, the summary of that person's life in poverty. The diary entry was just a very simple diary entry—and keep in mind that death was imminent—and the last entry was:

“Mine was a wasted life, full of degradation, insecurity and of not belonging.”

What this bill is designed to do is to work toward and hopefully ensure that we never see that kind of diary entry in the last stages of a person's life. Think about what that person said—lived an entire life in poverty. The conclusion of that person's life was: “Mine was a wasted life, full of degradation, insecurity and of not belonging.”

You know, we have—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly, I am looking forward to my colleague from Beaches–East York's comments on this bill, but suffice to say, I just want to hearken back to a historical moment, and that was a moment when all federal parties got together and said they wanted to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Out of that sprang Campaign 2000. We know how that ended. In fact, child poverty is worse now than it was back then. It's certainly worse now than it was in the year 2000, and it continues to grow.

My great hope and the hope of all Ontarians who are anti-poverty activists is that the same thing doesn't happen to this bill and this set of targets, and that this bill and this set of targets are not just the minister's—hers alone—but that they are shared by all of the cabinet portfolios. To really eradicate poverty, what we need is action on housing. We need dramatic action on housing, where we've seen very, very little. We certainly need dramatic action on the health file. In Europe, where dental care is assumed in many countries until age 18, bad teeth are a sign of poverty, and bad teeth don't get you the job.

There are all sorts of markers of poverty that really expand beyond her file to all files that are held by cabinet ministers. We hope they all take it seriously within their own file and that they step up to the plate with some concrete measures, actions and a timetable that will meet with this one so that, truly, this doesn't go the way of Campaign 2000, but that we actually see the 25% reduction. It would be beyond sad if that day comes to pass in five years and we're left with a growing child poverty rate.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to thank the members for Beaches–East York, Halton, Willowdale and Parkdale–High Park for their comments. I think both the members for Halton and Parkdale–High Park talked about how important it is that we all work together. I think the member from Parkdale–High Park saw that as a positive; the member from Halton maybe thought it was impossible to get all hands on deck, all people working together. I absolutely believe we can and must do that if we want to make the gains we know we can and must make.

0930

I want to talk about the story that the member from Willowdale told. I just want to comment on the man who wrote, "Mine was a wasted life, full of degradation, insecurity and not belonging." I think in fact, because those words have been mentioned in the Legislature, those words will now live on and serve as a symbol for all of us. That was not a wasted life. While that man wrote those lines, he may have considered it to have been a wasted life, but in fact that man, in writing those words, has actually informed this debate.

I think what's really important, as we move forward on poverty reduction, is that we do see the human face of poverty, that we understand that we can use statistics and use numbers, but really, they are individual stories. Every story is a little bit different, but with common threads throughout.

So I move forward with optimism on this. I move forward because I know that in this province there are people with enormous untapped potential, and that's what our poverty reduction strategy is all about. It's about tapping that potential so that no one feels that their life was a wasted life, so that no one feels they don't belong and so that everyone can make the contribution they are able to make and have a sense of belonging and social inclusion.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand here to support, the government should know at the outset, although I consider it my duty and my privilege, as a member of the opposition, to oppose. I will be supporting the bill, but I will be critical to the end.

That is because, as you have heard so many times in this Legislature and I have repeated throughout my entire political life, I am a boy from Regent Park. I grew up with poverty around me, although I cannot actually state that we were so poor as to not have things. My father always had a job. He worked as a factory worker, and we had a lifestyle, I think, pretty common or perhaps slightly better than some of those who lived in Regent Park at the time.

But I grew up seeing poverty. I grew up not understanding why it existed, why children who came to my school had no shoes. Oftentimes they had rubber boots only—winter, summer that's what they wore, the things we call Wellingtons today. They came with holes in their shirts and clothes. They came without lunch. It seemed to me to be a pretty bad life, and I resolved myself at a very early age to be a politician. That might be a very strange thing for people, but every day, when I stand here, I stand here living my dream, because what I wanted to do from the time I was a young person was to be a politician and to stand up for the people from whence I came, to give voice to their concerns, because I always believed, and still believe, that very few politicians listen to them about what they need or what they want.

It is in that vein that I rise in support of this bill. I recognize the difficulties inherent in the bill, and I recognize

even more the difficulties that will befall this government and any subsequent government, because this bill, although it is intended to set a yardstick and to cover the length and breadth of the two-plus years remaining in this government's mandate, it cannot, by law, encumber future governments. They can and they will, if they choose to do so, not follow what is being passed here today.

I hope that is not the case. I hope that is not the case because it is within our prerogative, our mandate and our ability to end poverty in this province. It ought not to be here, in a place as rich as Ontario and in a country as free and beautiful as Canada. This ought not to be the norm for so many children.

Having said that, I had a friend who talked to me yesterday—she told me something, and I was not privy to it because it was the minister appearing before Equal Voice. The statement that is alleged to have been made by the minister—and again, I was not privy to it, nobody's seen it in writing, but I believe she said something to the effect that she thanked the women members of the Liberal caucus especially for the work that they did around this bill, because without women—correct me if I'm wrong—she doesn't think that this would have happened. She is nodding in the affirmative, so I take that to be true.

Well, I'd like to thank them as well. I think it is another reason to elect more women. Bills such as this are more deeply felt, in my view, by women, because more women live in poverty than men; more women suffer abuse than men; more women have low-paying jobs than men. I think that women generally understand the necessity of a bill like this. So for those women members of the Liberal caucus who helped, I thank them as well.

The NDP has expressed, from the beginning, concern about poverty. I know that last year, when the minister stood across the street in the Mowat Block and talked about the poverty strategy, I was not pleased, to put it bluntly. I was not pleased because although I agreed that the strategy for getting rid of poverty for children was a good strategy, it seemed to me at that juncture and at that point that everyone else was being left out. It seemed to me, at that point and at that juncture, that aboriginal Ontarians were being left out, people of colour were being left out, adults were being left out and people with disabilities were being left out. That's why, when this bill came forward on second reading, I was not pleased with the contents of the bill, because I continued to feel that those people who live in poverty and will continue to live in poverty for a long period of time should not be left out. We have an obligation, not only to the children of this province but to all people, to eliminate poverty. Some of it is systemic; some of it is endemic. It simply exists, and it has continued to exist throughout my entire lifetime. That is why we fought so strongly in committee. That is why we are glad that the minister has seen fit to make so many changes in a bill.

I got a copy of the bill yesterday. Normally, when you get a bill after second reading, you open it up and there

might be one or two little, tiny amendments in it. It's highlighted by having a different font and a different texture to the font wherever changes have been made. This bill is absolutely replete with changes. Every single page has changes upon changes that have been made to the bill.

I'd like to thank, first of all, those people who came forward to make deputations. I know there were a lot more who wanted to make deputations than who actually were allowed the opportunity. Perhaps the government, since they were so intent on making these changes, should have had another day, because I would have liked to hear some of the groups who wanted to come forward who didn't have that opportunity. That's in the past.

I'd like to thank some of the people—the 25 in 5 Network, the Social Planning Network of Ontario, the Colour of Poverty Campaign, Campaign 2000 and all of the other groups that came forward to talk about this bill. They were adamant that we include adults, that we include children, that we include people of colour; that we make the necessary changes to make this an inclusive bill. The NDP listened intently, of course, to all of them, as I believe the government did as well, and we made amendments, including strengthening the goals of this strategy to include a vision to eliminate, rather than just reduce, poverty. I speak to that because that's not a part of the goal. I think it should have been. I'm going to save that for a little bit.

We talked about making the bill more inclusive, including adults rather than just families and children. We put a special emphasis on people of colour, immigrants and other at-risk groups. We asked for a strengthened accountability to create an independent panel to advise the government and review the strategies and their impacts. We requested the tabling of annual reports and reviews before the Legislature, requiring that it address the causes of poverty, rather than merely the symptoms.

We asked about recognizing racism and discrimination as a cause of poverty. We asked about measuring income, housing and education as indicators. We talked about broadening the focus to include adults. The government members on the social policy committee responded in large part to our challenge and took some steps to strengthen the bill. I'd just like to go through some of those that I think have been strengthened—and justifiably so.

0940

Poverty reduction strategies will be guided by a vision that “reflects Ontario's aspiration to be a leading jurisdiction in reducing poverty.” As I said, and I will talk about this later, I'm happy to be a leading jurisdiction, but I think that simply reducing poverty should not be the end goal. We can be number one, but until such time as we eliminate poverty, we can never say that we're the best.

The second one was the recognition that adult poverty, as well as the poverty of children and families, must be tackled by poverty reduction strategies. The government set a fixed date. It was not the fixed date that we put for-

ward, but it is a fixed date. March 31 of the following year is established for the annual report to be laid before the Legislative Assembly each and every year. This is important for the assembly to see not only what is happening in terms of government programs, but it also coincides precisely, or almost precisely, with the annual budget. That is an important earmark—what happens in subsequent budgets—because I do not believe that it is possible to eliminate poverty in any form without putting the necessary funds behind it. It's almost impossible to simply legislate poverty away. It will require government expenditure, and sometimes considerable government expenditure, in such areas as education, housing, welfare rates, ODSP rates, food supplements, rent supplements and all of the things that keep people in poverty. Having a date of March 31 is a good date because it will invariably be almost exactly the time that subsequent budgets are brought forward, so we can see whether or not the bill is an empty shell, or whether there is a will on the part of this government and subsequent governments to put the necessary resources into it to give it life.

There was stronger language regarding the significance of discrimination on the grounds of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability and the need for particular attention to be paid to the barriers faced by these groups. I cannot underestimate, or I think we ought not to underestimate, how important all of this is because invariably, when you look at who is in poverty, those who suffer it most are people who are disabled. Those who suffer it most are First Nations communities. Those who suffer it most are new immigrants and people of colour. Those who suffer it most are women and those who suffer prejudice and, as a result, poverty can include people based on sexual orientation, age and marital status.

I was overjoyed to see that women are now included in the list of groups at heightened risk of experiencing poverty, because in my young life in Regent Park, those who were poor mostly came from single-parent families led by women. It wasn't always women who had been abused and it wasn't always women who had been abandoned; when I was younger, a great many of them were widows because industrial accidents in those days took a much higher toll than today. People did not live as long as today, and medicare was not the law of the land. Poor people did not have the same kind of access to health, they did not have the same kind of access to education to know about it, and they did not have the same opportunities to work in a workplace that was free from disease or was free from industrial accidents. A great many of those single-parent families were widows and there was very little money available to them. Oftentimes women struggled against great odds to bring up one or two or five or more children and grew up being real strengths and pillars. We need to recognize the work that they did.

Also, the government now has stronger language to support the involvement of Ontarians, especially people living in poverty, in the design and implementation of

poverty reduction strategies. The original bill did not contemplate involving those who lived in poverty, and the words have now been added to make sure that they have a voice at the table and that they cannot be ignored.

What they have to say is absolutely important because you can listen to someone like me, who lived around poverty, and possibly in it, but doesn't anymore; you can listen to people who work with the poor but who are not themselves poor; but you really need to listen to someone who experiences it day in and day out to understand the depth it has in their psyche, the way it motivates and makes decision-making difficult—how they have to choose between going to a doctor's appointment because a subway token in Toronto costs \$2.50 or eating that day—to fully understand what living in poverty is all about.

There is a recognition today of the significance of the third sector in poverty reduction work and stronger language regarding the indicators to be used to measure poverty specifics—the determinants of poverty—including, but not limited to, income, education, health, housing and standards of living.

Last, but not least, is stronger language regarding the individuals and groups to be consulted by the minister on a regular basis. What it now states is: “The individuals and groups to be consulted by the minister must include representatives of people at heightened risk of poverty, including immigrants, women, single mothers, people with disabilities, aboriginal peoples and racialized groups.”

I'm saying all the good things before I become a little critical, and it's only going to be a little.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, it's important.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Michael, don't spoil it.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm not—no.

Those are the good things that happened, and as I said in my earlier two-minute comment, this is a very rare thing because most times, when members of this Legislature, particularly sitting on the opposition side, go to committee, their ideas are not often listened to. I commend the minister, the parliamentary assistant and all the others for listening to some of the ideas, but especially for listening to the people who came forward to make the deputations. It was a very rare event. In listening to those people, the bill was so profoundly changed, and so profoundly changed to the benefit, that I can stand here to support it today.

I am a New Democrat. You ask me what I would do differently. I want to tell you what I was hoping would have been in the bill and perhaps what can be included in the bill in the future. I think it needs to be part of the record how I think that this good bill could have been an excellent bill, how we could have done even more to improve the bill than we did.

The first thing I want to talk about is a vision of a poverty-free Ontario, to build a strong, long-term commitment to eradicating poverty in our province. We put forward a motion that asked that the goal of Ontario was not to be the leading jurisdiction in reducing poverty but

to be the first province in Canada to eliminate poverty. I asked a question, and I used a scientific term to the parliamentary assistant, because the government has, as part of its mandate, to reduce poverty by 25% over five years and, looking down the road, is talking about eliminating it by 50% in 10 years. The government said this over and over again.

So if you eliminate half of the poverty in 10 years, what is the longer-term goal? To me, it would have been, if we use that same yardstick, that in 20 years we eliminate poverty. That's what I was hoping the government would have said, that that's the long-term goal of this government and every subsequent government to follow; that 20 years from today we would eliminate poverty, and that is our goal and we want to be the first jurisdiction in Canada, or perhaps one of the first ones in the world, to actually eliminate poverty in 20 years.

Instead, the government chose that they wanted to be a leading jurisdiction. So I asked the question, and it was not tongue-in-cheek, but I used a scientific analogy about fissionable material and the half-life of fissionable material. For those who are scientists at all or know about science, uranium or plutonium or any of those products all have a half-life, so that after a given period of time, half of it is gone, and then, after the next period of time, half of the half is gone, and then half of the half of the half is gone. But it never ends, because in the end, there will still be fissionable material, no matter how small it is. That is what I liken this bill to and what the government has done, saying there will always be poverty.

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What you are saying is if you can get rid of half of it and then half of the half, and half of the half again over several mandates, then that's a good thing. I'm not going to say it's a bad thing, but in the end there is still something left, and there ought not to be, and that ought not to be our goal. Our goal should have been the eradication of poverty from this province once and for all. If we don't have that goal, I don't know what goal we do have. We can reduce, we can reduce, we can reduce, but at the core of just reducing it is the acknowledgement that it will always be with us. I don't share that. I don't share that it should always be with us.

I know it's too late now. I tried my best in committee. I will continue to try my best, if this bill ever comes forward again in the House while I am still here, to change those words, because our goal should be like Quebec's. Quebec has made that their goal—to eliminate poverty. Newfoundland has made that as part of their goal, I believe, to eliminate poverty. Jurisdictions in Europe have put it forward as their goal, to eliminate poverty, but in Ontario we simply want to be the best jurisdiction. I'm sorry, but I disagree.

The second thing was an independent body to review, assess and advise on the progress of poverty reduction to ensure that government is held objectively accountable and is not able to exaggerate progress on poverty reduction. We see that governments from time to time—not necessarily this one—will try to exaggerate what they're

doing. We see in the House from time to time, in other aspects, governments trying to say how much they're doing, and oftentimes people who are very knowledgeable out there in the field and opposition critics think that what is being said is a little bit of an exaggeration, a little bit of hyperbole.

What we were asking for here is someone to hold governments objectively accountable—an independent body. We have independent bodies that hold this government and this Legislature accountable. We have an ombudsperson, we have a commissioner of the environment, we have a commissioner responsible for integrity, and we have a commissioner for privacy. We were hoping that the government might have considered somebody like that, a commissioner responsible for poverty who could come back to the Legislature once a year, who could be independent, at arm's-length and responsible to the Legislature to actually put in front of us what kinds of programs, policies and monies the government had put forward and what effect they were having.

Quite frankly, governments will take credit for all manner of things, whether they have anything to do with them or not. I remember, in this Legislature, listening to members on the other side talking about the numbers of jobs they had created and talking about all manner of things, which I think, really, they had nothing to do with at all. It was the whole cyclical upturn in the economy; jobs were being created. I remember standing here and saying to one of the honourable members, who is now a minister in this government, that I hoped he would be satisfied to stand up and wax so eloquently when jobs started to disappear. And he laughed at me and said that it was not likely to happen. In fact, that is increasingly what we see these days. Governments will talk about the jobs they're creating, as if they had something to do with it, but they won't talk about the jobs that are being lost; they say that's a worldwide phenomenon or somebody else's responsibility or it's not their fault.

So what I was looking for, and what I continue to think is necessary, is to have a commissioner or someone at arm's-length from the government who can dispassionately talk about the government's actions and whether in fact they had taken the necessary actions and whether they'd had the desired effect.

The third thing we asked for was a clause that would require Ontario's laws, policies and practices to be consistent with the principles outlined in the legislation so that all government operations are in alignment with the strategies to reduce poverty. That is what Quebec has done in their legislation, and it is not a difficult thing. I explained to the members of the committee why this should be passed: because it requires every single minister on every single bill to stand up, and it would take only a matter of seconds, to state whether or not there was anything in the bill that would either negatively or positively affect the fight on poverty. I'm given to understand that there are going to be amendments to the Mining Act brought forward. If a minister were to stand up and say, "This probably has no effect one way or the

other," that would take 15 seconds of ministerial time, and probably it would have no effect one way or the other. I'm not privy to what's in the bill yet, but more than likely it wouldn't.

It was suggested during the course of the committee hearings that it was too onerous on ministers to make that statement every time a bill was introduced: whether or not it would be having an effect on poverty. I know in Quebec they must do so and I don't think it costs more than 10 or 15 seconds of time, and it should be before the House, whether or not the bill will have any good effect or bad effect when it comes to reducing poverty. If this is in fact one of the government's signature pieces, and future governments' signature pieces, then it should be spoken to.

The next thing is the recognition that strengthening Ontario's human rights laws and the enforcement system is essential to the reduction of poverty. A public commitment to the rights of all is crucial to reducing poverty. We believe that human rights are akin to the rights of people to get out of poverty. Almost always, those who are living in poverty are to some extent having their rights abused, and we think that the strengthening of rights was something that should have been included, even if it was only a line in the legislation.

Next is a clause requiring targets to represent a substantive reduction in poverty so that governments don't set poverty targets at minimal levels. Although there is a commitment by this government for 25 in 5 for children, and the minister made that statement last year, there is not a minimal standard set in this legislation. We tried to set a minimal standard so that there had to be, as an example, a 3% or 5% or 7% reduction—I leave the numbers—each and every year so that future governments would have a standard which was met. If it could not be met, then they could stand in the House and explain why it could not be met. But you cannot just simply say, "We didn't meet any standard this year," or "This year was a rough year," or "This year, the stock market went down," or "This year, we lost X number of jobs," or "The people are revolting because they think the taxes are too high," or whatever other number of excuses might be made. There should be a standard set, and the standard should be met against that. If the minimum is to be only 3%, which would be a 33-year time frame to eliminate poverty, then let the minimum standard be 3%. In good years it might be 5% or 6% or 7%, and governments, I'm sure, would stand up and say, "We doubled the minimum standard this year," to much applause across all parts of this House. But it was not put in the legislation. I am puzzled to know why. If I were minister, I would have made sure it was.

The next thing is a clause requiring a longer-term, 10-year goal for deeper reductions in poverty instead of only the five-year goal. I know that governments have spoken in part to a 50% reduction over 10 years. I've heard that, not in this bill but in other comments made by government members and members of the cabinet, that a 10-year goal would encompass 50%. I think that should have

been part of the bill, and we tried to make that motion, to no avail.

We also asked for the requirement that ministers review and report on the impacts of new legislation on poverty reduction so that all future legislation supports the fight against poverty instead of undermining it. I think it is quite self-evident that ministers are required to look at their new legislation to make sure that the legislation does not in fact hurt the poverty fight. That would coincide, I think, very closely with ministerial statements to that effect.

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The collection of disaggregated data on groups at increased risk of poverty to ensure that progress is made for all Ontarians, particularly those most at risk: It is often difficult for governments to collect data and it is often difficult and problematic for them when it involves things like sex, sexual orientation, people of colour, or that kind of data, because people wonder why it's being collected. I know at the time when I first became a politician in the city of Toronto and other groups were attempting to collect data based on race, there was a hue and cry against it, but we have become much more used to that kind of collection of data and can see that it can be used for the purposes of good as well as for those who are trying to pinpoint blame. We asked that the disaggregated data be collected on those groups at increased risk, but that was not part of the legislation either.

We asked for the creation of an anti-racism directorate and an employment equity directorate to ensure that the poverty strategy strongly addresses discrimination as a cause of poverty, and that did not make it to the bill. We asked for the inclusion of a good job strategy and the inclusion of minimum commitments for social transfers for education, health, child care, housing and income support, and that, too, did not make the bill.

In the end, we asked for a great many things we got and we asked for a great many we did not. I want to reiterate that we are thankful for those things we got because that is an unusual occurrence to us. I wish there could have been more. I will continue to fight for more. My colleagues in the New Democratic party will continue to fight for more. We believe that this bill, should it be passed—and I believe it will be—will set a template, but it is a template upon which we must improve. It is not a bill that can be allowed to stand alone or stagnate or be the end for all time, because it needs to be stronger. It needs to be stronger so that that child who wakes up in the morning in Regent Park, on Jane-Finch or on a reserve in northern Ontario knows that there is hope and that something is going to change. The legislation needs to change in the future so that a person living in disability knows that they're not going to have their money clawed back, and so that a young mother knows that the allowance that is given to her by the federal government is going to safely remain in her pocket over the long term and not be clawed back. It needs to remain there so that someone who is living in poverty on Ontario Works knows that there's going to be sufficient food, and that

the government is trying to react to a healthy food basket in giving enough money on which they can live. It needs to remain there so that people who are desperate for social housing don't have waiting lists of 75,000 families in Toronto alone, trying to get a decent place for themselves and their children to live.

In summary, we believe that the bill remains weaker than it should be. We recognize that poverty reduction acts on their own are not enough. We want to take a look back to the 2009 budget. We waited for the 2009 budget. We knew that this bill was not yet before the House, but we waited on the budget to see some kind of a signal of what this government was going to do around poverty. We waited for a signal in terms of the rates for ODSP. They are not enough. They were \$999 before the budget and they're \$1,020 after the budget. I would ask any of the members in this House to think about living on \$1,020 a month if you are on ODSP; if you were born with Down's syndrome; if you've suffered an industrial accident or some kind of accident that is not covered by workers' compensation; if you have developed a mental illness, have somehow found yourself unable to work and doctors, this Legislature and everyone else say that you are disabled, that you cannot work, and you have \$999 on which to live.

I know, because I go around my riding all the time here in Toronto. I saw an ad, the first one I've seen for a long time, because there are some vacancies, advertising an apartment for \$895. That was the first time I've seen one that low for quite a while. I saw one for \$895. The first thing I thought wasn't, "What a low apartment; what a low cost—\$895;" the first thing I thought was, whoever is on ODSP and is lucky enough to find this cheap apartment is going to have \$100 left—

Mr. Paul Miller: Can't eat.

Mr. Michael Prue: —can't eat, can't take the TTC, can't get a pass, can't get any decent clothes, can't do anything else. But at least, thankfully, somebody was willing to rent them an apartment for that cost.

I looked at that. I think that the government needed to have raised the rates more than they did, and the rates are not effective until November, because this is something else that's done in this Legislature: Each and every time I ask the question, you're raising the rates 2%, and this time is no different. It's 1% now and 1% later. It's not 2% all at once, and it's not 2% when the budget comes in. This year it's 2% in November, so it's halfway through. It's not right away; the people have to wait another six or eight months to actually see the increase, and then what is reflected in the budget at the end of the year is that it's a much smaller expenditure to the government than if it was in the whole year.

Hon. George Smitherman: It's on the anniversary.

Mr. Michael Prue: I know it's on the anniversary, but it doesn't have to be.

Hon. George Smitherman: But you're making it like sound like it isn't.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, I'm not making it sound—what I'm also saying is that 2% does nothing more than

tread water. Even in these times when inflation is running at around 2%, the people are no better off in that terrible poverty.

I look back to all of the increases since this government came into effect, and I am thankful that at least there were some increases, because I was here during the Mike Harris years, when there were no increases at all, ever. I can say that in the first year this government came forward with a bit of a poverty agenda because there was a 3% increase, and the next year they forgot all about it because there was a zero. In subsequent years, there has been 2% each year. The net effect of the three-zero-two-two-two is that people are no better off than they were in the Mike Harris era, because all of that has been eaten by inflation; every single bit of it has been eaten by inflation. So more needs to be done.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I see that the minister is indicating to me that she knows more needs to be done.

You cannot allow tens of thousands of people in this province who are disabled, who are on ODSP, to continue in this poverty and in this dilemma, because there is literally nothing they can do; most of them cannot work. But for those of them who can, I also have the dilemma—and I want to talk to you again about the clawback, because I find this morally reprehensible. I'm hoping that the government will listen, not only in terms of this bill but in the budget that will follow next year, so that we can see whether something is being done.

I have given the example many times of a child born with Down's syndrome, but a child can be born with any number of learning disabilities and have difficulty and can end up, sometimes, at the time after we've educated them and done the best job we can, finishing high school and wanting to participate in the economy and the community of this province. We should welcome that; we should say that it's a great thing. I know that when I go into places like McDonald's and see somebody with a learning disability flipping hamburgers or cleaning the tables or doing whatever they can do, when I see young people with a learning disability stacking shelves, when I see them working in factories doing work, it is the best they can do. They are happy to do it and they are happy to belong and they are happy to participate and they are happy for any extra money they can make, because \$999 is not enough. I have some real difficulty when the government chooses to claw back half of what they earn. I have that difficulty because what we are saying to them is that they are going to be living their entire life in poverty, because, until such time as we can give them \$12,000 for being disabled and on ODSP, and the difference to—the poverty level is somewhere around \$20,000 for a single individual in a big metropolitan centre—until they can make \$16,000, not \$8,000, they are going to remain in poverty, and very few of them will ever find the wherewithal to make \$16,000 a year.

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What we are saying to them is that they are going to be living in poverty their whole life. I want this minister

to know I don't accept that. I do not accept it now, I do not accept it with this bill, I will not accept it in the next budget. For me, to see a real change, there has to be a rate increase to those who cannot work and an acknowledgment that those who do work and are contributing to our society ought to be allowed to keep that money—and personally, I would allow them to keep the first \$8,000 they make without having any clawed back, so that never again in this province of Ontario, no matter what you do and no matter how hard you work, is being a disabled person tantamount to always living in poverty. We need to hold out that hope, and that hope should be that the first \$8,000 is tax-free.

I would also hold out that hope to some of those who are on Ontario Works. Very often and most often, people on Ontario Works are of two categories: They're women and they're children. That's who they are. They're single mothers trying desperately to look after their children, oftentimes after abuse or abandonment—and I think that we ought to be mindful of that as well. A single person on welfare earns about \$560 a month. In today's Ontario it is certainly not enough for an apartment, it's not enough for food, it's not enough, really, for anything. I don't know how people do that.

We do know—and there was a report out today by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives—that when the monies do not go up, the use of food banks goes up. I've not seen the report; I just saw a little cut in today's newspaper, explaining that they discovered that. They also discovered, to no one's surprise, that when welfare rates in Ontario were cut by 21%, food bank usage the same year went up by 14%. That should be of no surprise to anyone at all.

I'm looking for the government in the future to take this bill and to use it at budget time to avail, so that people living in poverty can see that the bill is working and that the budget and the cabinet are making sure that it works to the benefit of the poor.

There's also child care. We know that child care is essential, and there was not, really, very much in this budget about child care. I do know the government is willing, now, to spend the money that's being given by the federal government, but I'm waiting for the government to take that next step to start putting its own funding in there.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There's \$50 million.

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister tells me \$50 million, but this is \$50 million on a \$100-billion budget. Think about \$50 million in terms of \$100 billion and what a percentage that is. I have to tell you—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's more.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no, it's like half of 1% or less. I'm saying that the government, if they want to reduce poverty for women—and we've now included women and children in here—have to look at this as a poverty reduction measure, because in my view, there is nothing else that will matter more to women than having quality child care, being able to go back to school and being able to go back to work at the earliest possible

times. I certainly know that it has been a key determinant in the province of Quebec, and it can be a key determinant here if we have the will.

