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Tuesday 28 October 2008

Mardi 28 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to inform the House that I've had the opportunity to review the revised opposition day motion that was placed by the loyal opposition and reviewed by all three parties, and I find it acceptable to proceed with.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS (NO 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 114, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters, to amend the Ottawa Congress Centre Act and to enact the Ontario Capital Growth Corporation Act, 2008 / Projet de loi 114, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions, modifiant la Loi sur le Centre des congrès d'Ottawa et édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la Société ontarienne de financement de la croissance.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Yesterday, I was speaking and trying to explain one of the provisions in Bill 114, and that referred to the Ontario seniors' property tax credit. The property tax credit was instituted by the government three or four years ago, and it enables senior households to apply, when they file their income tax, for a credit from the Ontario government. The credit can go up to \$600 per household. That is not only for people who own their homes or have a mortgage but also renters, because they pay property tax indirectly. So what this bill does is it raises the threshold so more people can take advantage of it. I know that a lot of people who have small homes and apartments in my riding do apply for that every year. You can get up to \$600 off your property taxes. But they

have to include it in their tax returns; that's very important. What people sometimes confuse this with is that in last year's budget we included the property tax grant. The credit was already in place. The grant, which will be up to \$250 this year and then, when it matures, will be up to \$500 per household, also has a threshold—I think it's about \$40,000 per household—but it's a direct grant. That's one way we're trying to help seniors on fixed incomes in their homes because we certainly know that the living-at-home strategy wants seniors to stay in their homes. It's something they want desperately.

In this bill we are talking about the general context of the economy. When I was coming to work on the subway this morning, it was very crowded. I said to myself, "This is a good thing," because in the early 1990s—and some of you remember the recession we hit in the early 1990s—I was involved with the TTC at that time, I was chairman of the TTC, and our ridership was just collapsing almost on a weekly basis because people were losing their jobs. I remember a lot of people at that time were requesting that we lower the transit fares to try and get more riders on transit. I know that seems to be the right thing to do, but it's really not the right thing to do economically. People were not riding transit at that time because they didn't have a job to go to. If you don't have a job to go to, you also do less shopping and less discretionary spending. So we could have lowered the transit fare right to the very bottom and it still wouldn't have brought people onto the TTC because, again, if you do not have that job to go to and you don't have money, you're not going to ride the TTC. For that time in our history, the TTC ridership was almost lock-sync with what was happening in the recession. TTC ridership went down; the number of people applying for social assistance went up. It was almost on a weekly basis in the 1990s when this recession really impacted on people. It was very, very challenging for government—it was challenging for everybody—to try and get through this.

Now, why I use that example of TTC ridership, which, by the way, I recommend to everybody who wants to see what's happening in the economy—and the good thing is that ridership is staying steady; it doesn't mean that it will, but for the time being it seems to be doing quite well. It's a very good indicator of the economic health of the GTA. Why I mention that is because of a lesson to be learned in terms of the overall economy. We as a government have invested over a billion dollars in the forest industry because of their challenges, but the forest industry is still struggling because, as we know, Ontario's forest industry, like Ontario's auto industry, depends on foreign

markets; in other words, willing buyers, especially in the United States, who buy our lumber and lumber products to build their homes etc. But as you know, the American domestic economy is in very sad shape. Our best customer, the United States, who buys our lumber and buys our cars is unable to buy because they're not working. So no matter how low the price of lumber is, the Americans aren't buying. The same with cars: Over 80% of the cars we manufacture here in Ontario—in Oshawa, Windsor, Oakville—are bought by Americans. Look at the pickup trucks—the Ford F-150s, for instance. We made a living in Ontario selling those trucks to Americans. They are not buying these very good Canadian products. You can lower the price of those trucks, as they are; still our best customers are not buying the trucks. That example is why we in Ontario are not an island unto ourselves. And not to use that as an excuse, but it's a reality check.

0910

The best thing that could happen for Ontario's economy is for the American economy to get back to where it was. I know as much as we'd like to say, "We're Canada; we're a large nation of 32 million; Ontario has 13 million people," we cannot get out of this economic morass that we're in unless we have our neighbours see better times. As you know, the American situation has directly impacted on the whole world's economy. The United Kingdom is now in a recession. Prime Minister Brown announced yesterday a huge stimulus package to try to prime the pump in the UK economy. They're not immune. France, Italy, even the East European countries—Hungary had to have a bailout from the IMF; Ukraine just got \$16 billion from the IMF. None of us are an island, and that's the lesson that maybe we should appreciate if we are going to get out of this economic morass that we're about to go in.

We are dependent on each other, whether dependent on the United States, dependent on Europe or dependent on Asia. The Chinese, who have been doing very, very well exporting products all over the world—we all know about their success—are now suffering; they're having to lay off people. In many Chinese factories the wages are being cut in half—a 50% reduction in wages—because the Chinese are not able to sell their products to the Americans and to the Canadians. So whether you're in China, whether you're in Iceland, where essentially there's been a total collapse of their banking structure, or whether you're in Ukraine, all of us are impacted by this economic downturn.

We have to ensure that our federal government, and whatever we do from a provincial standpoint, works with the world economic community. In the long run, that's the way we'll get out of it. As a government, we'll try to do what we can to cushion the blow, to try to make strategic investments, but it would be foolhardy to say that what we do in Ontario alone is going to be the solution to all of this unprecedented impact.

Thomas Friedman wrote a book called *The World Is Flat*. Basically, the thesis of that book is that no matter where you are, you are in one global village where we

are all affecting each other. In this time of crisis, we really have to understand that more than ever. I know that the Wall Street collapse has been the collapse for financial markets all over the world. That means that Main Street is impacted. Main Streets are impacted in every country in the world. So we have to try to understand that we've got a global impasse here and we need global solutions and we have to look at solutions.

I know in this House, sometimes all of us are partisan and saying, "Well, the last government had a deficit," or "Ottawa is not doing this," and that is going to continue. But I think we also want to listen to the people of Ontario, who are telling us: "We want to hear from you what your solutions are. We want to see what strategies you have in place to recognize the economic realities." The economic reality has just begun to hit—just begun. We are a little slower in the impact here in Ontario, but we are seeing it marching right across the world. That's why we need to try