There was the housing, I think—I need to mention housing just for a second. There was no additional housing benefit put forward in this last budget. There was some glimmer of hope for additional supportive and assisted housing to be built in Ontario. I'm waiting for the shovels to go into the ground; I'm not sure when that is going to happen. This, too, will be a key determinant in the next budget of whether or not this government is serious about giving this bill effect. Again, there was a government commitment, I will acknowledge, to raise the minimum wage, but we—in our party, anyway—think it's a little too slow. We think that it should have been raised to \$10.25 right now and \$11 in 2011 in order to not only keep up with inflation, but to outpace inflation and to give all of those people, particularly new immigrants, women and young people, who form the bulk of the minimum wage earners, an opportunity to work full-time and escape poverty.

Despite the limitations and despite the fact that it doesn't guarantee action, many anti-poverty groups feel that this legislation is important and we should respect it. I have talked to them. I've talked to 25 in 5, I've talked to the Colour of Poverty, we've talked to all of the groups that made deputations and we've asked them what they think about this bill.

I'm a New Democrat, and I have to tell you I want more, I expect more and I hope for more. I've asked them whether they're satisfied. To a person, all of the groups have said that although they're not 100% satisfied, they believe that this bill should go forward. They believe it will set the template, they believe that in time it can be changed, it can be speeded up, and they want the bill in place, quite frankly, to ensure that this government, in the next round of budget process, puts the money where the mouth is—puts the money on the table to do the things that this bill will require of it, because that's going to be the key.

The key is going to be March of next year. The first report will come out March 31, the budget will come out in March 2010, and the two are going to have to be synced, because if they're not there, then I'm not sure what the purpose of this bill was, at least in terms of this government. Maybe you're trying to encumber future governments. But unless this government moves quickly forward to reduce poverty by a huge amount, and I'm talking in excess of 5% in the next budget, then this whole thing would have been a charade.

Is it time?

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. It now being quarter past, I will stand down and continue on the next occasion.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being past 10:15 of the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1017 until 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I welcome to the chamber SEIU janitors Fida, Renato, Jana, Jimmy, Inessa, Maria, Ignacia, Gajan, Julio, Ritch, Eliana, Steve, Ritch and Rafeale. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ANNIVERSARY OF LEGISLATIVE STAFF

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like all members of the House to join me in congratulating Deb Deller, the Clerk of the House, and Zina Decker, executive assistant to the Clerk of the House, who are today marking 30 years of service at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Health. There is an excellent column by Michele Mandel in today's Toronto Sun, which I'm sure your staff brought to your attention. The column raises serious questions about just how prepared the province is to deal with an epidemic. It mentions the experience of Ontario's first confirmed swine flu cases and how those affected with the confirmed cases were given the green light to carry on normal activities, including perhaps exposing young children at a daycare to the virus.

Minister, your Premier has stated that you have a comprehensive plan to deal with the outbreak of an influenza pandemic. Can you explain why this was allowed to happen?

Hon. David Caplan: The Premier is quite correct: Ontario does have a comprehensive plan, as does every public health unit across the province of Ontario.

First of all, I want to reiterate that I can't comment on the specific case that was raised, but I can give the advice I would want to provide to all Ontarians: Do use good judgment. Do not go into work if you're feeling sick. Do not enter into social situations. Wash your hands; hand hygiene and cleanliness is the absolute most important thing that we can do to prevent the spread of infection. Use proper cough and sneezing etiquette; cough into your sleeve.

In fact, I am confident in Ontario's health network to be able to control, contain and identify the disease. So far, we have done an excellent job—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a very disappointing response. Ontarians deserve to have some answers about the specific issues I'm raising here. I quote the mother of one of the women with a confirmed case, who

operates a home daycare: “If I have one of the few cases of swine flu in the GTA in my house, am I not somebody who should be called and told what to do?” She wants to know: Should she be isolating herself? Should she be keeping her son home from school, her husband from work? No one has told her anything. Tuesday, the Premier stated emphatically, “I just want to assure families that we are on top of this.”

Minister, would you tell this concerned mother and the parents of the children in her home daycare that you’re on top of this and you will get them some answers? I think they have a right to suspect that you’re not on top of this.

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, not only is the Ministry of Health but also the experts who are advising the ministry on top of the swine flu monitoring, containment and control. I can assure the member opposite, as I can all Ontarians, that medical experts are telling us and providing us with the proper steps to take to identify, contain and control the outbreak of this particular influenza strain.

I want the member to understand that it’s very important that we all work in a coordinated fashion and that we all use the very best judgment and follow the guidelines that have been set out. For example, we’ve set up a special ServiceOntario info line: 1-800-476-9708. We want to make sure that Ontarians get the right information, good information about what they can do. One of the concerns that I will speak of in the final supplementary is about the fact that in the blogosphere, through Twitter and Facebook, people—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don’t know if you’re hearing any guidance for that mother; I’m certainly not. Once again, I want to remind the minister that the Premier stated there is a comprehensive plan in place—those are his exact words—as well as adding that he will ensure that public health units have all the resources they need to do the job.

Some time ago, your predecessor, the Deputy Premier, referring to communities not having the resources necessary for public health programs, beat his chest and said, “That’s a situation that is intolerable, and it will not be tolerated under our government.”

Minister, if that’s truly the case, why does this incident leave so many unanswered questions? Why have children at a daycare been threatened with exposure to this virus? How could this happen?

Hon. David Caplan: Resources for public health, after regrettably having been cut for many years or down-loaded by the New Democrats, have doubled. I understand members have a difficult time understanding, as we have heard from previous chief medical officers of health, that previous governments have turned their back on public health. That has not been the case with this government and with the actions we have taken. In fact, we are providing not only the resources but the advice and guidance from medical experts about what needs to

be done. There is the communication, there is the coordination, there is the control and the identification that is going to be necessary, and partners are working well together.

One of the real challenges we do have is that Ontarians get their information from a lot of different sources. We want to make sure they are getting the right information from the right sources. That’s why the ministry has enhanced the information on its website—

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

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Minister of Health: It’s unfortunate that, unlike his Premier who talks about the appropriate tone in a crisis, he continues to play the political blame game with every opportunity.

The acting chief medical officer of health recently issued a health notice for all health care professionals. It said that patients who may have been exposed to the swine flu virus should practise social distancing—not going out in public. Yet, the lady in question and her friends, who went straight to the hospital after returning from Mexico, were tested for the virus, then sent home with no instructions to ensure they weren’t exposing others to the virus. Clearly, that message isn’t getting through. You are creating holes in your pandemic plan. They’re causing potential risks to Ontarians and their children. How can you reassure Ontarians that they will get the vital information they need, when they need it, and not unwittingly expose others to the virus?

Hon. David Caplan: The only one playing the blame game here is the member opposite. In fact, medical experts are telling us that we are in a much better position today than we ever have been in the history of our province. Dr. Donald Low, for example, says, “There has been a big shift. We really have come a long way. We had no way to respond to this six years ago. We didn’t have the infrastructure, we didn’t have the expertise, we didn’t have the communications. Those are all there now. We are doing a much better job. It’s good to see that that investment is paying off when we have a crisis like this.”

I think that the member should act responsibly and provide the kind of facts and information—listen to medical experts like Dr. Donald Low, who has stepped up to the plate and has been a leader in this province both six years ago during SARS and today. I can assure this member that all information is being provided to medical—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I guess it’s wonderful to have plans, but whether they’re utilized and implemented is another question, which this incident certainly raises questions about. I would refer to—he has referred to it as well—the Ontario health plan for an influenza pandemic, issued in August of last year. It’s not new to the minister. It talks about public health measures in a pandemic alert

period, which I would say we are in, and specifically states that individuals experiencing flu symptoms should be given clear, consistent and accurate information. That includes staying away from daycares, school, work or large public events. That's what your pandemic plan calls for, Minister. Yet these ladies were sent home with no instructions and they spent the weekend doing the very things your plan says not to do.

Is this evidence of how you are implementing this pandemic plan so far? Is this what Ontarians can expect to see from you in the future?

1040

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, we not only have a very good and comprehensive plan, but it is being acted upon. It is being coordinated by medical experts and in public health units around the province of Ontario. It does require Ontarians to use good judgment, and that would be the advice I would have for all Ontarians: Stay out of social situations; don't go to work if you're feeling sick; don't put others at risk; cough and sneeze into your sleeve to decrease the spread of infection and disease; proper hand hygiene. These are the kinds of things that Ontarians can and should do, using good common sense to make sure that the spread of disease and infection is not kept up. Medical professionals and public health units across the province of Ontario are arming Ontarians with the right information, I know, as well as beefed-up resources from the Ministry of Health and from—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: You have to wonder if the minister has actually read the plan. I can forward you the link to your website if that would be helpful. It's right there. One of your top infectious disease advisers, Dr. Donald Low, whom you often refer to, clearly stated that it's too late to contain the disease and efforts have turned to mitigating the damage.

I'd like to quote the Premier from just yesterday, when I questioned him on this same matter of emergency preparedness. He said, let's "be honest as well." That's what he was telling the people of Ontario.

With that in mind, and based on what has transpired over the past few days, do you feel 100% certain that you're doing what Dr. Low has recommended? Do you feel you are mitigating the damage?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, Dr. Low has commented: "It is a pleasure to see the response and infrastructure put in place." But it's not just Dr. Low. Other medical professionals—Dr. Allison McGeer, director of infection control at Mount Sinai Hospital: "We should be celebrating the level of transparency of communication.... This is an excellent marker for how things have gotten better since SARS in terms of us of being able to coordinate things internationally...." Dr. Robin Williams, chief medical officer of health, Niagara Region Public Health Department: "I think we are best prepared as we could be for whatever that storm is going to look like here.... We have surveillance now. Five or six years ago, we wouldn't have even realized this was happening." Vicki Hawks-

worth, Lambton county, supervisor of environmental health and prevention services: "We have an excellent surveillance system in Ontario and they are on it."

Medical experts agree: Not only do we have a plan, but Ontario has taken the appropriate steps to protect—

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

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. The US and Canadian governments are going to be providing more than \$15 billion in financing to Chrysler to keep it operating through bankruptcy protection. News reports suggest that the federal and Ontario governments are going to be providing about \$3 billion of the \$15 billion.

My question is this: With well over 20% of Chrysler production located in Ontario and with Canadian governments providing 20% of the emergency financing, will the Premier and his friend Stephen Harper ensure that Canadians and Ontarians hold at least a 20% equity stake in the restructured company?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I appreciate the question from the member. The member did refer to 20% production—the 20% footprint of Chrysler in Ontario. I can say that the Premier is looking forward to, this afternoon, talking about the future of Chrysler in the province of Ontario, and that is very good news indeed.

Obviously, the member is asking important questions about the details, about control, about the agreement, about equity. Of course, the Premier and the Prime Minister are looking forward to providing all the details about the Ontario agreement, and the President is going to be announcing something at around noon with respect to the US agreement. I look forward to answering all the members' questions at that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Toronto Star is reporting that the federal and Ontario governments will jointly own 2% equity in a restructured Chrysler. Guess what? We're now very clearly seeing the negotiating power of the Ontario government—2% for billions of dollars of investment. This investment is supposed to keep jobs in Ontario and keep our economy healthy, but the Premier cannot enforce those terms because he only has a one-fiftieth stake at the table. A 2% stake in Chrysler, is that all the negotiating power Ontarians can expect for their multi-billion-dollar investment?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member is raising the issue of the investment or loans that the government of Ontario is making and what it gets for that. That can be achieved in a number of different ways. The way in which governments typically achieve that is through an agreement, a contract or a loan agreement.

A government taking an equity stake in a company is something that President Obama said this week is not ideally what government wants to be doing, but it takes

place on a temporary level and then, in his words, the goal is the government gets out of the business of building cars and Chrysler starts creating the cars that consumers want. That is exactly Canada's position and Ontario's position. We want Chrysler to get back to the business of creating cars that consumers—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister would know that the way to make sure your agreements are upheld is if you have a stake at the table. The frightening thing is that the Chrysler package may well be the template for the much larger GM restructuring. Once again, this government is signing a blank cheque and, with GM, a much bigger blank cheque down the road, without requiring any accountability whatsoever.

Twenty per cent of the financing is coming from Canada. Well over 20% of the production is located in Ontario. Why doesn't this government insist that Canadians hold at least a 20% equity stake in the restructured Chrysler?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The news of Chrysler's future has not been announced and the NDP is already opposed to the future that we're putting in place.

I'm sure the member knows, or certainly ought to know, that an equity stake is not the same as having a seat at the table, to use her words. I think what the member is looking for is some level of oversight, some assurance that in fact what Ontario is doing and the contribution it is making is yielding results, and I can assure the member that is exactly what is taking place.

I also remind the member that the Canadian Auto Workers wanted no equity stake. They didn't want any equity stake in the company. They weren't looking for that kind of a return on investment. They wanted to make sure there was something there for the workers, and we want to make sure there's something there for the workers. I don't understand why the New Democratic Party would—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. The city of Toronto has been planning to purchase new streetcars for quite some time now. They've made it clear in council resolutions, in meetings with the government and in public statements, yet this minister claims to have been blindsided by the city's request for provincial support for new made-in-Ontario streetcars.

Why is this minister putting his own narrow political interest ahead of good jobs at Bombardier for workers in Thunder Bay and badly needed transportation improvements for Toronto commuters?

Hon. George Smitherman: We say again that it's noteworthy that today's NDP is back in favour of public transit in Toronto and back in favour of the workers at Bombardier.

The honourable member doesn't understand the nature of the question at all. There's no question whatsoever that the city of Toronto has been speaking about the replacement of streetcars, and everybody agrees that it's an important project and that it's much necessary. The issues at hand have to do with the fact that the city of Toronto, in private conversations and otherwise, has also been examining a wide array of other priorities and it's getting very difficult to be able to meet all of those needs.

What we've sought to ask of the city of Toronto is that before it announces contracts, it should not do that without ensuring that the necessary resources are in hand and that the parties that are expected to pay for the contracts have agreed to do that, signed off and identified all necessary resources. We think it's—

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: John Barber in the Globe and Mail says that this minister's comments are "rankly disingenuous complaints," and I would agree with the assessment of Mr. Barber.

New streetcars will improve public transit for more than three million Ontarians. They will ensure the jobs of hundreds of workers in Thunder Bay, and they're going to get more people out of their cars, helping Ontario meet our climate change obligations. Any way you look at it, it's a win-win proposition.

My question is this: Why is the government, and this minister specifically, playing political games? Does he support public transit or does he not?

Hon. George Smitherman: We have it on the record from that party. They referred to the expansion of the subway line to York region as the sparsely populated York region. So if there's any question about which party supports public transit, it's the government here that's done it.

Ask the city of Toronto this for yourself—why, just yesterday, in the transit newspaper, they put out an ad: "Thank you, Ontario. We're breaking ground for Transit City thanks to the recent investments from Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario government's MoveOntario 2020 initiative."

There has been less doubt now than any time in a number of decades here in the city of Toronto that this government, the McGuinty government, is committed to public transit. We welcome the honourable member to support that policy.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the minister should talk to his member from the Thunder Bay area, who actually commented a couple of days ago himself that in fact Bombardier was going to get this contract. You should be talking to him.

John Barber again, in the Globe and Mail: He says that if this minister didn't know about Toronto's bid—Mr. Mauro certainly did—for new streetcars, he should have known. And if he's pretending that he didn't know, then

he is playing politics with an issue of crucial importance to Bombardier workers in Thunder Bay, who are desperately clinging to jobs, to millions of commuters who need a convenient, modern public transit alternative, and to future generations who will suffer the consequences if we fail to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in the province.

Given what is at stake—the things that I've just laid out—when will this minister stop posturing and start working with the city of Toronto to create jobs, to provide better public transit and to help the environment?

Hon. George Smitherman: I ask the honourable member, where is the sensitivity for the workers at Bombardier and the community of Thunder Bay when a party stands and says that they are entering into a contract for which they have clearly not identified all necessary financial resources, not just from our government but from the government of Canada? No one is pretending—and I am not pretending—that we have not heard about the streetcar initiative; everybody agrees with that. The point is that my city, which I love very much and which our government has supported very greatly, has a wide array of priorities. On February 22, in a meeting with the mayor, he told me that his priorities were the Sheppard LRT and Union Station. Now on a subsequent day, we've seen this initiative related to streetcars.

We simply ask of the city of Toronto, focus in on your top priorities. We will work with the government of Canada and do our very best to support them, like their very own ad has already thanked—

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

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, you insist that your Bill 150, disguised in the colour green, will have virtually no effect on energy prices. No one believes you. You offer only empty rhetoric and bluster to back up your claim. We, on the other hand, have provided a third party analysis by the universally respected London Economics International, first by way of an executive summary and, later today, by way of a full report. Their analysis clearly shows that your position is nothing but a fairy tale, that households could see their electricity bills rise by \$1,200 per year by the time you're done—and that doesn't include the 8% Dalton sales tax.

Minister, it's time to level with the people. What will your deal with Liberal developers really cost?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I want to say to the honourable member that we noticed that when they released their executive summary, they did it before question period and in the media studio. We noticed that today, they're going to release their executive summary after question period has ended and there's no public opportunity for that exposure. We wonder what you have to hide. Furthermore, we wonder if you can release the cost of public expenditure related to the development of that report that you ordered and that they authored.

On the issue of opportunity related to the Green Energy Act, I quote Mayor Percy Bresnahan from the township of South Algonquin, from the member's own riding, who came here to Toronto to say, "Now that the provincial government is interested in burning wood or wood pellets to produce hydro—and I'm hoping that's one way that they do go—I do think that our township can provide for green energy by providing biomass. Looking into biomass we could possibly create another 200 jobs within our township"—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't think you'll find Percy Bresnahan is any fan of you, Mr. Minister—and we'll have a question period Monday. Don't worry about that.

Minister, unlike you, London Economics backs their words with facts, not fantasy. They used data provided by the Ontario Power Authority, a creation of your government. Unlike you, they're not making it up.

No one at public hearings agreed with your dream around the cost of your personal power grab. Many presenters, such as the Consumers Council of Canada and the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association, expressed grave concerns about the effect of your Bill 150. They say that it will cost families and lead to job losses. Minister, will you give Ontario's hard-working families and manufacturers the real cost? They deserve nothing less than that.

I invite you to come to the press conference, Mr. Minister. Once you've had a chance to see the truth, maybe you'll try telling the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw the last comment, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do think it noteworthy for all members of this House to recognize that for that honourable member to see the truth in his terms, he's got to contract for its preparation. He had to order the very report that he now relies upon and refuses to release, even though he wants to talk about it today.

One thing that we noticed about their first go-round was that they gave no credit to the opportunity for conservation and for a reduction in overall energy use. I do say to that honourable member, who offered personal testimony on the day the bill was introduced about his family's ability to reduce their energy use by 40%, when you factor in the capacity to use less electricity, this further reduces the impact on any hydro bills. We all know that that member's policy in support of coal and coal sequestration also lives today, without a price tag at all.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

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

This morning, in the Toronto Sun, there is a very disturbing article. On Thursday of last week, a press con-

ference was held here at Queen's Park and we were assured that health care officials were being informed about the proper procedures for handling potential swine flu cases. But on Friday, three young women who were feeling unwell and had just returned from a trip to Mexico went to their local hospital—the right thing to do. They were administered tests—the right thing to do—but they were released from hospital and given no advice on how to minimize risk to others.

Can the minister tell us if he feels reassured that all is well with Ontario's plan when he reads stories like this one?

Hon. David Caplan: While the member knows I can't comment on a specific case, I can tell the member that I have tremendous confidence in the health care professionals of this province. I have confidence in the medical experts who are providing the advice and guidance to Ontarians in this province. I hope that the member opposite too has confidence in the health care network and the health care professionals in this province to provide good information to Ontarians and to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians, because I know that they are dedicated and incredible professionals who are doing a job to provide that protection.

I can tell you that the government has taken tremendous effort to be able to provide that kind of information to health care professionals about the kind of advice and guidance to give to Ontarians, and it is, specifically, these: When are you feeling sick, stay home; don't go into a social situation. When you are coughing or sneezing, use proper etiquette, into the sleeve—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The question was not answered, and if a story like this gives the minister confidence, I'm afraid that his feelings are not shared by a lot of people in Ontario.

Again, according to the story, one of the women confirmed to be carrying the swine flu virus informed health officials that her mother ran a daycare in her house. Yet health officials did not issue warnings, did not ask that the daycare be closed or relocated and did not notify parents of the possibility of contamination, as should have been done.

Minister, does this troubling story raise alarm bells with you? It does with many Ontarians. I want to know, does your ministry have a contingency plan?

1100

Hon. David Caplan: I would say that the Ministry of Health has a comprehensive plan, as has been identified by medical experts in the province. In fact, the information that we are receiving from health care professionals is that all of the public health units have similar kinds of plans in place to be able to coordinate the response, to identify what the threats are, to be able to contain them and to be able to control them. I have tremendous confidence in those medical professionals and in public health units right across this province to be able to protect the interests and protect the health of Ontarians. I hope the

member shares that confidence and shares the thanks that we should all have toward the work that those individuals do.

That's why we have put in enhanced resources. That's why, for example, emergency management centres are on 24-hour surveillance. That's why the coordination has gone out. That's why we've set up ServiceOntario to be able—

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

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, as you're aware, almost 250,000 newcomers come to Canada every year, and about half of them choose Ontario. These newcomers add to Ontario's cultural mosaic, they enrich us with their language and culture, and they come with skills. Yet we know that it can be difficult for newcomers to find employment in their fields. In fact, just yesterday, a report was published by the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians. It discusses the barriers that newcomers, educated and skilled in their trades, face when seeking employment here in Canada.

I have been hearing about the issues first-hand. Recently, I met with trade union leaders who told me that they're seeing a shortage of skilled labour. I've also heard from many newcomers in Mississauga South who would like to put their knowledge and training to work in Ontario.

Minister, is the government aware of the issues faced by newcomers seeking employment in their fields, and what is the government doing to facilitate the process?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Mississauga South for the question.

The McGuinty government is proud of its historic role welcoming newcomers and helping them on the road to success. We, the government, understand the importance of immigration to Ontario's future economic growth. According to the Conference Board of Canada, by 2011, 100%—100%—of Canada's net labour force growth will come from immigration.

Since 2003, our government has invested more than \$85 million in 145 bridge training programs to help over 20,000 newcomers to get the training they need to find a job in their field. Currently, my ministry invests in the Trades Win Support project, which helped 84 internationally trained tradespeople obtain certification.

The McGuinty government understands that when newcomers succeed—

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

Mr. Charles Sousa: In addition to outlining the concerns of foreign-trained workers, the report also highlights the need for more skilled tradespeople in Ontario and across Canada. The report references the study by the Conference Board of Canada. They found that by 2020, Canada could be short one million skilled workers due to

declining birth rates and an aging population. In addition, the report includes findings from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce that say that one third of all jobs in Canada require a skilled-trade designation or a college diploma.

There's no doubt that Ontario is facing some very challenging economic times, but we cannot lose sight of the future. Ontario's competitive advantage depends on us having the skill and talent necessary to compete in the global marketplace. It's imperative that we make the necessary investments today to ensure that Ontario emerges from this downturn stronger than ever.

My question is, how are we going to ensure that Ontario has the skilled workers necessary to build manufacturing—

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

Hon. Michael Chan: I'll refer it to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: The member raises a very important point about ensuring that Ontario has a supply of skilled trades. One area that we've particularly focused on is the area of apprenticeships, and I'm very pleased to say that we have 60,000 more apprentices in this province than when we took office, 120,000 in total. The most recent budget contained a package of \$750 million to focus on skilled trades, including apprenticeships here in Ontario, and literacy and a whole range of services.

Also, members may be aware that it's my intention to bring forward legislation shortly to establish a college of trades, a self-regulatory body, to look at the whole issue of skilled trades in this province, including, to refer to the member's earlier question, barriers to foreign trade workers who are looking to enter—

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

SMOKING CESSATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a question to the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, according to this morning's Hamilton Spectator, smoking has risen by more than one third in one year in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN, which also includes Burlington. Officials in Cancer Care Ontario indicate that these numbers are cause for alarm. Minister, could you tell us why there would be a 33% increase in the number of smokers in an area with a population of about one million people? That's up 33% in a population akin to the province of Saskatchewan, for example.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member opposite for the question, and I would like to advise the member opposite that this government continues to work to reduce smoking in the province of Ontario. We have the most comprehensive anti-smoking legislation in North America, and we continue to work. In fact, Health Canada's tobacco use monitoring survey shows that smoking is down overall in Ontario, down 6% among those aged 15 or older: from 23% in 1999 to 17% in 2008. It's down 12% among those aged 15 to 19, from 25% in 1999 to 12% in 2008. It's down 7% among those aged 20 to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Minister, time and again, members on this side of the House have indicated that your statistics are phony. This morning's report indicates that—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I withdraw—perhaps “not statistically accurate.” This morning's report indicates that; a report of a 33% increase in smoking. You talk about your programs. You've spent \$13 million on smoke-free Ontario and \$7 million on cessation ads. These campaigns aren't working and they won't work until you admit that smokers are getting cheap cigarettes from smoke shacks in Brant county, Six Nations, and on government land outside of Caledonia. Minister, what is your plan to get rid of the cheap illegal tobacco that is available without proof of age to young people across—

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

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'm going to refer that question to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me tell that member that on the eve of the police memorial celebration he chooses to demean the work of police services across Ontario and across Canada. He should be ashamed of himself. I am very, very proud of the work of the municipal police services, the OPP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister of Transport.

Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We on this side of the House continue to be very proud of the work our police officers are doing. In 2008, the seizure of contraband cigarettes was up by 46% over 2007, and the trend continues this year. Our police officers are doing their job. They're doing it very, very well, and the member across the way and those members on the other side should be supporting our police officers.

Mr. Toby Barrett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for Haldimand-Norfolk, you know that we generally do not—

Mr. Toby Barrett: On a point of order: If anybody in this House is pro-police and particularly pro-OPP—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Parkdale-High Park.

1110

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. On Tuesday, I joined cleaning workers at a rally asking for the Ministry of Labour to help them by investigating allegations of violations of the Employment Standards Act by Impact Cleaning Services. Many companies like Impact Cleaning run subcontracting schemes

that deny workers the basic protections of the Employment Standards Act. Is the Ministry of Labour housed in a building using subcontracted labour, which is denying workers their rights?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. I want to welcome the SEIU janitors who are here with us today as our guests in the Legislature. I want to commend them for the hard work they do for us every single day. You're in our building and our offices long before we arrive. You're there after we leave. You help our workday work that much better.

I also want to say that the Ministry of Labour is there to support you. If you feel that you have been unjustly treated, I ask that you contact the Ministry of Labour through the SEIU. I do know that you have a collective agreement. A grievance should be made on your behalf so that that issue can be dealt with. I do want to thank you for all the great work that you do for all of us here and at the Ministry of Labour.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member to speak through the Speaker.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The fact is, many government buildings are cleaned by janitors caught up by these subcontracting schemes. Janitors have complained to the Ministry of Labour with absolutely no response. One gentleman has had to sue Impact Cleaning just to get paid the \$23,000 overtime he is owed. Talk to them, Minister of Labour.

As an employer, why won't the province sign the Responsible Property Services Code, a code developed by industry stakeholders to ensure contractors play by the rules and stop abusing workers? Why won't you sign it, Peter? Why won't you sign it?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member that we take employment standards in this province very seriously. The member brings up a specific case. I can't comment on specifics, but what I can tell the member is that in June 2008, the SEIU wrote to the ministry to identify any specific workplace locations for investigation. The Ministry of Labour responded in July 2008 and provided the contact number for the program manager in our central region, who did not receive any calls from the SEIU—did not receive any calls.

But, again, should any of those workers feel they've been unjustly treated, I ask that they put forward a grievance through their collective agreement. That's what they should do. We are there to support—

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

TOURISM

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. It has been noted that many sectors of the economy in this province have been facing challenges outside of their control. The tourism industry is not immune to these challenges. We are entering the summer festival season and many organizations across the province are busy planning their festivals and all of their events. These

are organizations whose events I know to be significant drivers of the local economy, like our Retrofest, Gregor's Crossing Medieval Faire, Tilbury Fun Fest and the Rotary Ribfest.

I know that the ministry of tourism has programs that are available to local festivals and events throughout the province, including the Celebrate Ontario program. Can the minister outline for the members of this House how important the Celebrate Ontario program is to local festivals and events throughout our province?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to thank the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex. I had the opportunity to be down in Blenheim last week and actually had a chat with the mayor about RetroFest and how excited they are.

As all of the members in the House know, we are privileged to have a great many festivals and events—2,500, in fact—across the province. Our government recognizes these festivals and events as important economic drivers for all of our local communities in attracting tourists and increasing spending in our local economies.

That's why in 2006 our government initiated the Celebrate Ontario program, and we entrenched it in our programs in the 2008 budget, providing it with ongoing stable funding.

In November 2008, we announced \$9 million for the 2009 Celebrate Ontario. But I was pleased just last month to be able to announce in Ottawa that we are in fact investing \$11 million in 224 festivals and events across the province. This is more than double the number of events that were funded last year. We're very excited about the prospects across the province for the exciting festivals and events that are coming up.

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: The minister has mentioned that the province is home to so many festivals and events, and that they play an important role in enhancing local economies, attracting more tourists and increasing tourism spending. It's good to hear that the minister announced an additional \$2 million for this program, given the state of the current economy. This will provide further aid to the tourism industry.

Can the minister tell this House about the success of festivals and events last year, which had a significant impact on local economies?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm very pleased to note that of the 224 festivals and events that we're supporting this year, four are in our aboriginal community. We have Bob Goulais here, executive assistant to Grand Chief John Beaucage, who's in the House today, and I wanted to acknowledge his presence.

We had some incredible success last year with Celebrate Ontario 2008. The Elora Festival, which is in the riding of my critic, the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, attracted sellout crowds for the world-renowned opera singer Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, with overall sales of their whole concert series up by 25%.

In the Lanark district, the Lanark Highlands' Art of Being Green Festival saw attendance up 64% last year

with the additional funding that allowed them to expand their festival. Just about every bed and breakfast within half an hour of the venue was occupied during that July weekend.

There are a variety of success stories across the province, and I look forward to getting out to many festivals—

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

TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services: Two days ago the member for Hamilton Mountain said, and I quote, “At TICO’s 2008 annual general meeting, some member raised concerns regarding TICO’s handling of One Step’s closure. The TICO board directors then decided to commission a third party review of how TICO handled the specific closure of One Step Travel.”

That’s a far cry from what former TICO board members Bruce Bishins and Simon Perry recall and what’s reported in the Canadian Travel Press. In March, CTP said, and I quote: “The acrimonious meeting eventually saw a registrant-driven vote on a public inquiry, a vote that passed 39 to 28 despite TICO’s assertion it had no jurisdiction.”

What are you and TICO hiding about the handling of One Step and how it could have prevented the collapse of Conquest—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Which one, sir?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): “Hiding.”

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Hiding? Okay. I withdraw that, but I still expect an answer to the question.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I have said it a few times in the House already. Our first priority is to protect consumers, and I expect TICO to protect consumers whenever a travel agency gets into financial trouble or goes down. That’s exactly what happened in this event as well.

I’m sure that these issues were raised in the annual general meeting last year. The board of directors of TICO handled the situation, and they have asked for an inquiry into this issue. Whenever we get the recommendations, if those recommendations make some sense to improve the workings of TICO, then we will definitely look into it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister should get his story straight because this looks like a cover-up. TICO first—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker, but this does look a little suspicious. TICO first ignored the registrants and then they arranged for a third party commission on One Step when they acknowledged, and they had knowledge of Conquest’s cash flow troubles. You and your appointees on TICO have a lot to answer for, including removing a TICO board member who disagreed with you.

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One Step collapsed in 2006. In June 2008, the court transcripts are made public, admonishing TICO for its work in this case. It was also around this same time that Conquest started having cash flow troubles.

What are you telling this House, Minister? Why are you trying to dupe the consumers whom you are sitting in that chair to protect? Will you make the third party review public—

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

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say this again for the record of the House: Our first priority is always going to be the consumers. We are always going to make sure that the consumers come first. If the travel agency goes down and they are stranded anywhere, then we will bring them home.

Let me tell the member on the other side: There are a lot of other organizations which will differ from what the member has said. I’m going to quote the chair of the Canadian Association of Tour Operators: “The media and politicians seem to have overlooked TICO’s excellent track record....”

“TICO has overseen the industry for 12 years and there have been very few failures in the industry.... This is because TICO works with registrants to keep them onside with their financial requirements under the Travel [Industry] Act, or it has closed companies in an orderly fashion, with the least disruption possible.” That’s exactly what we believe, and that’s exactly—

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

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. As we speak, the pensions of tens of thousands of hard-working Ontarians are hanging in the balance. Pensions are in danger at Chrysler, GM, AbitibiBowater, Nortel, steel companies and all the smaller companies across Ontario.

How can this government introduce legislation that absolves the province of any legal obligation whatsoever to ensure that pensioners get every last pension penny owed to them?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We continue to work with FSCO with those plans that are affected, to help protect pensions. For instance, when Stelco got into difficulty some three years ago—

Hon. Jim Watson: Too big to fail.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It was a too-big-to-fail pension; that’s absolutely right. It was the NDP who set that up. And when we stepped in to save that pension, you and your party voted against it—that member.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d just remind the honourable member that he asked the question. It would be good for him to listen to the answer.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He doesn't want to hear the answer, because not only did they create the "too big to fail" clause, but when they had a chance to support Stelco workers in Hamilton, they voted against it. When they had a chance to help Chrysler workers in Windsor, they said no. When they had the chance to stand up for General Motors and keep production and pensions in Ontario, they said no.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: People who work hard all their lives defer their earnings to a pension plan. The least they should expect is that when it comes to the end of their working days, they can count on the retirement income that they put away over decades. And yet, unbelievably, we apparently have a company called AbitibiBowater going to court to suspend pension payments towards its unfunded liabilities for workers. We have a government that is trying to deflect the blame to the federal government when in fact, Minister, the majority of the responsibility falls on your shoulders.

How can this government bring forward a resolution today—today, Minister—to deflect the responsibility for pensions when so many thousands of pensioners are in jeopardy right here in Ontario?

As far as the Stelco thing goes, I lived it; I was there; and one of their CEOs walked away with \$60 million.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The people of Ontario reject the tired old rhetoric of that member and his party. It's tired and it's old and it's just not completely candid, and it certainly doesn't reflect reality.

Government after government in this province have continued to deny the challenges facing our pension system and, by extension, pensioners. This government, for the first time, is beginning to address those challenging questions.

We reject "too big to fail." It didn't work. Every one of the too-big-to-fail—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please listen to the response. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He doesn't want to listen to the answer, and he's certainly not listening to pensioners in Ontario who want their government to address this challenging issue openly, recognizing the need to protect the interest of pensioners in Ontario.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, we can all agree that keeping Ontario roads safe is a priority for this government. It is important to those who use our roads to feel secure about driving with family, friends and loved ones through their daily routine. That is why our government has moved forward with a variety of initiatives to improve the safety of Ontario's roads, including, four years ago, making the use of booster seats mandatory to protect our youngest and most vulnerable passengers.

In 2006, a one person, one seatbelt law required that every person in a vehicle must buckle up, and Ontario

now has the toughest penalties in Canada for street racing, contest and stunt driving on our roads.

I understand the records have been recently recognized, and I was hoping that Minister of Transportation could please share with this House details on this record and achievement.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Excellent question. Yesterday, I was pleased to accept an award, on behalf of this government and the Ministry of Transportation, from the Ontario Safety League. It was given in recognition of Ontario achieving its lowest fatality rate since 1931, making Ontario's road safety ranking number one of all jurisdictions in North America.

This award is a symbol of the collective road safety achievements, and I want to thank everyone for doing their part to keep Ontarians safe, from successive governments who took action when they were in government to our road safety partners, police partners and the general public.

The latest statistics show that traffic fatality rates in the province dropped nearly 60% in the last quarter century. At the same time, the number of drivers has gone up 70%—

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm pleased to see Ontario once again leading the pack with respect to road safety, but even though we have the safest roads on the continent, we cannot stop there. I know that this government is doing a lot to make our roads safe. For example, I understand that we are getting even tougher on drinking and driving by introducing escalating sanctions for those caught driving with blood alcohol concentrations in the warn range.

I also know that there is a lot more that can be done. I hear from my constituency constantly with the question: How is this government working to make our roads safer? I'm hoping the minister can please share with this House how he is ensuring road safety remains a priority and what some of this government's newest initiatives are.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, the member is correct; there's always more we can do when it comes to highway safety. Every day, two people are killed and 10 more are seriously injured on Ontario's roads. That's completely unacceptable. That is why we are constantly working with our police and road safety partners on how to make our roads even safer. The message is clear: More work needs to be done.

We continue our work to keep our roads safe. With unanimous support from this Legislature, we recently passed two pieces of legislation that aim at making our roads safer: Bill 118, the Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, addresses hand-held electronic distractions, to help prevent injury and reduce collisions; and Bill 126, the Road Safety Act, is a comprehensive piece of legislation targeting some of the most persistent and dangerous behaviours on the road.

I commend all members of the Legislature for supporting this government legislation and for being part of making Ontario's roads the safest—

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

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, your government still has not dealt with the fundamental problems in Ontario's apprenticeship program. In my area, the plumbing profession is in desperate need of apprentices, but your rules and regulations are making it nearly impossible for them.

For instance, Bay Area Electrical and plumbing has brought to my attention that although they have three licensed plumbers, they can only sign on one apprentice. If they want to sign on another apprentice, they need to get a fourth plumbing licence. This is ridiculous. Ontario should have a one-to-one ratio like the rest of the country.

Minister, we've been asking you this same question for months. Why are you making it so hard for businesses to train apprentices in this province?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the honourable member for the question. It gives me an opportunity again to talk about the fact that we have 60,000 more apprentices in the province of Ontario than when we took office. I think the honourable member is aware that, at present, ratios are established on the best advice from industry committees, which are made up of representatives, apprentices, employers and employees.

At the same time, he may also be aware of the extensive consultations that have been undertaken by Kevin Whitaker, the chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, around the idea of setting up a college of trades, a self-regulatory body which would work with all stakeholders in the trades and address a number of issues, including ratios, to ensure that they are properly reviewed and can come forward with the best advice possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, you would think after this question being asked so many times, you would have an actual answer. Apprenticeship ratios need your immediate attention. As minister, you must know that less than half of Ontario apprentices actually complete the training and get certified—less than half, 48%, the lowest in Canada. Why haven't you done anything about this? You should be making it easier for people to acquire the skills to become plumbers and electricians.

Will you commit to changing the ratios to make it easier for small plumbing and electrical businesses to train apprentices? Will you implement a one-to-one ratio in Ontario?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, we changed ratios based on the best advice that we get from the industry. I'd like to point out to the member that under our watch, we've changed ratios for brick and stone masons, architectural glass and metal mechanics, iron workers, structural and ornamental technicians, and sprinkler and fire protection installers. When the Conservatives were in power, they did not change a single ratio. Zero is their record on that front.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1132 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It's my pleasure to introduce four of Ontario's finest. Larry Molyneaux is the president of the Police Association of Ontario. Jim Christie is the vice-president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. He's also the president of the memorial foundation. Ron Middel is the chief administrative officer for the Police Association of Ontario. Mike Abbott is with the Toronto Police Service. Thank you so much for being here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HAYWARD GORDON LTD.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The McGuinty Liberal government is asleep at the switch while a company in my riding is in real trouble. Hayward Gordon Ltd., located in the town of Halton Hills, is a maker and supplier of pumping and mixing equipment for municipal water and waste water treatment plants. Until recently, 75% of its pumps have been sold into the US market. But today these exports, 75 good jobs and the company's future are all at risk because of a protectionist United States Congress and its new buy-American laws. This hardly seems like free trade.

Mr. John Hayward, the company's president, has been in frequent touch with me since the beginning of March. He has written the Premier many times, seeking the help of the provincial government, as have I. I also spoke directly to the Minister of Economic Development on March 12. In response, to put it mildly, we have been given the brush-off.

John Hayward says that while he appreciates my efforts on his behalf, he's very disappointed with the lack of leadership and action from the provincial government. Mr. Hayward says, "Ontario is utterly absent from the issue and is not at all engaged in protecting the interests of its companies affected by US protectionism."

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters are joining municipalities, including the town of Halton Hills, to urge this government to get engaged and see what can be done to help. Let's hope Premier McGuinty will do just that before even more good jobs are lost through his lackadaisical approach to leadership.

HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise in the House today to salute two outstanding Ontario Hockey League champions: the Brampton Battalion for having become the

eastern conference champions, and the Windsor Spitfires for having won the western conference crown.

Last night, the teams began their quest for the title in Windsor, playing the best of seven games. We lulled them into a false sense of security by letting them win. Game 2 is Friday at the Brampton Powerade Centre.

This is the first championship series in the troops' 11-year history, so we're hungry for victory.

While in sport it is never wise to be overconfident, I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that while the Spitfires have been strong all season, the Battalion players are a team that just can't be beaten.

This upcoming series will put the pride of the players of the Spitfires and the Battalion on the line, and I would argue that here in the House, members should follow suit. Therefore, I urge my colleagues who represent the Windsor ridings to stand up and demonstrate their support for their team by participating in a friendly wager to be determined by the winner of this Ontario Hockey League final. When my mighty Battalion proves victorious, the members from Windsor should agree to wear the white, green and gold jerseys of the Battalion, who will have clearly demonstrated their dominance in hockey by being crowned the best team in the province. If by some miracle the Spitfires manage to win the coveted championship, I am prepared to don the red jersey of the Windsor Spitfires.

I want to wish my Brampton Battalion players luck in the next six games, although I don't think they need it. The fans of Brampton are ready to support the Battalion in their quest to be the best team in the Ontario Hockey League.

Go, Brampton, go!

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Go, Brampton!

I rise today to address a very serious situation that is facing the residents of Halton. As the world faces a flu pandemic, the good people of Milton, Burlington and Oakville are more vulnerable than they need to be, thanks to years of inaction by the McGuinty Liberals.

One of the fastest-growing towns in Canada, with a population of 75,000, Milton has a hospital designed to serve only 30,000 people. Meanwhile, hospital construction in Oakville is at a standstill, and Burlington hasn't started yet.

On September 25 of last year, I rose in this House and warned that the lack of health care infrastructure in Milton was reaching dire dimensions. I warned that, "If ever, God forbid, there was a health crisis in Halton, I'm not sure if we could cope."

Around the same time, Halton Healthcare Services submitted plans to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for expansion of the Milton District Hospital and since then have consistently demanded that the Minister of Health begin the process of the hospital expansion in Milton, as well as renew construction on the Trafalgar Memorial Hospital in Oakville.

Now our fears are looming closer as this swine flu spreads throughout the province of Ontario. Given our experiences with SARS, there is no excuse for failure. We must be prepared for the worst. But in response to these lessons, warnings and statistics, the McGuinty government has only delayed, made excuses and told us to be quiet.

Well, in Halton we will not be quiet. We will not play nice while the government leaves us exposed. The people of Halton deserve far more.

RAIL LINE CONSTRUCTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Imagine waking up one day to what you think is an earthquake happening in your backyard, but the earthquake goes on for eight hours. It continues to go on, and it turns out that it's not an earthquake at all; it's piledriving done by GO and Metrolinx, in fact, to put in new rail.

Then imagine that the foundations of your house are shaking, and if you work at home, you can't work. If you have a business there, the business will go out of business because of the noise. If you have a school, you can't let the children out into the yard to play, and especially if you have a special needs school, the children who have autism are impossible to control because of this ongoing noise. There you've got the Junction in our riding in west Toronto.

These poor individuals asked GO to come to the table and negotiate with them. GO, a public agency, wouldn't show up and would only talk to a few hand-picked representatives of the community—stonewalled them; refused to talk even to the CBC reporter when she came out. Imagine that.

Then imagine, just to make it even better, that Metrolinx announces that—guess what?—instead of 40 trains running through your neighbourhood, there are going to be over 400, and they're going to be diesel—not clean electric, but diesel—and still you can't get a meeting with Metrolinx and still you can't get a meeting with GO.

That's the situation in my riding. I demand, and they demand, that the transportation minister do something about it.

POVERTY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to speak on the poverty initiatives of the McGuinty government's 2009 budget.

Our current economic situation underlines the importance to care for those most vulnerable amongst us. This government is committed to reducing poverty because of the opportunities it affords Ontarians to achieve their potential. It narrows Ontario's prosperity gap and strengthens our economy. I'll briefly focus on a few of these issues.

The first is the Ontario child benefit. This government's poverty reduction strategy will see OCB payments nearly doubled, from \$600 to \$1,100, per child

starting in July 2009. This is two years ahead of schedule and is an impressive 83% increase in the maximum benefit compared to 2008. Nearly 115,000 more families will be eligible for OCB than there were in 2008, with an additional \$400 million going out in OCB payments.

The second initiative is a 2% increase in social assistance rates in 2009-10, to include families receiving temporary care assistance for children with severe disabilities and those in long-term-care homes who receive comfort allowance.

Third, the government is spending over \$1.2 billion in the next two years, in partnership with the federal government, to construct and retrofit affordable housing units; also, \$700 million to rehabilitate 50,000 social housing units.

With all these initiatives being undertaken, we consider that this government is committed to assisting those most in need, and I urge all members of this House to support this budget because Ontarians will benefit across this province.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This government would like the people of Ontario to believe that the HST won't cost them much. They're trying to pretend that with the McGuinty bribe, you'll break even, but they won't. The truth is that this is going to cost Ontarians thousands and thousands of dollars.

For the 25-year-old who buys two cups of coffee a day, it will cost an extra \$83 a year, or \$4,576 over a lifetime, and that's just coffee.

Put together all the items that are increased by 8%, and the cost to Ontarians is huge.

A Woodstock woman who's worried her husband might lose his job calculated this tax will cost her \$967 a year, or \$39,000 over her lifetime.

A working senior from Caledon estimated that this will cost him \$846 per year and \$11,850 over his lifetime. A mother of two from Sudbury calculated that this will cost her \$859 per year, or \$36,946 over her lifetime.

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If you would like to figure out how much the Dalton sales tax is going to cost you, I encourage you to visit my website at www.erniehardeman.com. We have put together a simple calculator that lets you work out how much the 8% increase will cost you on just a few items that every Ontarian uses every day.

I challenge all my colleagues on the other side of the House to do the calculation, figure out how much it will cost them and then tell the Premier, "Scrap the Dalton tax."

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise in the House today to remind members and all Ontarians about the McGuinty government's dedication to improving the quality of health care services for all Ontarians.

This government realizes that timely and effective health care is becoming an even greater priority as Ontario's population ages. The McGuinty government has responded with bold funding initiatives, which will enable patients to receive better care closer to home by:

- increasing overall hospital funding from \$10.9 billion in 2003 to \$15.4 billion in fiscal 2009-10, an overall 37% increase;

- hiring 8,000 new nurses and expanding medical school spaces by some 23%;

- having no less than 100 major hospital construction projects completed or underway;

- creating 150 family health teams so that doctors, nurses and other health care professionals work in teams to provide 24/7 care; and

- rebuilding 35,000 beds over the next 10 years—that's more than half the homes in the province of Ontario.

The McGuinty government has responded to the calls for improving the health care system. While there's much more to do, our government will continue to work with front-line workers and hospital staff to ensure health care in Ontario is the very best that it can be.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Climate change is one of the fundamental challenges facing us today. Climate change does not know territorial boundaries and does not respect economic uncertainty. That's why Ontario is taking bold action to make our community schools greener and to stimulate the economy while creating the next generation of jobs.

Ontario is committing more than \$550 million over the next two years to make 1,000 public schools more energy-efficient. These upgrades will give kids better places to learn, help our school boards save energy and strengthen our communities.

Construction on these green upgrades will start as early as this summer on such projects as:

- retrofitting buildings with new energy efficient heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems and boilers;

- conducting energy audits to help manage and conserve energy;

- upgrading inefficient classrooms to improve the school learning environment; and

- adding environmental education to the curriculum in every subject and in every grade, as well as expanding programs like EcoSchools that teach students about conserving energy, minimizing waste and greening school grounds.

These investments underscore our government's commitment to the environment and to Ontario's children. We will work hard to improve the learning environment for all Ontario schools and students.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Dave Levac: Ontarians read every day about the impacts of the global financial crisis. The McGuinty government has responded with both immediate and

long-term initiatives to rebuild our economy and improve the lives of Ontarians.

These timely investments in Ontario's infrastructure and its citizens will help create and sustain the jobs of today and allow Ontarians to compete for the jobs of tomorrow. We know that these investments will enhance Ontario's infrastructure base, improve the skills and the knowledge of its workforce and support key sectors of our economy. We will work hard to build a stronger Ontario by:

—investing \$32.5 billion over the next two years in infrastructure projects—something I'm absolutely sure that every member in this House will seek for their riding—in partnership with the federal, provincial and municipal governments. These investments will support 300,000 jobs to improve our province's schools, hospitals, public institutions and roads;

—providing more than \$750 million for job creation and skills training. This will enhance the apprenticeship training tax credit, and it will become the most generous in Canada; and

—providing specific sectors, including forestry and manufacturing, with supports to help them become more competitive and ensure they remain major contributors to the Ontario economy through enhanced funding for capital projects.

These investments highlight the McGuinty government's commitment to Ontario families, and we will continue to work hard with all of our partners to help make it through this uncertainty and come out on the other side stronger than ever.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. David Orazietti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs leave to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / *Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.*

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 / *Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto, the title of which is amended to read "An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 and to make consequential amendments to another Act / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto et apportant des modifications corrélatives à une autre loi."*

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated Tuesday, April 7, 2009, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES

Mr. Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / *Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.*

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'll do it in ministerial statements, Speaker.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Brad Duguid: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee membership.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move that the following change be made to the membership of the Standing Committee

on Regulations and Private Bills: that Mr. Naqvi is removed.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Motions? Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think that's it, Mr. Speaker. I don't have any more. You gave me a little scare there; I thought maybe I had another one that I didn't know about.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Today I introduced a bill aimed at bringing our mining legislation into harmony with the values of a modern Ontario while at the same time promoting a strong, vibrant and competitive mineral industry. If passed, this legislation would revitalize Ontario's approach to mineral exploration and mineral development.

It proposes bold steps towards making our Mining Act modern, effective and innovative, through legislation that would balance all of our respective interests and benefit all Ontarians as well as provide clarity and certainty to the minerals industry.

The Mining Amendment Act would deliver on a pledge made last July by Premier Dalton McGuinty when, as part of his announcement of the far north planning initiative, he called for a modernized Mining Act—one that would promote mineral exploration and development that is more respectful of aboriginal communities and private landholders. I believe we have succeeded in drafting legislation that would fulfill the Premier's commitment.

To do so, we have relied on advice from individual First Nations, aboriginal organizations, a wide range of stakeholder groups, communities from across the province and many, many interested citizens. I want to thank especially Aboriginal Affairs Minister Brad Duguid for his tremendous support and assistance throughout this process. Thank you, Minister.

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I certainly want to also recognize the First Nation leaders, industry representatives and other stakeholders who were with me earlier today to mark the introduction of this bill. I extend a special thanks for their words of support to Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse, who is here in the Legislature today—thank you, Regional Chief; Grand Chief John Beaucage of the Union of Ontario Indians; Garry Clark, executive director of the Ontario Prospectors Association; George R. Burns, vice-president for Canada and the United States of Goldcorp Corp.; and Larry Innes, the executive director of the Canadian Boreal Initiative. I also want to welcome Bob

Goulais—I see Bob Goulais there—the executive assistant to Grand Chief Beaucage who is with us in the gallery today. Thank you.

The participation of these groups and individuals has been much appreciated. It has been instrumental in our ability to maintain a balanced approach to modernization, an approach that sought to reconcile many divergent views for the benefit of all Ontarians.

There are two features of this proposed legislation that give me particular pride.

First, it is groundbreaking in several significant areas. For instance, it would expressly incorporate aboriginal consultation in legislation and regulations. It would introduce a requirement for completion of an awareness program to obtain a prospector's licence, and it would introduce a dispute resolution process for aboriginal-related issues in mining. No other jurisdiction in Canada has such provisions.

Second, our draft legislation draws on a consultation process that was by far the most comprehensive ever undertaken by my ministry. Since launching this process last August, we have benefited from the input of approximately 1,000 individuals and organizations, including the minerals industry, environmental groups, municipalities and private citizens.

Our proposals reflect the input, too, of all major aboriginal organizations, as well as approximately 100 First Nation communities. These groups participated in workshops and community meetings across the province or presented individual submissions on issues that were of special concern to them. As a result of these extensive discussions, our legislation is sounder, and we are all richer for the process.

I believe we have laid a solid foundation for the future. One of our main objectives in launching the modernization process was to ensure mineral exploration and development is undertaken in a way that respects the rights and interests of Ontario's aboriginal communities. In our proposed legislation, we have tried to balance the divergent positions we heard during the consultation process in a way that is fair to all and of benefit to all Ontarians.

For instance, our modernization approach would include provisions for withdrawal of significant aboriginal cultural sites from claim staking, notification of aboriginal communities immediately after a claim is staked, and requirements for prospectors and companies to notify aboriginal communities of plans for exploration activities within their traditional lands. In addition, the proposed legislation would introduce a graduated approach to aboriginal consultation.

Consultation requirements would be outlined. Environmental rehabilitation would be required, and exploration plans or permits would be required for activities.

These are significant changes. They would address some of the key concerns we heard during our consultation process.

Another objective in modernizing the Mining Act was to mitigate the conflicts that have arisen between mineral

exploration companies and private landholders who do not hold the mineral rights on their properties. Ontario proposes to withdraw crown-held mining rights in southern Ontario where surface rights are privately held, while respecting existing claims and leases. In northern Ontario, private landholders could apply for such withdrawals, but Ontario would consider criteria such as mineral potential before deciding whether to grant them.

When private land is involved, there would be enhanced requirements for notification as well as enhanced provisions covering the post-staking and exploration stages. In addition, owners of patented mining land who were not using that land for mining purposes would be able to apply for an exemption from the mining land tax.

These proposed changes would address the concerns of private property owners, provide clear rules to the exploration industry and reduce the impact of mineral exploration on the environment.

Our proposed legislation also responds to calls for greater consideration for the environment. It would reduce impacts to the environment by including rehabilitation requirements in our new graduated regulatory approach to exploration activities. It would embed in legislation the provision that no new mine opening can occur in the far north unless there is an approved community-based land use plan.

The phased implementation of map staking—a modern, computer-based system that doesn't require stakers to enter or disturb the surface of the land—would reduce the already low impact of ground staking.

These are some of the highlights of our proposed legislation. I believe strongly that it sets a framework that supports significant strides in aboriginal consultation. In addition, our proposals would help ensure that aboriginal peoples participate more fully in mineral sector activities in their territories.

Working in conjunction with other government initiatives, such as the far north planning initiative and the \$30 million set aside for resource benefits sharing announced earlier this week by Minister Duguid, our proposed legislation would foster partnerships in development, promoting prosperity for aboriginal communities and Ontario as a whole. At the same time, it steers a wise and prudent course that balances all our social and economic interests.

While these changes may require some short-term adjustments, they would in the longer term, I believe, strengthen the industry and provide new opportunities for growth, particularly in our northern, rural and aboriginal communities.

We set out to create a modern Mining Act that would promote balanced development that benefits all Ontarians, while modernizing the way mining companies stake and explore their claims. At the same time, we wanted our legislation to continue supporting a vibrant Ontario minerals industry that would help our communities realize their economic and social aspirations. I believe our proposal succeeds in meeting those objectives.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It is a privilege to rise in the House today to mark the Ontario Police Memorial's 10th anniversary service, taking place this Sunday, May 3, and to pay tribute to those brave police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service of their communities. Policing is a noble profession, one that is bound in duty, honour and, as we have been sadly reminded on 236 known occasions, sacrifice. On Sunday, His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, Premier Dalton McGuinty and myself will join police officers and their families from across the province to honour the memories of our fallen police officers.

We gather at the police memorial this year encouraged by the fact that not a single police officer lost his or her life in the line of duty in the province of Ontario in 2008. We are thankful for this and hope that 2008 has set a course for law enforcement in the years ahead, but we know in our hearts that as long as there are courageous men and women prepared to answer the call, there is always the chance that an officer will not be returning home to their family. That is the dark side of a profession that otherwise brings comfort and real hope to all communities in Ontario.

The Ontario Police Memorial will receive two additional names this year, now that historical evidence has shown us that they too were killed while serving their communities. They are Constable Frank Hare of the Port Dover Police Service, who died on June 3, 1951, and Constable Jeffrey Armstrong of the Ottawa Police Service, who died on May 13, 1963. I know that all members in the House will join me in extending condolences to these fine officers' families.

Time may lessen the pain, but never the memory. As an MPP, I know all too well of the devastation a community experiences when an officer is taken. My home community of Sudbury lost two police officers, violently and tragically killed in the line of duty, within six short years of each other. The Ontario Police Memorial reminds us that we are paying remembrance to heroes in life, not death. I hope all members will take the time to visit the police memorial and reflect on the sacrifices these officers made, not only to mourn their passing but to give silent thanks for their courage, honour their legacy and promise never to forget the service they gave.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

1330

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd first of all like to welcome our visitors to the Legislature today.

It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines on his introduction of Bill 173, modernizing and amending the Mining Act. I had an opportunity a few minutes ago to have a quick briefing with Ministry of Northern Development and Mines staff, who I see are watching in the Legislature, and I thank

them for their briefing. As a member of the opposition, I certainly will be looking at it in great detail to see what sort of effects these changes will have on mining in Ontario.

It is really important that the government get this right. Mining is absolutely too important to the economy of Ontario. Ontario used to be the number one jurisdiction in the world for mining investment. It was the best place in the world to invest. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case under this government.

The minister, in his speech, used the words “clarity” and “certainty” for the minerals industry, and I say that’s very important. I hope that this bill does bring about more clarity and certainty. Certainly the actions of the government, when we were about to have our first diamond mine opened in this province, were the exact opposite of what the minister was saying in his speech. They changed the rules. They tripled the tax rate for the first diamond mine in Attawapiskat, after they had spent a billion dollars and were about to open the mine. That’s what they’ve done so far. I hope that going forward, that will not be the case.

He talked about balance, and I agree that’s very important. We have conflicting interests. We have large mining companies. We have prospectors, often one individual going out into the bush. We have aboriginal communities that have a great interest in mining; mining is the largest employer of aboriginal people. We have northern communities and the whole north—the whole province. It’s so important to have successful mining. We have private landowners in southern Ontario who own surface rights but not the mineral rights.

I see that I have used up all my time, so I’m going to let the other critic respond to the other statement. But we, as the opposition, will be looking at this carefully and will try to make some constructive criticism and hopefully improve the bill.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I’d like to thank all the police services and all the police officers in the province of Ontario who put their lives on the line each and every day to ensure that we live in a safe and secure province. After all, it is their presence that stands between us and chaos. Whether it’s on our streets, in our communities or on waterways, they’re out there risking their lives in order to protect ours.

It’s a wonderful thing that in 2008, not one police officer, man or woman, lost their life. That’s cause for great celebration in this province.

At times where there are officers who lose their lives in the line of duty, we must not forget the sacrifice our policemen and policewomen have made for us. This weekend, our critic, Mr. Garfield Dunlop, MPP for Simcoe North, will be attending the police memorial on behalf of our party here at Queen’s Park, which recognizes those courageous officers whom we have lost.

I would encourage all members in this Legislature to attend and pay tribute to those men and women who have

given their lives for the people of the province of Ontario. I would also like to thank the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police Association, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards for the hard work they continue to do.

Police Week is a great time for communities to show their appreciation and acknowledge the tireless efforts of these brave men and women. I would encourage all my colleagues and the citizens of Ontario to participate in the events with their police service boards.

On behalf of our leader and caucus, we support the fantastic job our police officers do in this province. They put their lives on the line every day, day in and day out, so that we can live in harmony, peace and safety in the province of Ontario. We look forward to continuing to work with and support Ontario’s finest officers.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Mr. Peter Kormos: I am pleased, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and New Democrats here at Queen’s Park, to join in acknowledging the incredible sacrifices of so many police officers over the course of so many years, and expressing our support for the police memorial and appreciation of this, its 10th anniversary—appreciation of its incredible testament to the sacrifice and courage and heroism of so many police officers, women and men, over the course of decades of policing here in the province of Ontario.

Policing is as dangerous as ever. The demands that we place on our police officers have never been higher. The scrutiny is of the highest level, and it’s not just from official bodies, oversight bodies, but it’s also from the armchair critics after the fact, who didn’t have to share the fear, the desperation of a deadly situation.

We say this: If we truly want to acknowledge the heroism and sacrifice of police officers, if we truly want to pay tribute to those who have given their lives, let’s make sure that our police officers in this province have the resources and the tools that they need to do their job safely and effectively. We owe them no less.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of the New Democratic Party and on behalf of many people who are involved in this issue from mining, environmental and First Nations, I’ve got to say the bill is quite interesting, because the government is trying to walk a fine line, but I’m not sure that they fall on either side of the fence when you start to look at this legislation.

One of the key things that First Nations asked for was that they wanted to have revenue sharing. I recognize that in this bill there’s no attempt to deal with the issue of revenue sharing, and it’s something that has to be at least spoken to in regard to how this is going to impact the ability for First Nations to benefit from the activities of mining in northern Ontario or any place in this province.

But the other thing they asked for was an ability to have a duty to consult so that if they didn't want a project to go forward, they had a say on that. As I look at the legislation, there's one section under section 204 that says:

"No new mines

"(2) No new mine opening shall occur in the Far North if,

"(a) there is no community based land use plan," which would tend to indicate that the community has to give its consent. Unfortunately, the permission is,

"Despite subsection (2), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, taking into account any prescribed land use planning objectives, permit a new mine opening for a project described...." In other words, the cabinet can overturn it, if they think it's in the economic or social interests of the province to go forward with the project.

In the case of KI, what would a future cabinet do? I'm not asserting for one second that Premier McGuinty would have allowed KI to go forward under this legislation, but you can very well end up with a cabinet and a Premier that are hostile to the interests of First Nations, and they're going to be right back where they started from. I think what we need to be clear on in here is that First Nations are respected when it comes to the ability for them to have a real say when it comes to whether mining activities go forward on their properties or not.

The other issue is that of map staking. I give the minister and the staff upstairs who are watching here some credit, because it's a really tough issue. There are traditional people like myself who say, "Listen, map staking is dangerous because it kills one of the things that we've been doing in northern Ontario for a long time, and that is the job and the profession of prospecting." What you're going to end up with, with map staking, eventually, is you're going to have the larger companies and those that are more sophisticated better able to gobble up the good ground, keeping the little players out, to a certain degree.

I know there are people who fall on both sides of this issue, and I'm going to give credit where credit is due. But I can tell you a number of people are going to be somewhat upset around the issue of map staking. I understand why the government is doing it, but I'm just saying that is a bit of a sore spot with a number of people in northern Ontario.

The other thing I want to say is that I think in the end where we're going to end up with this is, a lot of this is going to be left in the details of the regulation. As I look at this legislation, there's a fair amount of uncertainty as to what this cabinet and future cabinets will do when it comes to the regulatory schemes that empower this act. You could end up passing an act in this House, having the government pass, let's say, good regulation—I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. Let's say you do good regulation. A future cabinet can come in and gut this act by way of regulation without it ever having to come into the House. The question becomes, to what degree are we protecting the rights of aboriginal people in this province

if we're leaving it up to a future cabinet, without ever having to come to the House, to make changes that could be seen as very derogatory to what the initial government wanted in the first place?

I say to the government, if you're serious about giving First Nations rights to determine what's going to happen in their traditional territories, it needs to be in the legislation, with the major components not left to regulation, because otherwise, other governments coming along could very well take away what a government has put in place and be right back where we started from.

Hon. Brad Duguid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in memory of Yom ha-Shoah, following which a moment of silence be observed.

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

1340

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Monte Kwinter: In a ceremony at Queen's Park earlier today, we recognized and honoured 12 Holocaust survivors, whose stories of anguish, suffering and survival of both body and spirit are a testimony to the human will to live.

These Holocaust survivors, who are in the House today, came to Ontario, rebuilt their lives and were honoured for their wonderful contributions as citizens of Ontario. Those honoured were Mrs. Fay Goldlist, Mr. Elly Gotz, Mr. Pinchas Gutter, Mr. Peter Jablonski, Mrs. Frida Lebovici, Mr. Jack Mudryk, Mrs. Zelda Rosenfeld, Mrs. Shoshana Rotenberg, Mr. Wolf Rotman, Mrs. Helen Sonshine, Mrs. Edith Weiss and Mr. Ernst Weiss.

Today we recognize Yom ha-Shoah V'Hagvurah, the Holocaust Memorial Day, a day designated for Holocaust remembrance in communities around the world.

This is the 16th year that the Ontario Legislature has observed Holocaust Memorial Day, and I'm proud to say that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world, outside of the state of Israel, to officially recognize it.

I have visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and museum, in Jerusalem several times. The memorial is dedicated to preserving the memory and story of each of the six million people who died in the Holocaust. For a Jew, these memories strike the heart and the soul. Every Jew is touched by the Holocaust. We lost loved ones, family, members, friends—all members in the community lost someone. The Holocaust echoes throughout generations. The loss is extraordinary. At Yad Vashem, that loss is made real. It is concrete. You can touch it.

In the Valley of the Communities, you stand before wall after wall carved out of solid rock, listing the names of more than 5,000 communities that lived, breathed, had life, and in which men and women loved, married, raised children, worked, laughed and worshipped. Today, in most cases, nothing remains of these Jewish communities except for their names, forever frozen in the bedrock of Yad Vashem. It was there that I found the name of the

city where my father was born, Czestochowa, and the city where my mother was born, Sosnowiec.

The Holocaust reaches out of the past and touches the shoulder of every Jew. The central theme of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2009 is children in the Holocaust. The Children's Memorial is especially sad. It commemorates the 1.5 million Jewish children who perished in Hitler's final solution. The memorial is carved out of an underground cavern, and memorial candles, the customary Jewish tradition to remember the dead, are reflected infinitely in the dark and sombre place. They remind one of a million stars. And as you stand there, you can hear the names of the murdered children, their ages and their countries of origin, read in the background.

Holocaust Memorial Day commemorates all who died in the Holocaust, not just Jews. We also remember those whom the Nazis targeted for their race, their religion, their politics, their disabilities, or their sexual orientation. It's important to set aside time to remember all these victims, whose lives were taken by the Nazis. In remembering, we bear witness to what these men, women and children endured.

Tragically, other genocides have followed since World War II, in Cambodia, Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia. It is evident that we must continue our struggle to keep alive the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the United Nations 61 years ago in the shadow of the Holocaust.

The declaration recognized the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world. It called on the world to protect human rights by the rule of law.

We are indeed fortunate to live in Canada and in Ontario, but we must never take our good fortune for granted. We must guard our democratic institutions and democratic freedoms, and must appreciate, nurture and protect them. We must constantly remind ourselves of how easy it is to lose them.

On Yom ha-Shoah, Jewish communities around the world recite a brief traditional mourners' prayer, the Kaddish. On the evening of April 20, some of our members were at Earl Bales Park, where there were hundreds of people who recited the Kaddish.

On behalf of the victims, the survivors and their families, I would like to recite that Hebrew prayer, which is something for which all people may pray. I ask for unanimous consent to allow me to do that.

Interjections: Agreed.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I ask all members to rise.

Remarks in Hebrew.

One line of this prayer translates as, "He who creates peace in His celestial height, may He create peace for us."

We must always remember so that the world will never forget.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My constituency of Thornhill is home to the largest number of Jewish people living in

any Ontario riding. Almost 40% of Thornhill's population is Jewish, and not one—not one—home, not one single family has not been touched by the Holocaust. This horrific event has been memorialized in public, in our schools, in our synagogues, in private homes and now here in this Legislative Assembly.

Thornhill, of course, is not the only place where memorial events are held, anymore than it is the only one where you'd find Jews as a part of the local fabric. So on Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember. We set aside time to remember so as to ensure that we never forget, so that our society never forgets, so that our children and their children never forget. Those who perished can live on in the hearts and minds of the descendants they never would meet and never would know.

At a large gathering last week, the approximately 1.5 million Jewish child victims were the prime focus of a 90-minute ceremony. How poignant to see so many vibrant young people, whose future is born of the ashes of the past, showing so much interest and taking part as citizens of today. Their lives are built on the legacy of other children—children of the Holocaust, whose futures were taken away from them for eternity. How fitting that their memories survive, vested in people of another era, yet of a similar age.

I told this Legislature last year, on this day, that I, myself, am a child of the Holocaust, that my father was a German-Jewish war refugee, and that I am named for his father, who, with his mother, perished at the hands of the Nazi war machine—two small pieces of Hitler's final solution. That a place such as Canada can be my home, that a rich and generous and eminently open and fair land could allow my own children to know all four grandparents when I could only ever know one, is the ultimate defeat of the final solution and a living testimony that those heinous plans, while intensely destructive and horrifically injurious, did not succeed.

While much of the debate in this chamber is rancorous, and while we often disagree on how best to govern our province, there is no disagreement on how precious we value Ontario's tolerant and diverse society and how we must commit ourselves to its preservation. This is why, ultimately, we are all here. This is Canada's most populous province, and the only place that I would want to live.

I raise that by way of underscoring the fact that Canada has no official annual way of honouring those lost in the Holocaust, but we, in Ontario, do. The province of Ontario, in 1997, passed Bill 66, a private member's bill introduced by my colleague the member from Halton. It states that "Yom ha-Shoah or the Day of the Holocaust, as determined in each year by the Jewish lunar calendar, is proclaimed as Holocaust Memorial Day...."

Holocaust Memorial Day was first marked officially in 1998. I, along with other members of this Legislature, have attended a number of memorial services around the province where victims' names are read aloud, candles are lit and prayers for those victims are recited. The ceremonies also remember those people who defied the terror and inhumanity of the Nazi regime.

1350

Notably, we have with us today 12 survivors honoured here today by the province of Ontario: Fay Goldlist, Peter Jablonski, Pinchas Gutter, Wolf Rotman, Ernst Weiss, Frida Lebovici, Jack Mudryk, Elly Gotz, Shoshana Rotenberg, Edith Weiss and Helen Sonshine. On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus of Ontario, I congratulate you for your contribution and for keeping the flame alive.

As you can see, along with the victims, these ceremonies also commemorate those individuals who risked their own lives to save a fellow human being. At the heart of it, however, one very loud message always emerges, and it applies to both the Holocaust and to every incidence of genocide no matter where or when. Let that message be heard and repeated around the world: Never again.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise not as a Jew but as a Christian and as a United Church minister by trade. I want to say welcome to the survivors and their friends and families who are here today. I think it's fitting that I say something as a Christian. Really, it could be summed up by saying "mea culpa"—I am sorry; we are sorry—because it's not enough, it seems to me, to remember, on this sad but necessary day, the six million or more who suffered and died in a particularly brutal and cold way; we must look at ourselves and anti-Semitism today and how anti-Semitism itself is making a comeback.

First and foremost, I want to say sorry for the anti-Semitism that has been part of Christian theology. I want to say sorry for the anti-Semitism that has been part of Canadian society that turned away Jews when they were trying to escape from the Holocaust. That's part of our history. I want to say sorry on behalf of Torontonians for those signs that my father told me of when I grew up that used to pepper the boardwalk that said, "No dogs or Jews allowed." I want to say sorry for all of those institutions that would not let Jews in the front door not that long ago, for the race riots that happened at Christie Pits, and on and on. I want to say sorry because a member of my congregation who's a nurse and who worked at a Jewish retirement home told me that in her introduction to her charges there was a wonderful rabbi who said to her, "You have to find out what is ailing them. They will never tell you because they are survivors of the Holocaust, and to tell you that they're in pain means a trip to the gas chamber." I want to say sorry that those memories persist; sorry for that as well.

I want to say sorry on behalf of my family because my brother, who's older than I, grew up with David Zafer, his best friend, who was Jewish, and my brother, no stranger to prejudice as an Italian young boy at a time when there was prejudice against Italians too, used to have to walk his best friend home from school so his best friend didn't get beaten up because he was a Jew.

I want to say sorry for all of those who still can't or won't say "Sorry." I want to say sorry for something that happened very recently on University, a demonstration

where I saw Nazi signs equated with the Star of David and the flag of Israel. I want to say sorry that ever happened; sorry that that was allowed to happen in our midst today, right now. I want to say sorry for the rampant anti-Semitism that is still part of campus life in this province in places, still part of the fabric of our society. We need to do something about it in honour of the victims of the Holocaust.

In our own church what we did in part was to celebrate Passover—not a Christianized Passover, but we invited a rabbi or a Jew to come in and lead Passover with us and to teach us the various elements of the seder dinner and what it meant. It was our small little step towards beginning to understand a history that we were so complicit with.

So again, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I want to honour you. I want to thank you for coming here. I want to recognize that this is something ongoing, that it's not something in the past. It's something we deal with very much: anti-Semitism in this country and in our lives. I want to swear to you, and I think on behalf of everyone here, that it is our duty and it is our will to stamp it out wherever we see it, to fight it wherever it raises its ugly head so that we can put some real soul behind the words of my friend who said, "Never again." Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and all of our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition in support of the caregivers and nannies who work in our communities.

"Whereas a number of" caregivers and nannies have been exploited by "recruitment agencies" under extreme circumstances; "and

"Whereas" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect" caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas in Ontario, the former" Mike Harris "Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

"Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

RAIL LINE CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have an important petition given to me by the community called East of the Tracks, composed of residents who live east of the railway tracks affected by the West Diamond joint venture project. It's addressed to the Ontario Legislature and to the Minister of Transportation and it reads as follows:

"Whereas GO Transit's West Diamond project is using a method of pile installation that is ill-suited to an urban environment and causing undue disruption and harm to residents in neighbourhoods on both sides of the railroad tracks;" many people are distraught and have suffered physical and mental ailments due to the construction; sound and intense low vibrations have displaced residents from their homes during the day and displaced multiple businesses; the noise is harmful to infants and children outside, and people who are ill or caring for children cannot stay at home during the day; duplicates of home inspections are being withheld from owners and businesses by order of the construction company in charge;

"Whereas there are other methods of installing piles that would cause minimal disruption and no harm to residents or property;

"Whereas the actions of GO Transit have been inadequate to mitigate the human and property concerns experienced by residents;

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

"Cease the current method of pile installation used in the West Diamond project immediately and engage in a consultation with the community residents to find a mutually agreed upon method that ends the damage to homes, our quality of life and our physical health."

Since I agree with the petition, I'm delighted to sign it as well. Thank you very much.

1400

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition here, and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

"Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure, all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

"Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities created in the green energy sector via the ... Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

"Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut to the tax rate in

Ontario's lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05% to 5.05%;

"Whereas Ontario's future, represented by her children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people."

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

INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas:

"(1) ROCHE-NCE, a consulting firm hired to study potential sites for an interprovincial crossing between Ottawa and Gatineau, is recommending that an interprovincial bridge across the Ottawa River be built at Kettle Island, connecting to the scenic Aviation Parkway in Ottawa, turning it into a four-lane commuter and truck route passing through downtown residential communities;

"(2) Along the proposed route are homes, seniors' apartments, schools, parks, the Montfort Long Term Care Facility and the Montfort Hospital, all of which would be severely impacted by noise, vibration and disease-causing air pollution;

"(3) A truck and commuter route through neighbourhoods is a safety issue because of the increased risk to pedestrians and cyclists and the transport of hazardous materials; and

"(4) There are other, more suitable corridors further east, outside of the downtown core, which would have minimal impact on Ottawa residents;

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

"To reject the recommendation of a bridge at Kettle Island and to select a more suitable corridor to proceed to phase 2 of the interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Zachary.

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

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

"Whereas workplace harassment (physical/psychological) and violence are linked to the mental and physical ill-health and safety of workers in Ontario; and

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

"Whereas employers will have a legal avenue and/or a legal obligation to deal with workplace harassment and

violence in all its forms, including psychological harassment; and

“Whereas harassment poisons a workplace, taking many forms—verbal/physical abuse, sabotage, intimidation, bullying, sexism and racism, and should not be tolerated; and

“Whereas harassment in any form harms a target’s physical and mental health, esteem and productivity, and contributes to trauma and stress on the job; and

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

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

I agree with this petition and will attach my name to it. Alexis will bring it down.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Barbara Kyselka, who lives in Eldon Court in Peterborough, Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

“Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario’s inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Cameron.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition, signed by a number of my constituents, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, has publicly stated that she ‘absolutely’ wants to help the beginning and new entrants to agriculture; and

“Whereas beginning and expanding farmers are going to be important in the coming decade, as a record number of producers are expected to leave the industry; and

“Whereas the safety net payments—i.e., Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture payments (OCHHP)—are based on historical averages, and many beginning and expanding farmers were not in business or just starting up in the period so named and thus do not have reflective historic allowable net sales; and

“Whereas beginning and expanding producers are likely at the greatest risk of being financially disadvantaged by poor market conditions and are being forced to exit agriculture because there is not a satisfactory safety net program or payment that meets their needs;

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

“To immediately adjust the safety net payments made via the OCHHP to include beginning and expanding farmers, and make a relief payment to the beginning and expanding farmers who have been missed or received seriously disproportionate payments, thereby preventing beginning farmers from exiting the agriculture sector.”

I thank you and I add my signature on this, as I agree with the petition.

SCHOOL FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas St. Matthew Catholic High School is currently operating at 137% capacity and has been overcrowded for many years; and

“Whereas the Ottawa Catholic School Board’s capital plan identifies building an addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School as necessary (contingent on provincial grants) and planned for 2008; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario does not currently have a model to fund capital additions for school boards which are not in debt, where these schools are in established communities and not part of the board’s education development charges bylaw;

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

“To immediately transfer to the Ottawa Catholic School Board the necessary funds to design and build the planned addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School in Orléans.”

I send it down to the desk with Cameron.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

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

“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 ... 170,000," 40,000 people more; and

"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by 'Places to Grow,' an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,500 in 2012," which is the first year of "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'm very pleased sign this petition and pass it to my page Zachary, who will carry it to the table.

RAILROAD BRIDGE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Bloor Street West between Lansdowne Avenue and Dundas Street West has been identified as the only stretch of Bloor Street that has no landscaping;

"Whereas the neighbourhood near 1369 Bloor Street West has been recognized as a priority revitalization area by a city of Toronto study in 2000;

"Whereas items for beautification include:

"(1) Developing terraced walls with flowers and planters near the railroad bridge;

"(2) Constructing new abutment walls;

"(3) Cleaning, painting and reconstructing the rusty, dilapidated railroad bridge; and

"(4) Creating brightly lit murals underneath the bridge in order to make it more secure and more people-friendly;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request in the strongest terms that our city government" and our province "immediately reactivate the 2000 reconstruction plan and CNR immediately proceed with improvements to the bridge" and that the provincial government support this plan.

"We look forward to a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape. We want to be proud to live here."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition as well.

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PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here from people from Markham, Brampton, Mississauga and Thornhill in support of our nannies and caregivers.

Whereas a number of our caregivers and nannies are being exploited by recruitment agencies throughout this province; and

"Whereas" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse" and denial of their employment rights "at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect" our caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former" Mike Harris "Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for" caregivers; and

"Whereas a great number of ... caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support MPP Mike Colle's bill, the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, it is imperative that our provincial and federal governments work in partnership to begin a dialogue to address the 70% of Ontario's workforce that is in need of a workplace pension plan to accommodate our seniors population that is estimated to double by the year 2025.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Dickson moves private member's notice of motion 82. Mr. Dickson, pursuant to standing order 98, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to draw attention to workers in Ontario who are not covered by a workplace pension plan. My resolution, which was put on the order paper a month ago, has just been moved. It is, in the expanded version:

Whereas over 70% of Ontario workforce is without a workplace pension plan; and

Whereas Ontario's population is aging, with our senior population estimated to double by the year 2025;

Therefore in the opinion of this House, it is imperative that our provincial and federal governments work in partnership to begin a dialogue to address Ontario workers who are in need of a workplace pension plan to accommodate our rapidly growing seniors population.

I want to bring forth this resolution to generate a positive team effort of approval for Ontario workers without pensions. Our workers need a plan to ensure security and financial stability when they retire. Our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, put it in perspective when he said, "Our elderly are sleepwalking into poverty." Now is the time to work together on this issue that we all share a

common concern for, especially for those who will be seniors in the near future.

I would never propose that this issue could be solved with one resolution or even one private member's bill. This is a complex issue, and we need to begin dialogue. There is a profound need to address the issue, as it affects most Ontarians—and indeed most Canadians. According to Stats Canada in 2006, 68.3% of Ontario's labour force was not covered by a registered pension plan.

I have a chart encompassing some 33 years, and I would give an example of what has transpired over that time on the proportion of the labour force in Ontario covered by a registered pension plan.

In 1975, we hit a peak of 42.1% of our workforce being covered by a pension plan. In 1977, it dropped to 40.6%. In 1991, it dropped dramatically, to 37.3%, going down to 34.4% in 2000 and as low as 31.7% in 2006. This means that almost 70% of our workers do not have a pension plan. In other provinces, it is much lower, such as 26.1% in PEI and 29.2% in British Columbia. In our global economic recession, those who have no pension to speak of face an uncertain future. To see what that number could grow to is cause for concern.

I recently met with the Canadian Institute of Actuaries to discuss the topic. Their group is in full support of the resolution I'm speaking to today. Michael Hale, president of the institute, reinforces this in his letter to my office by saying, "The country's retirement savings system is being threatened, and the lack of a coordinated retirement income strategy should concern every Ontarian, and indeed Canadians right across the country." Mr. Hale goes on to say: "The Canadian Institute of Actuaries shares the Ontario government's concern that pension plans must be sustainable over the long term in order to help provide retirement income to an aging population. We applaud you for bringing forward this motion—the challenges are obvious, and the dialogue is overdue."

On that note, fellow members, I thank you for listening and for participating in this dialogue today.

Going forward, the question is: Where do we begin to develop a strategy? This is intentionally a broad question, because the challenge itself is so complex. It could involve federal and provincial co-operation in every jurisdiction across Canada. Hopefully, the end result will be a unifying piece of federal legislation that addresses the issue; I believe this is indeed a national issue.

Just last week in the Legislature, our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, was asked what our government is doing about Ontarians who don't benefit from any kind of pension—I think it was one of my good colleagues who posed that question.

Premier McGuinty has already asked Prime Minister Harper for a national dialogue on pension adequacies. The Canadian Institute of Actuaries actually agrees with and supports this idea. President Hale, of the institute, says there is an urgent need for a national debate on pensions, facilitated by a national pension reform summit, where ministers responsible for pension legislation could come together.

Our Premier understands the scope of this problem. He said, "This doesn't just affect retirees in Ontario, it affects retirees right across the country ... we need to come together nationally to solve it."

Our Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, shares a concern for Ontarians without pensions. I would like to thank the minister and his staff for meeting with me several times and providing their expertise on this topic.

Canadian retirees and those who are about to retire need the support of all political parties on this issue. Specifically, seniors are a special concern of mine, as our seniors population will double in just over 15 years. This year, it is estimated that over 1.2 million Canadians are between the ages of 60 and 69, the prime retirement ages. Looking forward toward 2031, StatsCan projects that just under two million Canadians will be in the 60 to 69 age range.

In 2007, the Canadian Institute of Actuaries partnered with the University of Waterloo on a study that was submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. The study shows that two thirds of Canadians who are expecting to retire in the year 2030 are not saving at levels required to meet necessary living expenses, and half of that group has no savings at all. The younger generation—those in their 20s and 30s—should be urged to start thinking about this early in their lives.

You know, you get married and have children. They grow up and move on. They get married and have children. One day, you're a grandparent and you're retiring. But the most concerning item is that you're going to be living without a pension. You spent 40 years looking after everyone else but not yourself.

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Ontarians just entering the workforce should know that private pensions can make quite a difference. For example, a 20-year-old putting \$25 a week into an RRSP or pension plan from today until they turn 60, whether on their own or with the potential of some small assistance, whether it be corporate or government, would have a safety net. This could give the individual up to \$400 per month on a 2% return, or up to \$1,450 a month based on a 6% return. This may not go very far in their next 20 years of retirement, however. In other words, this won't provide total financial security, and this is when our seniors will still need help.

Today in Ontario, our provincial government supports seniors more than ever before. The Ontario budget boosts increases in the senior homeowners' property tax grant from \$250 to \$500 annually; we have introduced a new, refundable sales tax credit of up to \$260 for low- and middle-income earners; and we are increasing access to Ontario life income funds from 25% to 50%. The new budget also introduces some \$223 million for an aging-at-home strategy to support seniors who want to stay at home longer. On top of this, the province is increasing funding for long-term care to our community care access centres. And the list goes on.

But our seniors' needs go above and beyond provincial responsibility. From the federal government, seniors

get the OAS, which is, of course, old age security, and CPP, which is the Canada pension plan. These plans provide a modest base, but they are not designed to provide full support. I previously mentioned that although workplace pensions and RRSPs can provide some retirement income, the actuary institute contends that a combination of all these resources is required.

The Premier, the Canadian Institute of Actuaries and other leading experts on the topic of pensions are correct in calling for a national summit on this matter. When it comes to pension legislation, different jurisdictions assign different ministers to the responsibility. To date, few suggestions on a strategy have been made. Even fewer suggestions have been offered as to where and how the money for such a plan would be funded. In a time of global recession, a time when existing workplace pensions are in jeopardy, it is hard to say where that money will come from, but that's the next step.

Our provincial government is currently working with companies like GM and Chrysler to help thousands of Canadian auto workers who want to stay employed in Ontario. There is a \$1.3-billion effort on the table from our Ontario government, the first subnational jurisdiction in North America to bring this forward. However, the pension guarantee fund is not designed to save an entire industry, nor is the issue of pension adequacy limited to Ontario.

In Ontario, we are doing our best to help workers with pension plans. Last week, Ajax-Pickering MP Mark Holland and I met with members of the General Motors Salaried Pension Organization, also known as GenMo, to discuss their concerns. They were most generous with their input and offered great insight into some of the scenarios for the future. The GenMo group has done a lot and continues to do more.

Still, more help is needed. An all-encompassing national solution will provide the economic security our seniors need today, in Ontario and across Canada.

I hope the House will hear more support for this resolution as we proceed today and that Ontario workers who are in need of a pension plan for their retirement are taken care of. Thank you for hearing my thoughts. My colleagues will be speaking to this, as will my good friends who are in the opposition and the third party. I would like to tell you that it's time we all come together to put in place a pension for the almost 70% of our Ontario workplace employees who are not covered today.

I look forward to listening to the rest of the dialogue from all parties in the Legislature and I sincerely appreciate your help on this effort.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is one of those motions that it's hard not to support, but it's certainly not as strong as one would like to see: "That, in the opinion of this House, it is imperative"—it starts out very strong—"imperative." It doesn't say that it's a good idea. It doesn't say that we should go this direction or maybe this is what we should do. He says that it's imperative,

absolutely imperative, "that our provincial and federal governments work in partnership"—well, now we're starting to get a little weak here—"to begin a dialogue...."

Oh, my goodness. Those people looking for a pension, I bet they're happy about that. They can just feel it coming. We're going to have a dialogue with the feds. You know, the First Nations have been having a dialogue with the federal government for about 140 years or so and they haven't got very far, so having dialogue with those fellows down in Ottawa, especially when you're from Ontario, you may not want to expect very much, very quickly.

They're going to address the 70% of the people of Ontario who don't have a pension, and yet this government—I think it was this week, or it could have been late last week—was talking about the 30% of the people in the province who do have pensions, and 45% of those people have their pensions in some jeopardy. This government has said that those pensions—if they're in jeopardy, they're in jeopardy. They're not going to stand behind those pensions. That dialogue may not be very strong from the feds, but it may indeed be even weaker from this provincial government, which seems to be walking away somewhat from the pensions that exist in Ontario.

Again, this looks to start a dialogue. It does not talk about any specific action that might be taken. It's going to be a long, long time, given the wording of this resolution, before any action comes out of this resolution.

It also seems—I don't want to put words in the member's mouth, but it seems that perhaps they're setting up the federal government, to blame them for the pension problems. Personally, I don't believe that the responsibility for pensions necessarily rests with the federal government. Certainly, the Canada pension plan does and other pension plans that are federal in nature, but there's responsibility on the part of the provincial government to ensure that pensions are available and can be taken advantage of by people who work in Ontario.

One of the solutions, of course, to the entire pension plan issue is the good jobs that did and should exist in Ontario. It's interesting how we judge the economy from day to day, week to week and year to year. In the last two months, I have been driving in on Thursday mornings, and I leave my house at about 7 or 7:15 perhaps in the morning. I arrive at Queen's Park no later than 8:30. When I have lots of time, I go downstairs and have one of those really wonderful toasted westerns that they produce in the cafeteria. If you haven't tried one, it's one of the best toasted westerns in the province. It's just delicious. But you know, a year ago, a year and a half ago, I couldn't have done that. It would have been a two-hour trip in the car to come from Milton to downtown Toronto at that time of day, right through the middle of rush hour. And yet today, the roads are empty. In fact, up until a couple of months ago, on Thursdays I would always take the GO train because I would avoid that hour and a half to two-hour drive. So the good jobs in Ontario are disappearing, and they're disappearing at an ever-

increasing rate. Although I do take my hat off to the government because they have solved one problem in Ontario, the problem of gridlock; they're getting those people off the road. They're destroying the jobs in this province, and along with that, they're solving the problem of gridlock. In the times that we live in, I can't see that this resolution is going to change an awful lot about that.

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Also, pension plans, of course, are built by people putting a portion of the money that they earn and having the companies that they earn that money from make contributions towards a pension plan. As you have more money available, you're more able to put that money away and create your own pension plan to some degree—to a greater degree if you have more money and to a lesser degree if you have less money. It becomes a part of disposable income as to how much you can put away.

This government has introduced a new tax which is going to have an effective date of July 1, 2010; that's when the new harmonized sales tax will come into being. There's a \$1,000-per-household grant. It's associated with some income tax cuts. They're proud to say that 93% of people will have an income tax cut. They don't say what the \$1,000 plus the income tax plus the effect of the harmonized sales tax will be, because I believe that the harmonized sales tax will take about \$2.5 billion out of the pockets of Ontarians, making it far less likely that people will put that money into a pension plan.

Let me put that into perspective for you. The largest tax increase in Ontario's history, of course, was in the famous budget of the spring of 2004, where the Liberals introduced a budget that brought in \$4.6 billion of new taxes. The second-largest tax increase in history was when Bob Rae, in the spring of 1993, I believe, brought his budget in at around \$2.3 billion of new taxes. The harmonized sales tax, if you extrapolate what happened in the Maritimes and what happened to their revenue and transfer that into Ontario's economy, is in the ballpark of \$2.5 billion. That will be the second-largest tax increase in Ontario's history, and it's being done at a time when we are in one of the most serious recessions, the most serious downturns, one of the most serious—you could even call it a ceiling in the effect that it is going to have on our province because the people of Ontario are going to be seriously impaired in their ability to finance pension plans with the removal of that additional tax from their discretionary income.

When you look at the reasons why corporations come to a jurisdiction, one of the reasons that they come to a jurisdiction is a competitive tax regimen that would allow them to be competitive on a tax basis. They might also come because of a health care system that they're moving into. If you compare the health care system that we have in Ontario—or had in Ontario—with the health care system that one might find in Alabama, for instance, I think that you would find that the health care system in Ontario would be better than the one in Alabama.

The health care system in Ontario is in somewhat of a decline. The numbers that the government keeps putting

out on how quickly people get service, whether it be an MRI, a hip operation or how quickly they get biopsies done on suspected cancer tumours: All those numbers seem to be regressing, not progressing, and that augurs very seriously for Ontario.

As time goes by, those things are going to have less government money involved because the recession that we're in, the number of cars that aren't on the road, the number of taxpayers who are no longer there and the number of corporations that aren't going to be paying taxes are going to put a serious drain on the revenues of this government. They've predicted an \$18-billion deficit. I think that deficit will go over \$20 billion before the day is finished. You'll be looking that \$20-billion deficit in the face come next spring. I guess we'll get those numbers, the preliminary numbers anyway, in June. But we'll have a good look at what happened in 2008-09 in September of this year.

However, all of those things that are facing Ontarians—particularly those 70% of Ontarians who don't have a pension plan, as the government continues to take discretionary spending money out of the pockets of Ontarians through increased taxes and through increased regulations. The discretionary income that could go to pensions will not be going there.

I would encourage this government to perhaps not have so much dialogue and have a lot more action in job creation and making this province the number one province in Canada again instead of being at the bottom of the deck, as we have been ever since this government has been elected.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to start off, before I get into my notes, by responding. I have the utmost respect for my colleague from the Liberal Party. However, I'm afraid that they have missed the boat, been left at the bus stop. This is something that was dealt with. Five years ago, I was in Ottawa talking to the federal government about pension security and the other acts that cover pensions. I also have brought two bills forward to this House since I got elected: Bill 6, which would have helped people who lost their severance and lost their wages—of course, that fell on deaf ears and died—and Bill 17, which would have dealt with the PBGF. It also never saw the light of day. Now, all of a sudden, this government is concerned about people's pensions. Well, I find that really remarkable. I think this is just a publicity stunt. I think this resolution is simply the same thing as my bill, which was shot down. It passed second reading for show; it got to committee. The Liberals all shot it down in committee. They didn't even read it. To the general public here, don't be fooled by what's going on.

The NDP supports the principle and objective that all workers should be able to look forward to an economically secure and dignified retirement. What we do not accept is that the answer lies in a whole new set of talks between the provinces and the federal government. We

believe that the Ontario government has the primary responsibility—not only that, an absolute obligation—to deal with the pension crisis presently hammering hundreds of thousands of Ontarians. We do not accept the premise underlying this motion.

Let me repeat and let me be very, very clear: The province has the sole responsibility for protecting 85% of all pensions in this province. Its response to the crisis? It introduces legislation that explicitly says it has no legal obligation to support the pension benefits guarantee fund, the backup for Ontario pension plans. We think that is wrong and places the pensions of tens of thousands of retirees at risk. You don't have to talk with Ottawa to fix the PBGF; you just have to take ownership over your responsibilities that are already here.

I want to set out the NDP's broad approach to solving the pension crisis, but before I do, I want to mention that Ontario already has the basis for dealing with many of the problems plaguing the pension system these days. It's called the Arthurs report, which was sanctioned by the government and took over a year.

Now, I won't pretend that the NDP supports all of the Arthurs recommendations. In fact, we disagree with more than a few. But on balance, it is a sound report and it's particularly astute on the matter of the pension benefits guarantee fund. My point: You have a good first shot at a blueprint to fix Ontario's pension system. Why on earth do you need to talk to Ottawa?

I don't want to talk about the NDP's broad approach at this time because in the next few weeks, we'll be coming out with some reforms that will be very positive input for the people of Ontario, as I widely recognize that the Canada pension plan, CPP, and the old age security plan, OAS, form a crucial foundation for decent retirement for Ontario workers. Yet the levels of income replacement they offer do not set as their objective the provision of a retirement income that is sufficient for retirement with dignity. The Canada pension plan is designed to only replace earnings up to a certain maximum level that is significantly less than the earnings based on social security pensions in the US, for example, and many other countries.

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Within that low-level wage replacement target, the plan is only providing a replacement of 25% of earnings and only on a career-average basis. This means that for many workers, the CPP benefit would provide an income far less than one quarter of the average industrial wage. For women and others facing discrimination and structural disadvantages in the labour market, planned benefit levels are distinctly inadequate. Nonetheless, the strength of the public plan lies in the security of what they do promise. They are defined-benefit-type pension plans that are highly valued, in large measure because they are not simply savings and investment schemes.

Yes, as noted, the benefits that they promise, if not significantly supplemented by another pension, leave too many workers at or near the poverty line for their retirement years. Clearly, this is not good enough. At the

same time, only about 35% of today's workers have access to a secure defined pension plan at their workplace. To make matters worse, many employers that continue to offer defined benefit plans have threatened to discontinue them, downgrade their benefits or convert them to insecure defined contribution plans and type arrangements.

In our view, it is in the interest of all working people who want a secure retirement income to support the defined benefit pension plans in this province. At the same time, we are aware that most employers dislike programs that involve additional costs. This seems to hold whether one is talking about bankruptcy law reform, caps on pension administration, supporting DB plans versus DC plans, or, worse yet, non-pension RRSPs. The arguments vary, of course, but they often come down to the allegation that pro-employee reforms and pension security are unrealistic or would result in economic chaos, or are just too expensive, plain and simple.

According to a number of supposed pension experts, the DB plans are unaffordable for employers, yet at the same time, executives typically insist on handsome, gold-plated, individual defined pension plans for themselves. The same could be said for many high-ranking public officials. In our view, if the DB plans are good enough for Canada's employer elite, they are good enough for workers who make employers successful in our province.

More to the point, large DB plans are pensions with predictable and secure retirement benefits, and today constitute the best retirement income top-up to the public pensions people have. They are much better than direct contribution plans or RRSPs, where workers are required to make investment decisions and face the risk of ending up with a mediocre pension if they retire at the wrong time. Moreover, the growing trend of leaving workers fully invested during their retirement years and dependent upon market returns leaves them insecure, which is the opposite of retirement with dignity.

Therefore, it's the NDP's view that the discussion about pension costs should be reframed as, how can we ensure that the DB plans are properly funded, well governed and available to many more workers? High-value CEOs and public officials are offered attractive benefits by employers in order to keep them. After two decades of wage and benefit restraint and the growth of more and more low-paid, non-standard or precarious employment, working people want the same treatment. Decent pensions today ensure worker retention tomorrow, and help maintain seniors above the poverty line.

The gradual slide in coverage is of increasing concern to us. Much of this decline in the coverage of the DB and other pension plans has been due to factors such as massive government restructuring, leading to the shrinkage of public employment—10% in 10 years—restructuring involving the off-loading of programs and services, outright cuts and privatization. In 1992, there were 3.1 million public service employees. By 2002, the number had shrunk to 2.8 million, in spite of population growth and increased demand.

What the pension industry usually omits from its discourse is that, within the general decline of coverage, DB plans have grown as a proportion of all pensions, from 67.7% in 1992 to 76.7% in 2004. The actual number of workers covered by DB plans also grew by close to 11%.

The drop is also due to the dramatic growth of non-standard or precarious work. This includes part-time, casual, contract employment and self-employment. These areas of work have grown while full-time permanent employment has fallen to 63% of the workforce. It is estimated that only 15% of precarious workers enjoy workplace pension coverage.

To emphasize: The essence of the decline in coverage suggests that the real crisis is not so much the gradual decline of DB plans, but rather, the declining coverage of workplace pensions in general. This is particularly the case for new members of the Ontario workforce. Currently, multi-employer or jointly sponsored plans are the vehicles of growth in defined benefit coverage. If the downward trend in coverage is allowed to continue as it has for the last two decades, more and more Ontarian workers will be without a workplace pension, making the pension system their only option.

This is simply not a situation that can be ignored; indeed, it should be promoted—the CPP, OPP, OAS and GIS—guaranteed income supplement—public plans account for half the income of more than two thirds of Canadian seniors. In our view, this reality points to the crucial need for broad-based public discussion on how best to ensure that all working people in Ontario have financial security in retirement, and on the vital role of an Ontario-wide system in ensuring their security. I can assure the members across the floor that you will be hearing a lot more from the New Democrats on this issue in the coming weeks and months.

I want to end by saying that when the government brings forth these resolutions and motions on one hand, and on the other hand they shoot down bills that we bring to them that would help workers, I really have a problem. I don't want to use that word, because I couldn't use it before—it starts with an “H.” I'm just saying that this government has to learn that maybe you can fool some of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all of the time.

This is simply a diversion. This is simply trying to blame it on Ottawa. Your responsibility lies within your province and to the people of this province. Until you stand up and be counted, this is not acceptable.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm going to be cognizant of the time that is available, knowing that there are a number of members who would like the opportunity to speak to this resolution.

I want to start by congratulating the member for bringing the resolution forward. I want to speak briefly about the function of these 50 minutes that are set aside for private members' time. This is an opportunity for us, on a non-partisan basis or, at the very least, a less partisan

basis, to be able to express our views as a Legislature on things of importance within this place. It's important to keep that in context when one is looking at this particular resolution.

I want to congratulate him because he has taken this initiative. Also, I'm looking at the work of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, which took the time to write to him and congratulate him on bringing this resolution forward. These folks are professionals in the area. About 40% of their membership work in the pension field.

Among the notes within the letter they sent to him, I just want to quote a couple of parts: “The country's retirement savings system is being threatened, and the lack of a coordinated retirement income strategy should concern every Ontarian, and indeed Canadians right across the country.”

It's my understanding that 1985 or thereabouts, 1984 or 1985, was the last time that governments from across the country, ministers from across the country with responsibility, and the federal government met to speak about pensions in a formal way. That's 25 years ago.

I think that it's timely, not only because of the economic climate that we find ourselves in now, but timely that we lend our support to a dialogue, the coming together of Ontarians and the federal government, and ideally those from other provinces, to talk about the future of pensions in this country, to protect those who don't have pensions, and at the same time, maybe to speak about those who do have pensions, the nature of those pensions, the structure of those pensions, the portability of those pensions, what it means when we're all in multiple jobs over the course of our lifetimes and how we prepare for retirement.

It's an opportunity that the member is presenting to this Legislature to express our support for a structure, a strategy, an initiative to bring together Ontario and the federal government, and ideally, through that, other provinces.

I want to take just one more quote from the letter that was sent to the minister by the actuaries. In the letter, they say: “There is therefore an urgent need for a national debate on pensions”—they're certainly going beyond just Ontario and the federal government; they're talking about a national debate—“facilitated by a national pension reform summit where the ministers responsible for pension legislation could come together to harmonize their efforts and start a dialogue on the options for pension reform.”

Clearly, those who are in the business, taking responsibility, see a much broader need. I think it's incumbent upon us, and it's an opportunity we have here, to express our support for exactly the type of thing we need to have happen nationally, and for it to begin here in this Legislature on a non-partisan or certainly a less partisan basis than we might otherwise have.

This is not a government motion; this is not a government initiative. This is a private member's initiative, and I think it behooves us to support the member in doing that and begin the dialogue here in the Legislature so our government can see the interests of this complete Legislature and thus carry the ball forward.

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Speaker, thank you for the time; I know the time is limited for all the members who would like to speak to it. I want to thank the member for the opportunity to join him in this debate.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to stand and speak in support and congratulate my colleague, the member for Ajax–Pickering, the honourable Joe Dickson, for introducing a resolution which is very important to all the people across this province. It's very important to talk about pensions these days. As you know, this pension issue is big talk from coast to coast in North America in the midst of the crisis that GM and Chrysler are facing, and maybe Nortel, and many other small factories and companies and the people who used to work for those for many years.

The honourable member for Ajax–Pickering brings a motion to urge and encourage the federal government to start a dialogue with the province of Ontario to make sure all the seniors in this province will be protected. As he mentioned, 70% of people who worked very hard in their lives to build this province have no pension, no support, no protections. It's important for us to stand in our places and support this resolution because it's important to protect our seniors in this province. As you know, when you are young, you don't think about this stuff. Also, many people are not savvy enough to manage their financial issues.

I think this is a national matter, and the province of Ontario has extended a hand to the federal government to put in a national strategy to protect our seniors. We owe them the respect and the responsibility to protect them and make sure that at the end of their lives they live with comfort and protections and don't have to worry about how they can provide shelter and food for themselves and their wives, if they're still alive.

I want to congratulate my colleague. I'm here to stand today and speak in support. I hope all the members of this House will join us to support this resolution, to start the dialogue and start doing something with the federal government in order to protect our seniors.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: It's disappointing, but it's too common around here that whenever a member brings up a very thoughtful resolution, the opposition attacks the member, attacks his idea, heckles the member, because they don't want to do something positive.

The member for Ajax–Pickering has put forward a very considered motion whereby he cares about a problem that affects his constituency and the people of Ontario, and those are our seniors. He is condemned for putting forth an idea that says that a serious paradigm shift has occurred and that it's time to undertake a different course in the way we look at pensions. That's what he's saying.

Those of us who know what people are going through, as he knows in his own riding, know we have an

incredible number of people who have worked hard all their lives. Many of them, in fact, are women who worked piecework, worked for minimum wage, worked for cash, who only have an old age security pension. That's all they have: \$9,000, I think it is, a year. They're trying to make a living on \$9,000 a year.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know the member from Hamilton East doesn't care about that.

So here you have a senior in my riding who told me that she walked to work every day from Eglinton and Dufferin up to Finch. She would walk and not take a streetcar because she had to save that money to ensure that her two daughters, because she was a widow, would have enough money to go to school. She's living now on \$9,000 a year.

These are the kinds of people the member from Ajax–Pickering wants to help whom the member from Hamilton East doesn't care about. All he wants to do is play politics with this. But there are enough people in Ontario, enough people in this Legislature who know that this is an issue that goes beyond levels of government. It goes beyond parties. It goes to the fact that we need to look at how we take care of people once they reach their golden years.

He's saying in a very practical, pragmatic way that it can't just be a private member's bill. It can't just be some grandstanding. It has to be a comprehensive, partnered investigation in collaboration with the federal government, the government of Ontario, the people of Ontario and Canada and the employers of Canada. You can't do this with one-offs.

He's saying we need to do a comprehensive evaluation, and I commend him for being positive. I really am very tired of the negative old NDP. It's about time they woke up.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It is a pleasure to rise in support of the resolution of the member for Ajax–Pickering. He has certainly put a lot of thought into this resolution, I think actually this is the first time, as I rise in this House, that I regret not having more time to speak on this.

The workforce has changed over the last few decades. The workplace has changed. People are moving around from job to job considerably more often than they used to. I remember that in the early 1970s people would often get a job with a company and work with that company until retirement, giving them some sort of stability.

Now the average person born in the later years of the baby boom will have held some 10.8 jobs from the age of 18 to the age of 42, according to the US Department of Labor. So this is a complete change. Obviously, some of those positions may have pensions, some may not. There are issues of portability. So it's extremely important to look at ways that potentially we could supplement the CPP and the old age security provisions to ensure that all our seniors have the kind of income security that they deserve.

Looking at the rate of pensions in the workforce now: again, a dramatic drop since 1973 in Ontario, and particularly for men. I found this very interesting. Actually, males have seen a greater drop in the proportion of the workforce that actually does have a registered pension plan. In 1973, 46.4% of Ontario males did, whereas in 2006, only 31.3%—so a dramatic drop.

It's clear we need to do something about this. Our colleague has suggested an excellent first step. Every journey begins with the first step. This kind of dialogue is extremely timely, and I want to congratulate him and hope that all members of this House support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Dickson, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to thank the members from Oak Ridges–Markham, Eglinton–Lawrence, London–Fanshawe, Pickering–Scarborough East, and of course Halton and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I appreciate the input from all of the members. I particularly appreciate the input from the opposition because, unless you can mould all of the parties together and come up with a concise effort that works best for everyone, then you're not going to proceed very far.

This is a first step. I would certainly assure my friends in the opposition that I would not be setting up the Tories for a hit if this didn't work. If you know me at all, you know that if I can't say something nice, I won't say anything at all.

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I have to tell you that this is not about pensions, security or a number of other issues related to pensions of various sorts; this is simply about the 70% of the people in the workplace in Ontario who do not have a viable pension to give them an existence of normal living when they become a retiree, when they become a senior. I think it's appropriate that we do something about that.

I can only reiterate the words of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries when they say that they share the Ontario government's concern over pensions, that they must be sustainable over the long term and they must be there to assist an aging population. They say to us: "We applaud you for bringing forward this motion—the challenges are obvious and the dialogue is overdue." I sincerely appreciate the dialogue here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will vote on Mr. Dickson's ballot item in about 100 minutes.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY
AND PROTECTION
RIGHTS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES DROITS
DES ENFANTS EN MATIÈRE
DE SÉCURITÉ ET DE PROTECTION

Ms. MacLeod moved second 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, Ms. MacLeod, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to address the public today. I consider this an honour and a privilege to address the assembly with my first-ever private member's bill, the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act, 2008. This bill was introduced 120 years after Ontario's first children's act: the Ontario Children's Protection Act of 1888.

I first introduced the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act to coincide with the national day of the child on November 20, 2008. I did so because, as a society, we've unfortunately moved beyond only protecting Ontario's most vulnerable children. Even today, children in stable, loving homes need greater protection from the dangers on our streets. That's why this bill includes sweeping measures that speak to families across the province, including my own.

I'd like to start by thanking Megan Boyle, who's over to my right. She's my legislative assistant. Her dedication, her research and her nurturing of our stakeholder relations have made this bill possible. I want to thank you, Megan, for the great work that you have done.

I would also like to thank Jad Haffar, my parliamentary assistant, whose communications, advice and, of course, work were extremely valuable during this time.

I'd also like to introduce all members of the Legislature to the following stakeholders in the gallery today. When I say your name, please rise so you can be aptly recognized: Irwin Elman, Ontario's independent child advocate; Les Horne, Ontario's first child advocate; and Agnes Samler, Ontario's interim child advocate when we first opened the office of the independent child advocate. They're seated with Karyn Kennedy, executive director of the organization Boost–Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention.

We also have with us a very intelligent and remarkable young lady—please stand up: Katie Neu. She's with her father, Tom. Please stand up, Tom. Katie has been bullied since the age of five. She has started Canada's first online organization dedicated to anti-bullying: bullyingcanada.ca. She and her father are seated with George Pash, a dedicated father who has been fighting for mandatory reporting in our school boards. I want to thank all of them for attending today.

Others I would like to thank are Ottawa Police Chief Vern White; CTV anchors Max Keeping and Kimothy Walker; and others: Ron Jette, Ron Enson, Senator Landon Pearson, Dr. Tullio Caputo, Ontario Ombudsman André Marin, and of course Charley Coffey and Paul Gillespie. These are Ontario's champions of children. I want to thank each of them. Their support, advice and, quite frankly, their example has been inspiring to me. Each of their fingerprints can be found in various pieces

and measures in this legislation. They've helped shape my views on how we can best protect children in Ontario.

Since being elected to this chamber, I've spent many hours trying to make Queen's Park a more family-friendly place to work. I've also poured many hours into researching, consulting on and speaking about keeping our kids safe by letting them know what their rights and responsibilities are.

Before us today is a bill which first became an idea after committee hearings on Bill 165, the independent child advocate act. Later it was an election promise, and ultimately it's become a labour of love. The bill that is to be debated today is the product of many hours of researching the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, studying documents and press clippings on child abuse, child sexual assaults and other areas of child exploitation. Of course, it's also a result of meeting with children, their parents, their advocates, their teachers and their protectors.

This is a sweeping bill. It will amend six existing pieces of legislation and it includes nine new initiatives, including powerful new measures and tools which will better protect Ontario's children. I consider this legislation an important point in a discussion our province desperately needs. Our children deserve to feel safe and they deserve to know that they are being heard in this chamber.

Today, members from all political parties will have an opportunity to speak to this bill and the very issues of child protection and children's rights and their responsibilities. I believe, as I've always believed on matters of the family or on matters of the child, that this bill and this issue are above partisanship. There are elements, for example, that I know some members in the government will support. In fact, after Bill 130, the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act, was introduced, the Minister of Education put forward her own legislation containing one of the initiatives within my bill: namely, mandatory reporting for schools. There are elements of this legislation that have been supported by the NDP in the past: namely, supporting expanded powers for the Ontario Ombudsman over children's aid societies.

I'm therefore hopeful that today will mark an important and positive step forward together on a discussion about how we can best protect our kids in this Ontario Legislature. I'm hopeful that this bill will go to committee, so that I may work with the other parties and the Ontario public to adopt the best, strongest and most protective bill for children in our province's history. To achieve that, we need to start the discussion on the ideas tabled here today. Members may agree with some aspects and disagree with others, but the importance about today is airing in a thoughtful way our ideas, our concerns and possible solutions.

The time to do this is now. The statistics are staggering and the recent news headlines say it all. An Ontario incidence study estimated 5%, or 130,000, of Ontario's children possibly suffered some form of abuse in 2005. The Chatham-Kent police told the Chatham Daily News

that studies show that reported cases of child abuse only represent 10% of the actual abuse cases in Canada, and a government of Canada report in 2001 suggested that 60% of all reported sexual assaults are against children. As a mother who also happens to be a legislator, I can't help but want to do something about this. Through this bill, I intend to send a message to those who prey on children, who target them in their advertising and who hurt innocent kids: Your time is up. But in order for me and us collectively to be successful, I will need the support of every member in this Legislature today to get this bill into committee and these ideas into action.

Specific measures introduced in the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act will expand Christopher's Law to create a public child abuse registry that can be made public only at the discretion of the minister. It will prohibit and ban advertising that contains images of a sexual nature of children under the age of 16 or that is directed at children of that age. Members will agree that some people today are crossing the line.

The Education Act would be amended to establish November 20 as Children's Day, not only in our schools but also right here in this Ontario Legislature. It will require mandatory reporting of incidents of violence or abuse and it will prohibit the use of corporal punishment. Mr. Speaker, you'll be saddened to know that Ontario is one of three provinces that has not already done this. It will expand the Ontario Ombudsman Act and the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act to ensure that they have greater powers. The provincial advocate will also have an opportunity for more reporting of our obligations and how we're doing with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It will also repeal and replace section 150 of the Provincial Offences Act to ensure that child abusers may be detained to protect the public safety or to maintain confidence in our justice system. A defendant's release may also be conditional on not communicating with the victim. Kids should not have to be the ones who leave their homes if they are being abused. The abuser should.

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Ultimately, this bill will achieve three goals: It will create more education and awareness around children's protection rights, it will increase accountability and transparency in our existing system and it will strengthen child protection tools for parents and the justice system. I'm also pleased that the measures in this bill have garnered support from many quarters, including my own hometown's police chief, who said, "As the Chief of Police for the City of Ottawa, I fully support legislation that will assist us in protecting children." I'd like to also read other comments from stakeholders.

Well-known CTV anchor Max Keeping adds, "Ms. MacLeod should be commended for the work she's done in preparing this legislation; hers is an open invitation to every member of the Ontario Legislature, regardless of party, to vault this province into a leadership role for the country."

Karyn Kennedy, of Boost, says, "I congratulate you on the action you are taking to protect children and to bring

greater awareness to the needs for adults to respond in effective and appropriate ways to concerns of abuse or violence in children's lives."

André Marin, Ontario's Ombudsman, points out, "I was very interested to learn that as part of your proposal to enshrine children's rights into Ontario law, you will be seeking to expand my office's mandate to include oversight of boards of education and children's aid societies. I congratulate you for this initiative."

Irwin Elman, our good friend and Ontario's independent child advocate, adds, "I have long respected your steadfast concern for the children and youth of the province. Your bill is a reflection of that concern."

Charles S. Coffey, a great leader in this province, said, "We have a responsibility to build a secure and healthy society so that our children have the opportunity to grow, learn, work and succeed. This initiative is one more building block for the future of our province and country."

Les Horne, of DCI, said, "We are strongly in favour of legislation to reinforce children's rights in Ontario. This will bring" Ontario "into line with all other jurisdictions across the world that have recognized the need for powerful legislation to protect children from threats to their physical and emotional health."

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies writes, "The Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act is consistent with your strong voice in children's defence.... In particular, OACAS supports your efforts to entrench in law, article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child."

Again, this bill offers real solutions to some of the dangers our children in our province face. During these difficult times, it has never been more important for us to work together, to collaborate. I'm also appealing to all members of the Legislature to set aside political jerseys, political ideologies, to work together for the greater goal of child protection and to support these measures today, so we can get this bill into committee and start acting on some of the pressing issues that we need to best protect the children of Ontario. Thank you.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is an honour to rise and support this initiative, Bill 130. It's quite an ambitious bill. It covers a great deal of territory. I want to commend the member from Nepean-Carleton not only for bringing it in but for giving me lunch as well. Thank you.

I also want to introduce somebody in the gallery, my sister-in-law from Vancouver, Nancy DiNovo, who has come visiting. Welcome, Nancy.

I want to add another couple of really terrifying statistics that were provided to me by the member from Nepean-Carleton. The one that really struck home, the most extensive study of child sexual abuse in Canada, was conducted by the Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youths. Its report indicates that among adult Canadians, 53% of women and 31% of men were sexually abused when they were children. That's a

horrific statistic: One in every two women and one in every three men suffered child sexual abuse. The other one—and this I think is more pertinent to the member's bill because most of child sexual abuse, as we know, happens in the home and happens with someone the child knows. But for those particularly horrific instances where the child is abducted, if a child is abducted for sexual purposes, 44% of those children are killed, murdered within one hour of being abducted, and 91% within 24 hours of being abducted. This is where the member's bill will really help out, with an expanded registry of sexual child abusers. This is when the police need to act, and they need to act extremely quickly.

I know that members here remember the case of Holly Jones. Holly Jones and her parents have been here, on another crusade, actually, and that is for Holly's law, which is a motion on the table as well, which would add to the member's Bill 130. What my motion, Holly's law, calls for is that primary prevention, programs like Boost that Karyn is here representing, be introduced into all elementary schools. What these programs do—which is very different from the old "stranger danger" stuff—is actually enable teachers to talk to students, to be open to students, to listen to students; to boost, in fact, children's self-esteem. We would like to see that. We think that would help.

But in Holly's instance, it wouldn't have helped. In Holly's instance, it was one of those random and terrible acts of her just walking home from school one day, being abducted from the street and ending up horribly tortured and dead. Her mother, a phenomenal woman, has gone on to make it her life's crusade to help the vast majority of children who are sexually abused as youngsters by people that they know by introducing Holly's law.

The other little girl, who was also in my riding and more recently abused, Katelynn Sampson, is a more complicated case. In that case, there was a little girl who was the daughter of a woman who I knew quite well, again from my church work. She used to come to our evening service and our drop-in program. She was admittedly a crack cocaine addict and a sex trade worker. Most of us didn't know she had a daughter. Unfortunately, because she was aware of her own inadequacy as a parent, she went to the court system looking for help, and she gave the care of Katelynn over to people who she thought were trustworthy.

Now, there was so little care put into that foster situation that I'm not hesitant at all to say that there is more care put into adopting a dog from the Toronto Humane Society than was put into transferring the custody of Katelynn Sampson from her biological mother to the foster parents. That's a fact; simply a signature on a piece of paper. Nobody knew the background of these foster parents. Nobody knew whether or not they had a criminal record. They did. And the end of that story, of course, was absolutely horrific. The ending of that story was a murdered child, in a case that hardened police officers said they couldn't believe. They had never seen something so traumatic, so awful, as when they walked into the apartment and found Katelynn Sampson's body.

The question arose immediately: Didn't anybody notice that she was missing from school for three months? Didn't anybody in the community notice that she was gone? Again, if we had had an expanded registry, if we knew the criminal past of these parents—something that I know Bill 133 has tried to address as well—that would have helped. That would have prevented that transfer. If our school system was funded to provide more bodies so that somebody could have gone out and visited that home, that would have helped. If we had a child care system in this province like they have in Quebec, where you can get child care that is affordable for someone like Katelynn's mother, that would have helped, because there would have been another set of adult eyes on this child, who nobody seemed to care about enough and who was lost to us. So again, I commend the member for bringing in this bill.

I am looking at some of the aspects of the bill that I think are very positive. Number one—of course, she's already mentioned this—that it require mandatory reporting of incidents of violence or abuse committed against a student, something that I think Bill 157 does a bit as well. I'd be interested in hearing more about that in committee, which is where this bill needs to go. The prohibition of the use of corporal punishment on students—that's a no-brainer. Who could believe that's still carried out in some schools in Ontario? Frightening.

Expand the Ombudsman Act to include children's aid societies, school boards and hospitals. We in the New Democratic Party are huge fans of André Marin. We think that he does a phenomenal job, and we'd love to expand his jurisdiction, not only to children's aid but also to hospitals. In fact, our own member, France Gélinas from Nickel Belt, brought in a bill to that effect: that hospitals be brought under the jurisdiction of André Marin. We're the only jurisdiction where that's not the case; hence, it's very difficult to get to the bottom of issues like C. difficile. Certainly, again, it expands the Provincial Offences Act.

1520

It also deals with something that I think has not been dealt with adequately in this House, and that is the hideous sexual exploitation of children in advertising. As the member was talking, I was thinking that most models now, most female models, start when they're 14 years old. Most of the women you see in magazines directed to women, where the girls look as though they should be in their 20s, are actually teenagers, many of them under 16, and many of them presented, which is even worse, to look their age: 14 or 13. The sexualization of our girl children is absolutely horrific. I was speaking to a young woman the other day and saying that, having been a feminist all my life, in some ways women have progressed a great deal. We can't deny that. And in other ways, it seems like we've taken a big step backwards. Certainly, in the sexualisation of girl children, that's the case. When young girls, little girls—a child of six in my own family came home from school and said that she was too fat, that she had to lose weight. This is

horrendous. Why did she get that impression? Because of the ridiculous fascination with skinniness, with thinness that has produced this epidemic of anorexia and bulimia among our girl children. Again, this is something we need to do something about. The member has addressed that. I think that's going to be more of an uphill climb, to tell you the truth, because the forces of commercialism are so great that I can see a hue and cry erupting from that.

I talked to the member about a couple of my concerns about the bill in terms of some of the punitive aspects of it. She was very forthcoming, and I think rightly so, that we don't want to punish a 17-year-old, for example, who ends up dating a 14-year-old, not knowing that. We don't want to stigmatize that person for the rest of their lives. So there's a lot here that has to be done at the discretion of ministerial staff, and should be done.

But what's needed is to hear from stakeholders. We need to send this to committee. And if we do, I think what we're going to find is that there's huge support for this bill from across the spectrum of stakeholders, that there's huge support for this bill particularly from parents. I know it's every parent's worst nightmare. I used to have nightmares about this kind of thing. I know most parents here, if they admit the truth, will admit that when their children are little and very much dependent on their care, they do have nightmares about the child walking to school during the day—simple things. This shouldn't be the case. This bill will help to rectify that. In particular, it will help the police to react very quickly in cases of child abduction. That's what we want, and we in the New Democratic Party want that as much as anyone else. I would be shocked to hear from anyone in the province that he doesn't want that.

Certainly we're going to support it. I'm going to support it. We want this to go to committee and be discussed. I would call upon the government because, let's face it, it really is up to the governing McGuinty Liberals whether this bill lives or dies. I would ask all backbenchers—we know that private members' public business is, or should be, a free vote. I would ask them to freely vote with their hearts, not, as the member from Nepean–Carleton said, from their partisan bias base but from their hearts, to support this. I would also ask something further of my friends across the way, and that is that it actually get to committee. We know that sometimes voting for a bill in this place is a way of getting rid of the bill. I would ask that it go to committee, that it be seen by committee and that it be brought back here for second reading, for third reading and, hopefully, for royal assent and proclamation. Wouldn't that be nice?

I'll stop with that. I appeal to all of you to vote for this. It's necessary. We support it. Certainly it's necessary for the safety of our children.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured and privileged to stand up and speak and comment on Bill 130, which is brought by the member from Nepean–Carleton. Of

course this bill offers constructive ideas, and I want to applaud the member even though she didn't invite me for lunch, but I still applaud her.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We'll take a rain cheque.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's important to raise this issue in this House and talk about children and the safety of children in this province. This bill, I read it many different times, offers a broad perspective and has different elements. I know some of these elements have already been implemented, addressed by different ministries of our government from the Attorney General to the Minister of Education to the Minister of Children and Youth Services and many other elements of our government.

I will give an example. The Attorney General addressed safety throughout the court proceedings which he—we passed not a long time ago a law offering some kind of support to deal with this issue and make court cases easier on family and reform the Family Law Act in order to make those easier on children. As you know, when children get caught in the divorce between the father and mother, they pay the price. It's a part of the transformation of our Family Law Act to address part of this element.

Also, we talked about safety in schools. Many children attend school on a daily basis. As you know, some of the students and the children are subject to abuse for many different reasons, maybe for their shape or their colour or their religion or many different aspects. We're undertaking this issue very seriously and then we're addressing it in many different professional manners in order to create safety in the school system in the province of Ontario. In this regard I want to congratulate the Girl Guides, as the member from Parkdale-High Park mentioned, about some people getting bullied or abused due to their shape by introducing a badge to build the confidence of many different youth and children in the province of Ontario. It's very important, because we live in a society that judges us on our shape and our colour and in many different ways. It's important to eliminate all the barriers and obstacles facing our children in this province of Ontario.

I want to say, I have been in this place for the last five years. I've witnessed many different ministers who came through these last two terms. I'll start with Dr. Bountrogianni and Minister Mary Anne Chambers—especially Minister Chambers. She introduced a bill to allow the child advocate to be independent. I want to congratulate the child advocate, the interim, the past and the present child advocates. He witnessed what I am saying today. The people asked for it, and we, as a government, listened to the concerns of many different stakeholders, families and the child advocate in the province of Ontario to create independence for the child advocates in Ontario to report to the government and also report if the government has not taken the issue seriously. I remember him when he appeared before our committee and he criticized a bill which we introduced. Due to his advocacy, I guess we changed a lot of elements to come with

many different parts of the bill to address children's needs in Ontario.

Also, talking about the Ombudsman: I think the Ombudsman in the province of Ontario can launch an investigation any time they want and open an investigation if they see any problem or somebody reports a problem in the province of Ontario.

Also, I want to talk about a very important place in which many children live when they leave their homes. I'm talking about the children's aid society. This issue came last term under Minister Mary Anne Chambers. I believe we tried to address it in a fashion to protect the kids, because we heard of a lot of abuse going on in many different places in the province of Ontario. We thought back then some elements of the children's aid society were not strong enough to protect the children because so many people were being placed in unsafe places and among a family that didn't respect the law or abused those children. That's why I think we strengthened the law in this regard and created a section in our Children's Law Reform Act, in order to protect the children who are placed by the children's aid society within the families or communities to be protected.

We believe strongly it's our obligation as a government to protect the children of this province. We strongly believe the children are the future of this province. By protecting the children I think we're protecting our future. So I would agree with the member from Parkdale-High Park when she talked about how she cannot imagine or see any person in this place going against the children.

1530

But the issue before us is not about the children; it's about how we can create laws that can protect them with a real meaning. As I mentioned through my speech, we're addressing those issues in many different bills and many different laws and many different ministries because we believe strongly it's our obligation to protect the children. I believe not a long time ago we introduced a bill—the bullying in schools act—to make sure nobody would be bullied in the school. I think this one goes again—the PA, I guess, is going to lead it in a committee next week to listen to many stakeholders to see how we can protect the children. We heard a lot from the bullying advocates in the province of Ontario about how their kids, how their children are afraid to go to school because in some schools kids bully them and give them some kind of harassment and do not allow them to live a normal life.

I want to leave some time to my colleague the PA for the Minister of Children and Youth Services to address the rest of the issues. Again, I'm puzzled. I don't know where I stand on this issue, but for sure I'm supporting the children. We are here to support the children of the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to speak on Bill 130, the Children's Safety and Protection Rights Act. Pro-

tecting the children of Ontario is important to everyone. Unfortunately, we wake up to the daily newspapers reporting stories of children being abused, neglected, exploited, trafficked and even, in the worse cases, dying.

We all remember the case of seven-year-old Katelynn Sampson. Her young life came to an abrupt end on August 2, 2008, when she was found dead in the apartment of her caregiver and legal guardian. Katelynn's legal guardian and her boyfriend were charged with second-degree murder. In 2005, a man in Toronto was arrested for beating and burning his six-year-old boy. Toronto police had described this as one of the worst cases of child abuse they had ever seen. The father was charged with aggravated assault. The stepmother and father to seven-year-old Randal Dooley of Toronto were sentenced to 18 and 13 years, respectively, in prison for murdering their son. Randal had extensive internal and external injuries at the time of his death, including a lacerated liver, broken ribs and a tooth in his stomach.

The case of Jeffrey Baldwin was probably one of the most well-known child abuse cases in Ontario. Jeffrey died at the hands of his grandparents after being taken away from his abusive parents. When emergency response teams arrived at the grandparents' home, they found Jeffrey's lifeless and emaciated body on the kitchen table. Jeffrey was five when he starved to death in 2002 while living with his grandparents, convicted child abusers who kept him locked in a urine-soaked, feces-coated dungeon of a room. We know this is a pressing issue.

When the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect was published in 2005, it was suggested that child abuse and neglect shot up to 125% from 1998 to 2003. The report listed five categories of maltreatment of children. They are physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment and exposure to domestic violence. In 2003, over one third of all cases involved some form of neglect.

My colleague from Nepean–Carleton's bill proposes, among many things, to expand Christopher's Law, which is the national registry for sex offenders, to include child abuse offenders. I agree that there needs to be accountability within the system. This is a bill about saving the lives of not only vulnerable children, but all children across Ontario.

My colleague's bill would amend the Education Act to require mandatory reporting of all incidents of violence at the school level. I support the mandatory reporting of incidents against students to the students' parents, the school board and, of course, the police. Some students live in fear of going to school, the supposed safe haven. To some, school is not a safe place; it is a place where they feel terrorized, alone, unwanted and scared. As a parent myself, it must be heartbreaking to send their children off to a place where they feel this way, but it happens in schools all across our province every single day. We, as elected legislators, have the duty to protect children at home and at school.

On June 11, 2008, our party raised in question period a terrible incident where a six-year-old grade 1 student was assaulted in a washroom of a York region Catholic school by two 13-year-old students. Although the principal was made aware of the assault, she did not report it to the parents. The parents only found out because they have a daughter at the same school. When the parents confronted the principal and asked if she would contact the police, the principal said she had no intention of reporting the matter. The parents called the police, who charged the two 13-year-old boys with assault and assault with a weapon.

Another amendment to the Education Act proposed in private member's Bill 130 is naming November 20 of each year Children's Day here in Ontario. By doing this, we are taking that extra step in ensuring that the rights of children are recognized, and that parents, educators and law enforcement officials are working together to make our province a safer place for children to grow and develop.

On numerous occasions, my colleague the MPP from Nepean–Carleton has risen in the House to bring the issues surrounding child abuse and child protection to light. This is a member who truly cares about children and wants to see all children protected. I applaud her for all her hard work and perseverance on this important subject. We have a responsibility to ensure children in Ontario are safe, secure and have a future to look forward to.

Earlier this month, two young children were rescued from a feces-smear, windowless basement room where Hamilton police allege they had been kept locked up by their relatives. Bunk beds in the windowless, pitch-black room were soaked with urine; feces were smeared on the wall. The room was very filthy, and officers found dead rats outside the room. The room had been locked with a latch, and it appeared that the children had been confined inside the room for long periods of time.

Although we know cases like this happen, it is so frustrating to me that children in this province are still being treated this way, with no regard for their safety or their rights. By acknowledging in legislation that children need to be protected within their homes, schools and communities, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that children are safe.

As a legislator and as a parent, I can appreciate the hard work my colleague has put into ensuring the safety and protection of our children through introducing Bill 130, and it is my pleasure to support it.

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I also want to commend the member from Nepean–Carleton for her very constructive ideas. I applaud her efforts on behalf of children. I have met her own daughter, Victoria, and understand why she feels so compelled to do this.

The member and I have discussed the bill, and there are parts of it that I fully support. There are others that leave me in a bit of a conundrum as to how to approach

this, and how I feel, because it covers so many different things. By supporting one part of it, which I would like to do, I also end up supporting things I'm not so comfortable with. It leaves me wondering how I'm going to approach this.

I certainly agree that we need to have a Children's Day. I think we need to have some way of being reminded of the importance of children in our lives, and of the kinds of things that can happen to our children and why we need to protect them.

I certainly agree with the advertising part. I think that in today's world we've become a bit desensitized in a way. The member and I had a conversation about the old Coppertone ads. Remember the Coppertone ads with the little girl and the dog is tugging at her diaper? We thought that was cute, in its day. But by today's standards, I think we would have a lot more difficulty accepting something like that, simply because we now know that not everybody has the same eyes when they look at that. As I say, I think we have become a bit desensitized in that respect.

When I see her proposal for the sex offender registry—the member would like to make the registry available to the public—I am taken back to my own role on the public accounts committee. I remember having a discussion about the registry in public accounts. We know from the Auditor General that we actually have probably one of the most effective sex offender registries in the country. Unfortunately, it doesn't go throughout the country. There isn't a national system that allows these offenders to move from one jurisdiction to the other and be traced. So they can move out of the area and back in.

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I'm not quite sure, if we were to make the list public, whether we would not force some of these people underground. I wonder about how we would approach that, and how we would protect our children, if we give these offenders an opportunity to slip out of the province and then back in but do it without coming back onto the registry. That is a particular concern to me.

I also am looking at the Education Act. The member from Parkdale–High Park also talked about Bill 157 and how this particular bill is going into standing committee next week. It addresses the whole issue of keeping our children safe at school.

The member talks in here about requiring principals, teachers and all other board employees to report incidents, which I agree with. But I also have to ask, is there a possibility, is there an opportunity there, for no one to take responsibility, where it's assumed that somebody else is going to do it? The buck gets passed around, and you don't have one person who is ultimately responsible, who ultimately has to take that on and see to it that the police and parents are informed, that the proper actions are taken. If you make it everybody's responsibility, it becomes a little more difficult to make sure that the job gets done. That is just one of the things that, as I look at the bill, I have to wonder about.

As I say, she leaves me in a conundrum here, in terms of how I want to approach this, because I certainly do understand her need to protect the children, and from my own experience, I certainly do know how easily children are hurt and how bullying occurs. We need to do everything we can to protect our children.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm very pleased to join in the debate today on Bill 130. First of all, I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member for Nepean–Carleton. She has consistently demonstrated her personal commitment to the protection of children at risk. This bill is another example of her dedication to keeping every child in Ontario safe.

In the last 40 years, our society has changed almost beyond recognition. Before women entered the workforce in great numbers, children grew up spending most of their time at home or in the local neighbourhood. Back then, almost every house had someone at home all day. Neighbours were far more likely to know each other and to look out for each other's children. We had no Internet for stalkers to use. Child abuse certainly existed, but the ability of families and communities to protect their children was much greater. Kids could go out to play after dinner, and their parents would know where they were and that they'd be home when the lights went on. This world is gone, and it will not be coming back.

One of the greatest risks today is the question of isolation. Families move much more frequently. They split up more. They are blended; they are unblended. Children can easily become isolated from friends and family members—far too easily. We know from a great deal of research the impact and effects that this kind of community and familial instability has on children's mental health. It's certainly one of the things that contributes to the question of children taking on the role of being a bully or becoming victims.

We need to decrease this isolation. What we need to do today is ensure that every family, community, police force and social agency has the tools and resources it needs to keep children safe.

I just want to comment on the fact that across the province, we have many organizations providing amazing, successful programs to bring children together and help support families: the F&ST program, Families and Schools Together, which operates with school boards across the province; the *mindyourmind.ca* program, which helps vulnerable teens particularly; and the SNAP program, Stop Now and Plan, developed by the Child Development Institute. We have these kinds of programs in our province, and I think my colleague, the member for Nepean–Carleton, has provided an excellent template for government to take action.

Step 1 is education: Families, friends, teachers and caregivers need to know the signs of child abuse, whether physical, sexual or emotional. We need to regain the sense of community we once had, in which everyone kept an eye out for the kids in their neighbourhood.

Step 2 is giving those who protect children the right tools to do their job. Social agencies that fight abuse need our support. In my case, YRAP, the York Region Abuse Program, does tremendous work helping victims of sexual abuse. But children's aid societies, as well as these others, need more tools, more staff and more funding. Our courts need to work better as well. Our police need more support from government.

Sex offenders need to be tracked by police. Cyber-stalking is a new crime, and law enforcement must keep ahead of child abusers. Governments at all levels must make sure that our police have the resources and technology to keep ahead of those who would use the Internet as a means to abuse.

Step 3 is accountability and transparency. We need to ensure that parents, legislators, the justice system and others are able to see whether or not measures to protect our children are working. This is what this bill is all about. It provides a sensible solution to help protect Ontario's children at risk.

I commend my colleague for her bill, and I urge the government to work with her and our caucus to build a child protection system that is the envy of the world. I urge all members here to support the bill in principle—that's what today's vote is about—so that we may go forward and allow public hearings where specific issues can be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. MacLeod, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: May I once again thank the stakeholders in the gallery today for their input, their friendship and the inspiration they provided me with for the piece of legislation we have here today. Ladies and gentlemen, and friends at home, these are the people who work tirelessly on our children's behalf to make sure they are protected and that they have a voice, especially here at the Ontario Legislature. Thank you very, very much.

I'd also like to thank my colleagues and friends in this Legislature. My colleague from Parkdale–High Park has been a friend since she arrived here; I appreciate her kind words. To my colleague from London–Fanshawe, thank you very much for speaking to the bill. To my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon, you have become a great advocate for children in your own right, and particularly for the disabled, and I appreciate your kind words. To my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, thank you very much.

I urge you to follow the words of my colleague from York–Simcoe and address this bill in committee and support it in principle. These are ideas that are important and that we need to talk about and discuss. We need to have Les Horne, Agnes Samler, Irwin Elman and so many others from across the province come to us to tell us how we can do our job right. I want to thank Julia Munro from York–Simcoe, the PC critic for children and youth, who has been a strong ally and friend since I arrived here at Queen's Park.

In the few short seconds left, I want to thank all the members in the assembly. We all have the same goal,

obviously, and that's to protect children. That doesn't mean my ideas are the best, or the government's ideas are the best. It means we have to sometimes augment one another's ideas and move forward. I'm appealing to all of you in this chamber today to support this bill in principle and put it into committee, so that we can have greater discussions on what we can do best to protect Ontario's children. Thank you all very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): For those visiting us today in the galleries and for those watching at home, this ballot item standing in the name of Ms. McLeod will be voted on in about 50 minutes.

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AFGHAN FAMILY LAW

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario join the Canadian government in expressing concerns with the proposed laws in Afghanistan that would severely restrict the rights of Shiite Muslim women hereon and into the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Van Bommel moves private member's notice of motion number 86. Pursuant to standing order 98, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to put this motion forward today on what I feel is a very important issue.

A few weeks ago, many Canadians and people around the world were shocked to hear about the law that had been proposed in Afghanistan. The Shiite Personal Status Law quickly became known as the Afghanistan family law or the Afghanistan rape law. Many of you will have followed this story in the news and will know about the controversy that surrounds the law. Any piece of legislation that is dubbed the "rape law" will certainly make everyone's ears perk up, and this is a good thing: People should be outraged.

Before I go on, I should say first that the law has never really officially been communicated to the public. Anything that we know about it comes from legislators in Afghanistan who oppose the law and who knew they had to speak out publicly against it. But there are a few key points that have been brought to the attention of the international community, and these are extremely contentious.

Arguably, the most controversial item in the law is that it will force a Shiite Muslim woman to have intercourse with her husbands every fourth night, if he wishes. There are very few exceptions to this, only things such as if they are travelling or if the woman is ill. Essentially, though, this clause says that a woman can't say no to sex, and that is rape by any standard. The law also gives husbands total legal custody over their children. It prevents women from inheriting property when their husbands die and it requires women to wear makeup if that is what their husbands demand.

You can well imagine there are a number of concerns that have arisen out of these proposed laws. First,

because Shiite Muslims make up a small portion of the Afghan population—only about 10%—it means this law targets a minority group in the country and removes rights and freedoms that are currently in place. Proponents of the law have claimed that these things are already practised in Shiite Muslim families and this law simply puts requirements into writing. They argue that nothing will dramatically change. But the true Islamic faith recognizes women's rights to own property and insists on both parties' consent for marriage and sexual relations. This new Afghan family law is about control and attitudes, not strict religious observance of Islamic law.

One of my concerns is that when a practice is codified, when it is written on the books and enforced, the likelihood of reversal of the law is slim. To force all Shiite women, a minority in the country, to submit to a law that limits their rights is not democratic. What is democratic about it? We should be concerned about staying silent when a country passes laws that restrict the fundamental freedoms of individuals.

Secondly, we need to be concerned about laws that are a step backwards in terms of women's rights in Afghanistan. Under the Taliban, restrictive laws like this one were the norm. Women were treated as property, they were subject to the wishes of their fathers, their brothers and their husbands. Under the new government, it was expected that women would be allowed more mobility, better access to education and employment, and that there would be a shift towards equality. The country had committed itself to progress, but if this law is implemented, not only will it stall women's advance, it will signal a reversal for all vulnerable populations in Afghanistan. This law is about control of women and the attitudes of a faction that needs to change. While attitudes cannot be legislated, it is wrong to entrench even further such a mindset by catering to that same faction. This way of thinking will be forced on the daughters of these women. Another generation will be denied education and freedom.

Third, it is unnerving to think that a so-said democratic government would secretly push through legislation that would have such a detrimental impact on the freedom of its citizens. As I mentioned, the only reason that we know what we know about this legislation is because of legislators in the Afghan Parliament who spoke out against it. The contentious pieces of the legislation that I have mentioned were buried and hidden within a much larger piece of legislation. Some of these legislators didn't even recall debating the bill in the House and were extremely surprised to find that it actually existed in the first place.

President Hamid Karzai did sign the bill. He has taken a great deal of criticism for this, for signing it in the first place, but he claims that aides that he relies on to review legislation missed the hidden pieces within the legislation. Karzai has promised a review of the law and has stated that he intends to make changes to it before the upcoming August election. This may be good news, but

the mere fact that the law was initially signed raises concerns about the Afghan political machine. How can this have happened, we wonder? For months prior to the introduction of this legislation, family law experts were working with the government to help transform outdated laws and to level the standards and expectations of men and women in the country. These people, these experts who so tirelessly worked on this, were completely surprised to learn of the legislation, as they too were never consulted.

On the other hand, the law had been backed by conservative Muslims. One Muslim cleric has gone public to try and explain the law. He fully supports it and insists that it has been misinterpreted by the wider public and international community. Women, he says, are allowed to refuse to have sex with their husbands, but if she does refuse, he would have the choice of giving her food or not giving her food. I ask you, should a woman have to choose between unwilling submission or being unable to eat? The same cleric says that women are still allowed to work and so theoretically they should be able to support themselves if their husbands choose not to feed them. But in the same vein, part of the legislation makes it impossible for the women to leave their homes freely to receive medical care, go to school or go to work. If they aren't allowed to leave their homes to work, then how will they buy food? There's no logic in the way that this argument is supposed to be supported.

When this law was brought to the attention of the international community, Canadians looked to the federal government. They waited to see what the federal government would say about this law and what they would do. Members of the federal parties expressed their concern about this law. But Canadians looked to their federal government for more. People want to know that when things are difficult, we will stand up for what is right and just. They look to their provincial government as well. They look to us for principled leadership. They look to us to represent their values. How federal and provincial governments respond to issues such as this is a clear indication of how we will govern ourselves at home. Our reputations are at stake here.

Ontario is a multicultural province, and people from all over the world have come to call Ontario home. Many are from places where they faced persecution, sexism and racism. They have started a new life here. They are men and women in our province from the country of Afghanistan. These people look to our federal government and to us, the provincial government of Ontario, with an expectation: an expectation that we will speak up for the rights of people, an expectation that we will seek opportunity to speak out against things that are wrong and stand up for values we fundamentally believe need to be recognized.

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There is a further complication in this matter and another reason why Canadians and Ontarians are looking to their governments with expectation: Canada has committed to the Afghan mission with the direct intent of

helping to establish a secure and stable government there. If we have soldiers serving in Afghanistan with the intention of upholding human rights, then we have to respond to things like this law that blatantly go against those purposes. We have to recognize that all of the work that is being done there would be in vain if this legislation were passed, a law that is detrimental to human rights and the democratic process. Women and men from Ontario have served there. We need to acknowledge their contribution by encouraging the Afghan government to do the right thing and follow through on their international commitments to protect the rights of humans and the rights of women.

I do have to point out that although there are many people in our province and our country and in countries all over the world who are speaking out against this legislation, there are people within Afghanistan who are also concerned. Shortly after the legislation was brought to the public's attention, a group of about 300 women and a few men gathered in front of a mosque in Kabul to publicly protest the law. They were met with anti-protestors throwing stones and yelling obscenities. One of the organizers of the protest told the media that the women were demonstrating because, like the international community, they were outraged at the law and the limits that it would put on their freedoms. Many of these women took a big risk. Many put their physical safety in danger to be at the protest, and many other women were prevented from attending, but their presence and determination to bring justice to their homeland is extremely courageous, and we should do everything we can to support these brave women.

A great deal of criticism from the international community comes from the feeling that the law violates the Afghan compact, which was signed in 2006 by Afghanistan and members of the international community, including Canada. The Afghan compact is a set of guidelines and principles that are supposed to be incorporated into the reformation of Afghanistan's government system. As a young democracy, it is inevitable that there will be growing pains, but that requires the rest of the world to watch closely and insist that they not divert from the goal of equality for all citizens.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Today I rise to speak on behalf of the motion put forward by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex to express solidarity with and support for the Shiite women of Afghanistan.

I'd first like to take the opportunity to thank a volunteer in my office, Oriana Kobelak. She has just completed her third year at the University of Toronto studying political science. She worked very hard to help me put together my speaking notes for today, and I want to recognize her for her hard work.

As the Progressive Conservative interim critic for women's issues, I am pleased that we are taking a stand against this proposed legislation, which is set to severely restrict the rights of Afghan women. There may be those

who would wonder or question why, at a provincial level, we are debating a motion about an Afghan law. Human rights are important to all levels of government and are important to all people. We are doing the right thing here today by encouraging rights for Shiite women. We are doing the right thing by joining our federal colleagues to ensure that the rights of Shiite women are not being violated.

There are many concerns with what is informally known as the Afghan family law or rape law. The proposed legislation stipulates that Shiite Muslim women are not allowed to refuse sex with their husbands or to leave their homes without a male escort. A briefing document prepared by the United Nations Development Fund for Women also warns that the law grants custody of children to fathers and grandfathers only. This law, which was signed by President Hamid Karzai in March, only applies to less than 20% of the country's population, the Shiites; however, its potential passage is reminiscent of the Taliban-style oppression of women.

Although the law has not been published and the full text has not been made public, some Afghan legislators have spoken out publicly against it. Most of them are concerned that the new law had not been debated. Only due to public, national and international outcry did President Karzai agree to send the law for review.

An Afghan MP who supported the new law has said, "Men and women have equal rights under Islam but there are differences in the way men and women are created. Men are stronger and women are a little bit weaker; even in the west you do not see women working as fire-fighters." How untrue.

This MP also said that the law gave a woman the right to refuse sexual intercourse with her husband if she was unwell or had another reasonable "excuse." He said that a woman would not be obliged to remain in her house if an emergency forced her to leave without permission. I can only imagine what would qualify as an emergency.

On April 15, about 300 Shiite women attempted to take a stand and fight for their rights and freedoms in protest of the oppressive law in Kabul. However, in response to this performance of solidarity, these vulnerable women were stoned by 1,000 people who opposed the protest, and a female Afghan politician was recently assassinated.

This is a step back for Afghanistan, a step back for democracy and a step back for human rights. It is absolutely obligatory that the international community as a whole try to stop the passage of this oppressive legislation.

As elected representatives, we must accept that we have a responsibility to support women and girls who will be affected by this law. We have the opportunity to show our support for a democratic Afghanistan, promoting basic human rights.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and legislators across the country are deeply concerned by this new legislation. He has said, "Making progress on human rights for women is a significant component of the international engagement in Afghanistan.... It's a significant change we want to see from the bad old days of the Taliban."

Harper has even gone so far as to tell President Karzai that allied support for the mission could shrivel if he does not change this law that would make it legal for men to be able to rape their wives.

The Honourable Peter Kent, the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for Canada, has said that Prime Minister Harper has called directly and firmly on the Afghan government to honour its human rights treaty obligations under international law, including respect for the equality of women before the law.

The Honourable Peter MacKay, the Minister of National Defence and the Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, has said: "It is ... the Conservative government's plan to continue to put pressure on the government of Afghanistan and on President Karzai. It is absolutely necessary that the international community work together and send that clear message.... We continue to send this message to the government of Afghanistan on a daily basis."

The Honourable Stockwell Day, in his role as Minister of International Trade and chair of the cabinet committee on Afghanistan, called on the Afghan government to "live up to its responsibility" for human rights, including the "rights of women."

Canada has invested a great deal to help rebuild Afghanistan. Thanks to Canadian assistance, more girls than ever before have access to schooling, and women and girls are now recognized as full persons under Afghan law. The work that Canada has done in Afghanistan is a source of pride for all Canadians.

The Progressive Conservative Party supports Canada's position, which discourages any law that would increase inequity between men and women. This position is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Canada is a signatory. It mirrors Canadian values that highlight our current efforts to work with other countries, including the Afghan government, to secure peace, human rights and development.

Sometimes we take our rights for granted. This regressive law is a reality check and reminds us that not all women have the freedom we enjoy. It is important that we continue to speak out about inequities wherever they occur.

Many fear that the passage of this law marks the return of the Taliban-style rule. The Taliban, who ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, required women to wear all-covering burkas, and banned them from leaving their homes unless accompanied by a male relative.

Many in the Afghan Parliament who oppose the law said it had not passed through the normal channels, which would have included discussion of all the articles, because lawmakers were advised to let the Shiite community determine the details of their own laws.

Obviously, our opposition to this new law is working. President Karzai agreed just this past Monday to change the law that legalizes rape within marriage to remove concerns that it violates human rights. President Karzai has been quoted as saying, "I assure you that the laws of Afghanistan will be in complete harmony with the con-

stitution of Afghanistan and the human rights that we have adhered to in our constitution and the principles of international treaties." I hope that is the case. President Karzai has since pledged to complete the law review process before his term ends later this month.

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I hope that we stand together today on this non-partisan issue to join the government of Canada in expressing concerns for this proposed law. We have a responsibility to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. We have a responsibility to speak for the women who fear they will be stoned and killed if they publicly oppose this law. We have a responsibility to do the right thing for all of our citizens. It is the human thing to do. It is an important issue for all parties, and even though the issue may seem far removed from us here in Ontario, it is important that as legislators and as women we show our solidarity and support for women across the world.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to stand and support your bill. I'd like to dedicate my words in honour of the woman who was killed. Human rights campaigner and local councillor Sitara Achakzai was shot dead in Kandahar after receiving death threats, a prominent women's rights activist in Afghanistan, and really her spirit is here as we discuss this issue.

It is true: What can we do? We can add our voice to the growing international consensus around this. I would certainly encourage those at home and those here to go to their Facebook sites, because there is a very large Facebook community around this very issue, and it's growing. It's not just here in Ontario but it's around the world, and it's numbered in the hundreds of thousands right now. That's a wonderful way of adding pressure to the words that we're listening to here.

You've heard about the law pretty extensively, how horrendous it is. I want to caution members, though, that this is not a huge departure in the lives of Afghani women, unfortunately. A couple of years ago there was an Afghani woman who was a member of the government there who came to speak to our own national convention and talked about just this very sort of thing in actuality. The fact that it's been codified is what's so shocking, but the reality of Afghani women's lives is pretty shocking in and of itself. And not only Afghani women's lives, but it's interesting that we're not talking about Saudi Arabian women's lives, another ally that is horrendous as well. They're not allowed to drive; they can be stoned etc. This is a problem, and it's really a problem of patriarchy and patriarchal fundamentalism around the world, and we're not immune to it. We're not immune to it in North America either. We're certainly not immune to it in Ontario, where women make 71 cents on the dollar, and we're not immune to it where equity is simply something we look forward to or where only about a quarter, at best, of our Legislatures are staffed with women. We're not immune to sexism and patriarchy anywhere, so I want to put that out there because among

my friends who are Islamic—this is not only a feature of Islamic countries. Sexism and patriarchy is a feature everywhere and it's certainly a feature of Christian fundamentalism in the States and everywhere, and Jewish fundamentalism as well.

Having said that, of course we in the New Democratic Party support this resolution. We think that the government should speak out more loudly about these women's rights. It begs another question too, and I can't help but say it: Why are we there? I don't know if anybody has seen the film—it's actually a pretty good one—called *Where in the World Is Osama bin Laden?* In that film he basically goes on a worldwide hunt to try to find Osama bin Laden. After all, the American government and ours have spent billions and billions of dollars that could have gone to health care, women's rights, education, everything that we hold dear, but instead have gone on this, some would say, outrageous military imperialist adventure to try to find one man or one little group of people. We know now that Osama bin Laden is probably not in Afghanistan, if he ever was. He's probably in Pakistan, and that's probably where most of al Qaeda are. So it really begs the question: Why are we still there?

I also want to raise another name in the House today: Jeremy Hinzman. Jeremy Hinzman is a phenomenal war resister who was in Iraq, served his country and left that war because he thought it was an unjust war; who came to Canada seeking sanctuary, as so many have before, certainly from another unjust war. I can remember Vietnam; we opened our doors to those who resisted what they saw as injustice and a war that should not be fought. Jeremy came here. He's an incredible person. I remember interviewing him on my radio show years ago. He is a Buddhist; he's married with two little children. All he wanted was to speak about what he felt was an unjust war, a war that he had personal experience of, and that's the war in Iraq. At that point, it was a very unpopular view. Now it seems to be the view of the American government, but at that point he was certainly in the minority.

Now Jeremy is going to be sent back to the United States. So if there's a message that we want to get through to the Canadian government here, it's that these resisters of the Iraq war should be allowed to stay. Canada was seen as a peacemaker—or should be—before the Afghani adventure; a peacemaker in the world. We want to reinforce that stature. We want this to be a place where people can flee all sorts of injustice—sexual injustice, military injustice etc. So again, if we're speaking to or at the federal government here, that's a plea I would put forth: Let Jeremy stay and let those other war resisters stay. They're contributing members of society, they're incredible people and they stand up for what they believe in. We have been a haven for such people and we've been a haven for such women, Afghani women and other women who have fled their countries to Canada, to safety, to a country that has a great deal more civil rights than they experienced back home. So we should work actively on that front in terms of our position and our face in the international community.

You know, it's funny. I remember the taunts for our leader Jack Layton about “Taliban Jack,” and it's interesting that now, all of a sudden, even the military authorities in our own government—including Mr. Harper himself—are saying that this is basically an unwinnable war. The soldiers themselves say, “We go out, we fight, we regain a bit of turf. It gets taken away from us. We go out, we fight and we take it again.”

This is the same kind of story we used to hear back in Vietnam, and it's a story with tragic consequences. We've stood many times in this Legislature for moments of silence for those we've lost; young men and young women who have done their best, who have given everything to their country—their lives. We've stood here, and so we have to ask, what are they dying for? What are they fighting for? What is going on when Karzai's government can pass a law like this? Are we fighting for that? Are we dying for that? Is that what Canada is about? Is that what we want to be about?

I know that we keep extending the deadline. I know that in 2011, the troops are supposedly coming home. Let's hope for this new resurgence in the United States of a diplomatic solution, a solution where we actually send in diplomats, people who speak rather than shoot, who will work out through The Hague some kind of reasonable, negotiated truce so that we can get on with our lives here and they can get on with their lives there. It might not be the North American ideal they get along with there. It might not be, but it will be an Afghani one.

Afghanistan has been the quagmire for imperialist powers for a century now, at least. We saw what happened to Russia when they went. The Taliban keep coming back. The military solution is not working, and now we see that even the government that we've been propping up isn't so far away from the Taliban anyway.

The question, then, is a very broad one and a very big one. It's one certainly beyond the scope of this Legislature, but suffice to say, as my colleagues have, what we can support, what we all can stand together on today is the issue of women's rights—here, there, everywhere. Women should be seen as equal, and that equality should be part of the structure of our societies, wherever we happen to be, whether in Ontario or in Kandahar or in Riyadh—everywhere.

1620

I certainly will support this; it can't hurt. It can't hurt adding our voice to the hundreds of thousands. Again, I would recommend that everybody watching go on that Facebook site, sign on and add their name. Let's get a million voices from around this planet speaking out as one for Afghani women, who, no doubt, are at risk for their lives—and not only there but in many, many places around the world, including right here. You heard the statistic: One in two girl children is sexually abused. Wherever women are forced into sexual situations they don't want to be in, wherever women are treated unequally, New Democrats will absolutely be there, and this is no exception.

Congratulations to the member. Certainly I'm voting for it. Of course, we'd like to see this extend beyond the

limits of this motion. We'd like to see the federal government do the right thing and reposition Canada to what we once were seen as being; that is, peacemaker to the world.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to speak on this very important motion being debated here today, and I want to congratulate the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for bringing this very important issue to this Legislature.

This, in my humble opinion, is not just an issue of women's rights; this is more fundamental than that. This is an issue about human rights—period. At the outset, I want to dedicate my comments to the 118 Canadian soldiers who have perished in Afghanistan to ensure that human rights are restored for both men and women in Afghanistan, and particularly the three Canadian women soldiers: Captain Nichola Goddard, Trooper Karine Blais and, most recently, Major Michelle Mendes. These are three very strong Canadian women who have lost their lives in Afghanistan to ensure that all men and women in Afghanistan have their fundamental rights—their human rights—in place.

As many know, I was born in Pakistan, where I was raised by a very strong woman, my mother, who, being a lawyer all her life, practised law by helping women. To this day, she is very proud that she never raised a single penny from her law practice; she always worked pro bono. One of the things she did by getting together with other professional women in Pakistan was to create a group called Helpers. Essentially, what these women did, in their respective professions, was help others who needed help. One of the things my mother was involved in was helping women who were abused by their husbands or their families, who were trying to get out of abusive relationships or marriages, and whose rights were denied.

I look back on the journey my family took to come to Canada, bringing my sister and me, so that we could be raised as equal citizens and so that my sister had all the rights she needed as an equal person. It is extremely important that we raise our voices as Canadians, as Ontarians and as people of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that ensures our equal rights, to make sure that women in Afghanistan have the same equal rights.

There's no doubt that that cannot be achieved overnight, but we have to do our part in any way possible to make sure that those rights are not taken away, that those women are protected. As a democratic society, and as a society where we value the equality of men and women in our Constitution and in our daily lives, we need to send the message loud and clear that as Canadians and as Ontarians, regardless of our religion, our background or our gender, we fundamentally believe in the rights of men and women.

I urge every member of this Legislature to support this motion. I once again congratulate the member from

Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for bringing this issue forward.

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

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I too would like to add my voice to those in the Legislature who have spoken on this issue today. I would join with the member from Ottawa Centre in his defining this matter as a human rights issue as well as a women's right issue.

Canada has a long history of aid and development in Afghanistan. In fact, under the former government, the bilateral aid program to Afghanistan was the largest in the history of Canada's development program. It's not easy to determine what the status of the development portion of that aid is today. We rarely hear from CIDA ministers in that regard. I am heartened by the member of the official opposition who advises that the Prime Minister is putting serious pressure on President Karzai, but I'm not confident that that necessarily is the case.

There was a very good article in one of the Toronto papers, and they went to a number of prominent women for their reactions to the passing of this law—one of whom is someone for whom I have the highest regard, and that's Margaret MacMillan, who is the author of *Paris 1919*. If I can quote her, I think she nails it in saying: "This is a regime that depends very heavily on western backing and the Canadian government, and others should bloody well"—if I'm allowed to use that word in House—"use their influence over President Karzai. They have been timid and they don't want to appear like they are telling him what to do, but I think they jolly well should."

I've had the pleasure of meeting President Karzai on a number of occasions and initially had great regard and great hope for the leadership that this man was going to bring to Afghanistan. But from my perspective, I have seen an ongoing regression, a lack of courage, a failure to stand firm when, regardless of the complexities of political system of Afghanistan, firmness was required. I don't, quite honestly, believe that President Karzai will do as he said. I think the timelines, as my honourable colleague has mentioned, that he has left between now and the time when he will see the end of his mandate, are short. I think he could accomplish it. I think only the leadership of President Karzai is going to stop that bill.

What's needed, as has been mentioned by Ms. MacMillan and by others, is that tremendous pressure should be exerted on him to do so by this government, because what we are expending in Afghanistan in terms of the lives of Canadian soldiers, if that isn't sufficient to tell this president, "You will change that law. You will join us in trying to move the society in Afghanistan toward an open, fair society"—if that price that we are paying is not sufficient, then I can't imagine what is.

We have many aspects of what we're trying to do in development, but I would say that we have had many, many successful programs on the issue of governance, attempting to build the parliamentary and judicial

systems in that country, encouraging and teaching and enabling women as parliamentarians to be a part of the future and part of the opening up and the movement towards equality in that country. But this kind of a setback is massive, and his failure to make sure that this does not move forward is integral to what all of the donor countries are doing in Afghanistan. So I'm delighted to join my colleagues in adding our voices, being firm in our voices and telling President Karzai, "You have no choice."

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am quite pleased to speak to this motion put forward by my honourable colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Certainly addressing an issue such as this has political, historical and cultural dimensions.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with a group of Afghani women who live in my riding of York South–Weston, and it's their perspective that I bring to this debate today. First and foremost, these women pointed out that this law is contrary to the teachings of their religion because the Quran places women and men on equal status. Nowhere in the Quran, they said, will you find passages that suggest treating women in the manner that this law proposes. They also believe that this law was brought forward by religious conservatives, who do not represent the majority of Afghans, with the sole intention of scoring political points at the expense of fundamental rights.

1630

The bill, as we heard earlier, proposes to forbid women to go out alone unless they have written permission from their husband and in case of emergency. All the women that I met with believe that this bill will restrict everyday life for women in Afghanistan, reinforcing that sense of insecurity that the country is living in, and it will severely restrict their mobility. They fear that young girls will not be able to go to school. What happens if a mother has to take her child, who has fallen suddenly ill, to the doctor? In the opinion of these women, the majority of men and certainly of women of Afghanistan do not agree with the principle of the new law.

However, they fear that both genders will need to abide at least with the mobility rule, and that's because even though women might have their husband's approval to go out on their own, they could still be subject to attacks, verbal or physical, because of societal expectations. By legislating the bill into law, even the men who do not necessarily agree with this treatment of women will feel obliged to obey it, fearing for their wives' safety.

The restrictive and discriminatory nature of this bill, if passed, would place Afghanistan on a dangerous path which no one in Canada, the international community and, most noteworthy, the overwhelming majority of Afghans want to see. We should not lose sight of the implications that this law will have on the rights of women.

Afghanistan finds itself in a delicate economic and security situation. We all also recognize the tremendous challenges that the Afghan people have had to overcome in recent years, having to rebuild their country after decades of war and destruction. However, amidst all the obstacles before it, the Afghan government must commit itself to protecting the human rights of its citizens, including all women, as a member of the United Nations and as a constructive partner in South Asia.

I therefore join my colleagues here today in expressing the deepest concern over this law and its potential impact.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to thank the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for bringing this very important issue forward.

When I first heard of it, I was not only appalled, it just obviously shook me, as it did everyone else, to the core. So many Canadians, in fact, so many Ontarians right now are sacrificing their families, their limbs—many, their own lives—to fight for freedom, to fight for the little girls who finally have a chance to go to school, to fight for a better life ahead, for literacy, for free thinking, for a free and open society, and this is what we hear.

I want to speak a little bit about my experience with the Canadian military, albeit limited. I'm not a military wife. I've never been, myself, in the military. For the last year, my husband has been working with the Minister of National Defence. From time to time, out of the blue, he has to go to Trenton. He comes back, often silent, often staring at my little girl, because he's seen a little girl, either her age or younger, on the tarmac either losing her mother or her father because they went overseas to fight for freedom.

I look at this resolution as one that says to our troops that they made significant groundwork, that they have done their job and that we should be very proud. But as the Minister of Culture rightly points out, this is Hamid Karzai's issue, and Hamid Karzai better darn well know that the rest of the world, including the Ontario Legislature, is watching what he does. Men and women in this province and in this country are not going over there to sacrifice their lives so that he can buckle to any pressure to be duplicitous, if I'm allowed to use that word in this chamber, and to say one thing to our diplomats' and our political representatives' faces and to do another.

When this resolution first came out, and even to this very minute, I wished that this had been an all-party resolution, that each of our political parties had had five or 10 minutes to speak to it, because I think—although I'll support it and I congratulate the member; I think it's a brilliant thing to do—this Legislature as a body should have made that statement to Hamid Karzai and also to the government of Canada, to say that it is unacceptable for freedom fighters from this nation who go over there and fight on their behalf to save young women, to save young men and to save married women.

On that note, I want to congratulate her again. I want to congratulate all of my colleagues, who are all women, except for you, the member from Ottawa Centre, but we appreciate you nonetheless speaking to the fairer sex and to our gender's issue. You've done a heck of a job. We're very, very proud of the member from Ottawa Centre and very proud of the Legislature for taking a stand today. It shows that on some of these very serious issues, we can speak together with one very strong voice. I want to thank you again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Van Bommel, you have up to two minutes for your reply.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I certainly thank the member from Nepean–Carleton for her thought on having this possibly have been an all-party resolution. It certainly could have been, I think, from the support we've heard here today.

The urgency around this motion came to me in my role as chair of the women's caucus, and it was the women's caucus that was so outraged that they felt we needed to do something as a government and as a Legislature to express our outrage at what was happening. I want to thank the members from Dufferin–Caledon and Parkdale–High Park for their passion on this one especially. I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre. He's definitely evidence of the power that women have in shaping lives. I want to thank the member from Barrie for her personal experience with Karzai and relaying her thoughts on having met the president and how he will react, or how she feels he's changed in his approach to this. I want to thank the member for York South–Weston for talking about the Afghan women in Ontario and their reaction to this.

I also want to say thank you to Angela Hersey, who is my intern and who did the research for me and wrote and drafted the speeches for me; also Rachelle MacDougall and James Berry in my office, who supported her in that.

In closing, I want to say that our government has a responsibility to be vocal about our position, together with federal legislators. In supporting this motion, we will be telling the people of our province that we believe in the fundamental rights of women and that we join with those who continue to stand in solidarity for justice and human rights around the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PENSION PLANS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 10, standing in the name of Mr. Dickson.

Mr. Dickson has moved private member's notice of motion number 82. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND PROTECTION RIGHTS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES DROITS DES ENFANTS EN MATIÈRE DE SÉCURITÉ ET DE PROTECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 11.

Mrs. MacLeod has moved second reading of Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts related to the safety and protection of children. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will vote on this item after we deal with the next ballot item.

AFGHAN FAMILY LAW

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ballot item number 12, standing in the name of Mrs. Van Bommel: Mrs. Van Bommel has moved private member's notice of motion number 86. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1640 to 1645.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND PROTECTION RIGHTS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES DROITS DES ENFANTS EN MATIÈRE DE SÉCURITÉ ET DE PROTECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. MacLeod has moved second reading of Bill 130. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please stand and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dickson, Joe	Phillips, Gerry
Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Qaadri, Shafiq
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Ruprecht, Tony

Cansfield, Donna H.
Carroll, Aileen
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob

Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff

Sandals, Liz
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 9; the nays are 27.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 28, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters / *Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Parkdale–High Park.
Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you. It's nice to get the occasional little bit of applause in here; let's face it.

It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 139. It has been a pleasure to be part of the process of Bill 139, particularly with groups like Workers' Action Centre and Parkdale legal—Parkdale legal being in my riding; a phenomenal group of people, so I want to first of all give out kudos to them—also the Ontario Federation of Labour, which deputed; Canadian Auto Workers deputed. We had a number of folk come and depute and talk to this bill. Basically, for those who are watching from home and wondering what I'm talking about, they were speaking to the need for a revamping of the Employment Standards Act. The Employment Standards Act really hasn't been revamped in any major way for a long, long time.

What this bill does—it's a kind of back-to-the-future bill, in a sense—is it undoes some of what I would consider the grievous injustices perpetrated by the Harris government. It takes those away. It doesn't move forward in any significant way, and I'm going to talk to you about that as well, but what it does is undo some of the wrongs that we've been living with—some of the wrongs being that temporary agencies have been allowed to charge fees to those who are applying to them. This was never okay. It was never legal when I was in the business, and I'm going to talk about that too, because I have the interesting

perspective of having been in the business of owning an agency and also being very concerned about social justice and now being the employment standards critic for the New Democratic Party.

1650

In my day, it was illegal to charge a fee to any applicant at any time. That was undone in 2000 and now is done again, to take us back to a place I think we want to be, where one does not charge fees to those looking for work.

What else does it do? There are a number of other things as well. It requires of agencies that they be licensed and that they put out information about the temporary assignments to those who are going to be doing them. Quite frankly, most temp agencies—not all, but most—already do some version of that. We pushed, in our amendments, to have written—didn't get that—and certainly that the details of the assignment and the estimated length of time should be given to applicants. Other realities as well, including a barrier of six months: A temporary agency is allowed to charge six months' salary to the employer if they want to take them on permanently. I'm going to talk about that too, because we feel that that's a barrier to employment.

Anybody who's very interested in employment standards: If you're that kind of geek at home who likes to read bills from cover to cover and get excited about the differences in provincial legislation, I would suggest that you look at Bill 22, which was brought in in Manitoba, as being a much stronger and better version of Bill 139. Look at the Manitoba bill.

But more to the point, the broader picture of employment standards is that this really just tinkers around the edges of what's necessary, and what's necessary requires looking at the entire field of precarious employment. About a third of our employees are hired and work precariously. What do I mean by that? I mean that they're not sure if they're going to have a job next month or next year. They're on a contract basis; they're on a temporary basis; they're on a part-time basis, so they can't really guarantee to their families—and remember, many of them are in families—that they'll be earning in the future the same thing they earn today. One could say, "And I suppose, in this economic environment, who can?" We've lost about 300,000 good-paying jobs—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Sorry to interrupt. Just stop the clock for a minute.

Perhaps you could move your BlackBerry if it's buried under there. Maybe it's not yours? The problem is, we're hearing it through the speakers and it's blasting the ears out of our translators. If it's not yours, I apologize.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just in case, Mr. Speaker, I've moved it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Start the clock. Thank you to the honourable member.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To get back to field of precarious employment, certainly it's a major problem. The days of working for one company for 30 or 35 years and retiring

are over. Right now, one out of every three Ontarians really does work from job to job, from career to career, and there really isn't a great deal of job security. The rate of unionization is going down, and if there ever is job security, it's in collective agreements, argued for and defended by unions.

That's one of the problems. One of the backgrounds of this bill is the fact that in Ontario it's very difficult to unionize. Where it's difficult to unionize, it's difficult to have a dignified labour force, because only with collective agreements, only with collective power, the ability to strike, to withdraw one's labour, does one get real bargaining clout. So without that, you're always in a precarious situation.

Ramping back from that, if you're working part-time through a temp agency or on a contract basis, you're also in a precarious situation. I want to make very clear to those watching that this is not just the area that is inhabited by secretaries, by clerks and by data entry operators; no, this is the area in our new workforce inhabited by those with Ph.D.s who work in our universities and colleges. In fact, the bulk of teachers in our post-secondary institutions are contract, precarious workers who aren't sure if they're going to get a job next year like they have this year—that's pretty horrendous—and also make, by the way, far less than their full-time, tenured counterparts. I remember a member from CUPE 3903, someone with a Ph.D. and years of experience, when we were dealing with the York strike here in this Legislature, saying to me that she had been teaching for 16 years at York University—16 years on a contract basis.

Every year she had to reapply for a job, every year she wasn't sure she would get it and she was still making about 50% of what somebody would be making if they were full-time. This is unconscionable; this is unethical.

The backdrop of what we're talking about here is ethics. It's the ethical reality we all need: stable employment, that job that gives us our dignity as human beings. And if there's something attacking that job's dignity, it attacks our dignity. So this is a serious problem.

Precarious employment has now taken over whole industries that previously supplied dignified, full-time, stable employment. What do I mean by that? Well, increasingly corporations are hollowing out their full-time staff. Why? Because it's simply cheaper to hire somebody through a temporary agency, to not have to pay their benefits, to not have to invest in a pension program, if you're lucky enough to have one—to not have to look after all that other expense of having an employee. It's also cheaper because temporary employees are not paid as well as full-time employees. This is a basic inequity that, unfortunately, Bill 139 does not address, but is addressed, I might add, in other jurisdictions.

It's certainly addressed in many European jurisdictions, particularly and notably France, where they actually have laws that say, "Equal pay for equal work." What a revolutionary concept that is: If you're doing the same job, you should get the same pay, whether you're

working 40 hours or whether you're working four hours. We have nothing like that in Ontario, and we certainly aren't going to get it with the advent of Bill 139. That, in fact, would be a much more elegant and much more direct solution to the problem of precarious work than this bill, because the person working on a temporary or a contract basis would not represent a cheaper alternative to a full-time worker, but would actually be paid what they're worth: the same amount for the same work, for the same job.

I want to give kudos to OPSEU, who have been front-runners on this very issue and, through the LCBO, are working on this as we speak. They're fighting for equal pay for equal work, again something that's pretty commonplace in European jurisdictions but is unknown in Ontario and still unknown after the advent of Bill 139. That would truly give more dignity to the workplace.

We had a phenomenal range of groups that deputed before the committee on Bill 139. It was interesting, because I asked the same question of every single group that came through. The question I asked was, would you support some kind of legislation that would protect nannies—at-home caregivers?

Very shortly before, the Star did a series of articles on the exploitation of at-home caregivers. These are foreign-trained workers who come over here and don't have their landed status. They're almost indentured servants, because they have to work for one employer for two years. They can't leave or shift employers without jeopardizing their immigration status. So they really are in a precarious situation in terms of their rights and even in terms of their safety, because they're in a private household. They don't get overtime and they don't get nights off. There are all sorts of horror stories that we've heard from both sides of this House about these nannies. Every single group I asked the question of said this bill should absolutely extend to nannies.

I have to give kudos to them for that, because out of that conversation did come two pieces of legislation: one, a private member's bill by the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, and ultimately another, from the Minister of Labour himself, which attempted to deal with the situation. So all the committee work was, in fact, extremely valuable in expanding the role of employment standards in this province.

1700

What else do we want to say about the broader picture of employment standards? We want to say something about enforcement. I said I was standing out in the rain with SEIU the other day, in front of the Ministry of Labour, speaking about the horrible plight of janitors—a question I asked this morning—the plight of those who are seen as contractors, again something this bill unfortunately doesn't address. They're called contractors because that way the company doesn't have to pay them benefits. They have to supply their own cleaning utilities, in some instances; they're sent out and they're given a lump sum—sometimes they're even charged for the "privilege" of working as a janitor and being a contractor;

some of them are forced to incorporate. It's outrageous. By the time all the dust is settled, metaphorically, and by the time the end of the week comes many of these janitors are making less than minimum wage, yet they're considered independent contractors, therefore outside the scope of this bill.

I said to the janitors assembled, "Imagine the province of Ontario if we had criminal laws but no police to enforce them. Imagine what life would look like here." In a very real way that's what life looks like in the labour force of Ontario, because in a very real way we have employment standards that are not enforced. The minister himself knows this. There are millions of dollars of unpaid wages in the province of Ontario.

A student of my husband's at Humber College asked him about the minimum wage, since he knew it was a topic near and dear to me with the advent of Bill 150 and the campaign we ran around the \$10 minimum wage. The student asked, "What should I be getting?" because he was working at a minimum-wage job, and Gil said, "Well, now, \$9.50." So he said, "Really? I'm not being paid that." Gil said, "Go back and talk to your employer and tell him that you should be being paid \$9.50, that that is now the law of the land." So he went back to his employer. You know what the employer said? The employer said nothing. He laughed at him. He said, "If you don't want the job, just quit." So then this young person said, "What do I do now?" I know the Minister of Labour will say, "Why didn't he phone our ministry?" Well, he did, and he got put on hold and he got put through—it became such a bureaucratic nightmare that he just dropped it, and that young person is still making less than minimum wage.

That's one of many, and I know that members here are seeing these cases in their casework in their constituency offices: people who come in who are fired with no cause, people who are let go when they demand overtime, pregnant women—again a story that the Star broke—who are being fired or not being rehired because they are pregnant. These are absolutely outrageous abuses of existing employment standards legislation. But if you're not enforcing it, it might as well not be on the books.

This government has promised to hire another, I think, 100 employment enforcement officers. I'm not sure whether that's happened or not, but I can tell you that on the ground it doesn't feel like it's happened. Hence, I put forward a motion in the motion papers demanding that 25% of all places of employment be inspected in a one-time sweep, and that thereafter 10% of them be inspected on a rotating basis. If this can be done, in some instances, in the health and safety inspection model, why can't it be done with labour standards, why can't it be done with employment standards? Until we enforce these laws, until we check it out, it's not going to happen.

In conversations with the Minister of Labour, for example, around the janitors, who are trying to organize with SEIU, who are being ruthlessly exploited—again, kudos to the Star for doing a piece on that as well—these ruthlessly exploited janitors are being told to just phone

the Ministry of Labour if they have a complaint. Now, maybe we live in a rarefied place here at Queen's Park, but anybody who has ever worked in a precarious job environment knows that if there are a handful of employees there, which is usually the case, and all of a sudden a complaint-inspired Ministry of Labour enforcement officer comes onto your floor and—remember we're dealing with people who are often immigrants, who are racialized, who don't know their rights, who have English as a second language—and this person comes on the floor and asks you, as has happened—I have cases to prove it—in front of your boss, "So what is the problem?" or says to the boss, "This person has a problem with you" or "Your staff has a problem with you not paying overtime," guess what's going to happen to that employee after that inspector leaves? Well, we know what's going to happen: They're going to be let go. They're going to be disciplined. It happens all the time. There was a case that SEIU was telling me about where an entire staff was let go because they suspected one person of complaining to the Ministry of Labour. This can't be allowed to go on, and it is. That is the backdrop to Bill 139.

So even if we pass this bill, incremental though it is, a step in the right direction, the real question is, will it be enforced? Because if it's not enforced, what are we wasting our time and taxpayers' time doing? That's a huge concern. It's a concern that can only be addressed by hiring more employment standards officers and by having them go out into the field, independent of complaints, to check out anonymous complaints when they're made, and just generally to check out whether industry is—because I know this can be an industry-specific issue—complying with employment standards legislation.

I've had other instances where people come into our constit offices, again, most often from racialized communities where they don't know their rights, where they're not paid at all, where they're hired and they're told that this is going to be volunteer work, where they're threatened if they decide they want to complain or even ask about it—again, abuses that are ongoing.

Many years ago in the 1980s, I did what many women do, because it's mainly a woman-dominated industry: I left my employer at that time, Drake, and started my own agency. I did it, I remember, with a loan of \$5,000, and remember billing, in the mid-1980s, about half a million dollars in my first year, so it was a very great success, and very quickly. We were an all-woman firm, which is not unusual in the employment industry and not unusual in the temporary agency industry, to have all women working in that industry. Interestingly enough, it's one of the few industries where women can actually make a substantial amount of money. That's rare, as we all know these days; we were talking about that earlier. I continued in that industry for quite a while. It wasn't a temporary agency; it was a permanent placement agency. The women who worked with me were paid on a commission basis; sometimes they did better than I did as the owner

of the agency. We placed women mainly in public relations, mainly in advertising, a little bit of everything, and rode the wave of women's equity, in the sense that at that point, in a buoyant economy, companies, institutions—notably government institutions—were trying to hire on women. So we rode that wave and did extremely well.

I've often reported on that period of time life because it's an interesting contrast to what's happening in agencies these days. First of all, as I said earlier, it was illegal to charge anyone a fee for applying in those days. We needed a licence—not that it meant much, but you needed a licence—and to get a licence, you had to show some kind of capitalization; you couldn't just be a fly-by-night organization. So you needed a licence. Again, these are things that this bill brings back in that haven't been enforced but need to be enforced.

We never paid anybody less than \$10 an hour, even for the occasional time that we placed somebody in temporary work doing filing or something at the lower echelon of office work. Quite frankly, back then, nobody would work for less than \$10 an hour. It was a buoyant economy. It's sad—it's pathetic, in fact—to be fighting for a \$10-an-hour minimum wage now when it was the de facto minimum wage 20 years ago.

Certainly we charged fees to clients for screening, for sourcing out applicants. It was a reasonable fee. It was based on what they made every year. And the agency, the industry, was governed by its own body—not the most ideal situation, I'll warrant, but certainly there was some sense.

So it was with interest that I was lobbied by and listened to ACSESS, who came and lobbied on behalf of temporary agencies, and agencies generally. One of the first things I said to ACSESS when they came and lobbied me about Bill 139 was about the six-month provision, that they could charge six months of salary for somebody going from what we used to call temp to perm. Sadly enough, what I discovered in this conversation, and what I immediately reacted to, was, why would anybody go through a permanent agency or an executive recruiter if they could hire on somebody temporarily and only pay them a six-month fee? So there was that aspect, from the agency and from the applicant's point of view. In a kind of weird, backroom way, it actually encourages companies to hire temporary people rather than permanent people off the bat, because it will save them money.

1710

The second objection I made to that, which was something, of course, that they didn't want to hear, was that this could be challenged in a charter challenge. I saw the six-month fee as a barrier to employment, that you cannot put a barrier to employment in place to prevent a company from hiring on someone they want to hire, and charging them a fee is a barrier. I suggested to them that this was open to a charter challenge, that any good lawyer could go after this, and that it's been sort of a gentleman's and gentlewoman's agreement in the indus-

try, a kind of industry standard that had never been tested in terms of a charter challenge.

What was sad is that in putting this into law, which Bill 39 does, it in a sense makes it more difficult to challenge that very aspect of this with a charter challenge, because this will be used as some kind of legal precedent for charging a fee that, before now, has been a kind of, as I said, gentleman's and gentlewoman's agreement.

That was one of the first discussions that we had with ACSESS. I don't agree with ACSESS. I don't agree with most of what they wanted and most of the changes they made. But it is interesting that the deputants from the OFL, from unions of all sorts, from Workers' Action and ACSESS agreed that they wanted to see that gone—for very different reasons, mind you, but they wanted to see that gone.

The other problem that immediately came to the fore was why home care workers are left out of this bill. They're not covered for another three years. Why single them out? I suggested, facetiously, that perhaps it's because many of them are on the government payroll, and it would cost the government more money. That's cynical, but it's hard not to say it or see it that way, because there's no other good justification for them being excluded. They're on the government payroll; they're not on the company payroll. Certainly they need to be covered and protected, just like every other labourer.

What do we need to have happen here with this bill and employment standards? I want to let the House know—it's no surprise—that we in the New Democratic Party are coming forward with our own rewrite of the Employment Standards Amendment Act. It's going to be a pretty weighty tome, because this is a piece of legislation that screams out for amendment.

What are we going to do? First of all, we are going to call—no doubt—for equal pay for equal work. A simple ethical, moral imperative, it seems to me, is that if you're doing the same job, you should get the same pay, whether you're doing it for 10 hours or 40 hours. It's the same work. Why should a temporary or precarious worker be paid that much less than a permanent worker? That's very clear.

Second of all: a minimum wage that is always pegged just above the poverty line—this would make the minimum wage right now about \$10.25—and indexed to inflation so that we don't have to go through the battles around minimum wage over and over again, depending on the government in power, but that it will automatically rise due to inflation. If the government is serious about eradicating or getting rid of 25% of the impoverished ranks of our province, then they would do this simple thing, because de facto, by definition, if they raise the minimum wage above the poverty line, they would take about a million workers out of poverty, two thirds of whom are women and most of whom are racialized women. So that's a very simple, no-cost option for this government that should be embedded in employment standards.

The other huge issue is, what is an employee? What constitutes an employee? Is a janitor an employee or a subcontractor? If they're working for one company or one employer, we want to say, we need to say and we should say that they're an employee and therefore guaranteed the rights of an employee: benefits, overtime, holiday pay etc. We think that should be embedded in the Employment Standards Act, because right now it's not, so right now the way that these companies are getting around the letter and the spirit of the law is by calling their employees subcontractors.

By the way, in not dealing with that, Bill 139 is going to open a whole Pandora's box of new ways of skirting employment standards. Instead of temporary agencies placing somebody, now we're going to have subcontractors; we're going to have secretaries working as contractors. You can see how this might move out into the commercial community because of some of the provisions of Bill 139. We want to prevent that. Again, when you look at European Union statutes, when you look at other jurisdictions where the rights of the worker are more paramount than they are here, you look at provisions like that in their employment standards.

Other things that are outside the bounds of the Employment Standards Act but are still absolutely essential to dignified labour in this province are things like the right to card check certification. We need to make it easier for people to unionize when they want to, and for sector-by-sector unionization, which is something, again, that we see in European jurisdictions. I've told this story before, but it's a great story, about how my husband and I went to Sweden, a jurisdiction smaller than Ontario. We went into the McDonald's and we discovered that the McDonald's in Sweden is unionized—a unionized McDonald's; who knew? Who would ever have thought that? I asked the member of Parliament who was showing us around how that happened. He said, "Well, 85% of the Swedish labour force is unionized, and none of them would have eaten in McDonald's had it not been unionized." We want to create that kind of work atmosphere, an environment where unions are the norm, where collective bargaining is the norm—and, by the way, something that even their chamber of commerce supported: sector-by-sector unionizing.

This is a country that has Volvo, H&M, Ikea, Sony Ericsson and other huge corporations—all unionized, all working well with the employers to come up with collective agreements that are reasonable, that are human, that produce benefits and produce a dignified labour relationship. That's something outside the bounds of the Employment Standards Act but something that's absolutely necessary, really, as the precondition for an Employment Standards Act that would absolutely protect people.

Other aspects of it are aspects like pensions. We heard a discussion about that earlier, with the private member's motion today about pensions. It's absolutely unjustified and it's wrong, it's ethically wrong, that 70% of Ontarians don't have pensions. Everybody deserves a

pension—and not a pension, again, that's going to put them under the poverty line, but a pension that will allow them to live with some sort of dignity. Many of them have worked all their lives but simply didn't have the good fortune to work in a unionized environment or to work for a company or a place that has a pension. So we need to look at pension reform, and that needs to be in employment standards as well.

My friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has talked about the necessity to pay workers first when layoffs occur. We need legislation within employment standards that does that: that forces companies, when they're downsizing, when they're laying off workers, when they're closing, to pay their workers owed monies before the banks, before the other creditors, because workers have worked for that money. Again, we're talking about something that rests on a solid ethical basis, and that solid ethical basis is the dignity of the worker and the dignity of the workplace. That's something that we need employment standards for as well.

Of course, when we're talking about the range of equity, we need some money going into our equity legislation and some enforcement, coming back to the issue of enforcement. When we live in a province where women make 71 cents to every dollar earned by men, there's something wrong, and the something wrong is with employment standards. So we need to do something. We need to beef up our equity commission. We need to put more money behind it so that it can be enforced better, so that that doesn't happen. By the way, one of the worst offenders on that is the Ontario government itself. So we need to look at that employment equity. That's a kind of ethical ground, that women and men should make the same amount for the same work, that part-time and full-time employees should make the same hourly wage for the same work. This is common sense. This is simply ethics 101. The fact that we don't get to that place with Bill 139 is discouraging, because at least Bill 139 gave us the opportunity to even talk about these issues.

1720

Getting back to Bill 139, amendments that would make it stronger, even as it stands—and remember, our problem with it, as the New Democratic Party, is that it's really the icing, as I've said before, where we need a cake. One of the things it does—and this is another loophole that I'm sure, as soon as the ink has dried on the royal assent and as soon as the proclamation is read, will immediately be taken advantage of by unscrupulous employers—is the fact that this is for temporary agencies, not for employment agencies. Every group that deputed before us, who were deputing on behalf of the employees of temporary agencies, called for this change. They wanted to see the terminology changed from "temporary agencies" to "employment agencies." Why? Well, for obvious reasons. All of a sudden, all you need to do is change your name. You're no longer a temporary agency; you're now an employment agency. You might place one permanent employee once a year. You might do 90% of your placements as temporary placements, but you're not

a temporary agency; you're an employment agency, because that's what you call yourself.

We have to tighten these loopholes because they will be used. We've seen that they have been used in past. They've been used successfully, hence our sorry situation in the province of Ontario with a precarious word. So we wanted this extended to employment agencies. What would it lose? I really didn't understand the objection to that amendment, because it really doesn't detract from this bill. It doesn't cost anything, if you will, in a legislative sense. It simply changes one terminology to prevent that one loophole from happening. All employment agencies, whether they're 90% permanent, 10% temporary or 90% temporary and 10% permanent, should subscribe to this. No agency should be allowed to charge an applicant a fee.

This bill in a sense sets up the possibility that if you walk into a permanent employment agency or an executive recruiter's, you could still be charged a fee because it's not a temporary agency. This is just silly, and that needs to be changed because, again, where people can save a buck in this economy, they will save a buck, and if this saving of the buck is an attack on the dignity of the worker, they will do it; they have done it and they are doing it. That's our historical experience. So, again, we want to make sure that they can't do it. That's so important.

I've talked about that six-month problem. We don't think it should be there. We don't think that any fee, really, once an employer wants to hire an employee that's in their employ, should be levied. This is a barrier to employment. I can't see that it isn't open to a charter challenge, so really what I challenge employers out there to do is to challenge it. In a sense what I'm suggesting to you is, now that the gentleman's and gentlewoman's agreement is over with Bill 139, or before this bill is passed—even better—simply refuse to pay. Force the agency to then prove that this isn't against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this country. Get them to prove it, because I don't think they could, and quite frankly, I don't think there's a legal leg to stand on there. It's simply been the practice of an industry that until now has not been scrutinized. So that's something to look at as well.

Again, in looking at other jurisdictional examples, this is where the dramatic difference between where we are and where we should be is played out fully. Certainly we see where the loopholes are and we've had very graphic examples of that, two in the recent past that I can think of—well, three. Nannies are being exploited still, pregnant women are being fired—all of these have been covered by the Toronto Star—and janitors are subcontracting out, calling somebody a contractor when they're really an employee. All of these things really put the lie to some of the accomplishments that could have been made in Bill 139 but were not.

Having said that, what's good about it? I will say that even though it's the icing and not the cake, it's a step forward. We in the New Democratic Party are going to

support Bill 139; we're going to vote for it. We would have liked to see the amendments put forward. We know how hard the stakeholder groups have worked; we know what they think. They think exactly what I've just said. They want it stronger too. But anything is better than nothing. Really, anything is better than nothing, although it makes my skin crawl to see a Legislature that is full of incrementalists rather than those who really want to take leadership and do something dramatic and something real. This is an incrementalist piece of legislation that takes an inch forward when we need a mile. Even so, an inch is better than not moving at all. Currently, the situation is so bad that Bill 139 looks good in comparison to it. That's the best one can say about it: Currently, the situation is so bad for employees through temporary agencies that this actually starts to look good. Remember, this is really nothing that they haven't had before, 20 years before—just brought back.

I'm going to conclude my statements with that and with thanks to all of those groups. I want to mention a few in particular that deputed, CAW among them, all saying really the same thing—OFL, Make Poverty History, Workers' Action Centre, OCASI, the Chinese Interagency Network of Greater Toronto and others. I've left out many, I'm sure, all saying the same things, all hoping this would be stronger, all wishing it would be stronger, all working to make it stronger, but all at least somewhat gratified that something finally has been done to make the employment standards better in this province. To give it its due, it does make things—reluctantly, I say—somewhat better than they have been.

Stay tuned. In the upcoming months we are working on what we'd like to see happen in the province of Ontario: a revised Employment Standards Act that really does all of those necessary actions that would make our labour force retain its dignity, regain its dignity.

Just to go over them again so that there is no misunderstanding, we need card check certification. We need to make organizing in a collective bargaining way easier, because that's where the strength of the worker really lies.

We need equal pay for equal work, for all workers, whether they're working four hours or 40 hours, whether they are university professors or janitors.

We need a redefinition of an employee so that we really know that the janitor is an employee and not a subcontractor. They are not contractors; they are employees. Let's call them that and give them the benefits according to that.

No fee ever, whether you're an employment agency or a temporary agency, should be levied for someone looking for a job; no question about that. The six-month fee is silly. It's a barrier to employment. It's subject to a charter challenge, I warrant, again, mainly because it's a barrier to hiring somebody who should be hired at a reasonable pay rate. Equal pay for equal work, by the way, in and of itself would have made Bill 139 redundant.

Of course, we need health care workers included in Bill 139. They should not be excluded. That's silly. Why

should they have to wait three years when everybody else gets rights now? We know the answer. The cynical answer is that it's the government that pays them. That needs to come out and that should come out.

Again, we need pay equity with teeth.

Finally and most importantly, none of this is worth the paper it's printed on if there isn't enforcement. Not enforcing employment standards the way they were written to be enforced, the way we enforce any other laws, independent of the complaint of the victim—if you break into a store, it doesn't take the storekeeper to call the police. The police will be there. If you're breaking an employment standards law, employment standards officers should be there, and they should be there preemptively, because we know that abuses are so widespread. If we don't have enforcement, we don't have real laws.

1730

I would ask the Minister of Labour to work on all of those, to bring back to the House, to make sure that we finally have something like that, not just the icing but finally get to sink our teeth into the real cake of employment standards reform.

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

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I listened to the member for Parkdale–High Park. I'd say to the member that the member knows full well that this government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, has been championing a modernization of our employment standards here in the province of Ontario.

I want to thank all of the stakeholders who made presentations at committee, in my office, who sent in letters and e-mails about this very important piece of legislation. Many advocacy groups understand the importance that this has on our poverty reduction agenda.

I want to read a couple of comments that came to us from Deena Ladd from the Workers' Action Centre. I know that the member spoke about Deena and about Mary Gellatly from Parkdale Community Legal Services. Here's what Deena Ladd had to say about Bill 139: "These are all the things that many of our members have been speaking up with for years, so this is a good day for our members." She is right.

Just talking about the progress that we've made—back in 2004-05, we established a dedicated employment standards inspection team in this province. They have gone out and made 8,700 inspections. They have collected \$5.5 million in lost wages for workers across Ontario—great progress. If you look back between 1989 and 2003, there were only 97 employment standards prosecutions initiated—97; since 2004, 1,700 prosecutions completed here in this province. That is progress. That is impressive. That is what we're doing, as the McGuinty government is here working with all stakeholders: employees, employers, labour working together—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member from the third party is an eloquent speaker and organizes her remarks extremely well. She made some excellent points, not all of which I agree with.

This government seems to have a full press on discouraging people from working in Ontario. To bring in this type of legislation at this particular time, when temp agencies have longer lineups for people seeking employment than they've had in years and years—it goes back into the 1990s since they've had situations like they're in now—and to put further red tape on them, to increase the costs to temp agencies in such a way that is going to drive much of the work that they currently contract for out of the province—this work can be put in almost any province or indeed in any state. Given the distribution and transportation facilities that we have in North America, these types of jobs can find their way into the southern United States, western Canada, eastern Canada. They can find themselves in jurisdictions where it's just simply cheaper to do business. This kind of legislation is going to continue to give advantages to other jurisdictions while it makes Ontario a much less competitive place to do business, and I think that's a sad thing for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member for Parkdale–High Park has up to two minutes for her reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I know what Deena Ladd and Mary Gollatly say in their comments on the bill. They say this too:

"The bill fails to meet the government's goal of 'removing barriers to permanent employment'...."

"The narrow scope of Bill 139 would still allow temporary staffing and employment agencies to charge workers fees for job placement.

"Special rules proposed for termination and severance of Bill 139 would substantially reduce temporary agency workers' current entitlements."

That's what they also say.

To the Minister of Labour's statistics, which I challenge—I'd love to see those statistics—I simply counter that only 1% of our workplaces ever see an employment standards officer—1%. That's the reality; that's a fact. You can throw out numbers all you want, but if that's the reality, then 99% of workplaces never see an employment standards officer.

Quite frankly, all I would suggest to the minister is to talk, as he did after question period today, to those janitors who are being exploited, to those people out there who are working in precarious employment, to those who are still going to be exploited after the passage of Bill 139 and who do not get redress through the Ministry of Labour. Speak to them. That's all I ask. What you will hear from them is that the system isn't working for them. It's not working for those who are most egregiously hurt by precarious employment. Speak to them.

We certainly heard from them in deputations, and all I suggest again is, take their recommendations and either

put them in the bill or put forward another bill that really makes the strategic amendments to the Employment Standards Act that are actually required.

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

Seeing none, it's time to put the question: Mr. Fonseca has moved third reading of Bill 139. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received a deferral slip, pursuant to standing order 28(h), requesting that the vote on Bill 139 be deferred until deferred votes on Monday, May 4, 2009.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1738.

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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 (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
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	
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 Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire 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	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
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	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
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
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
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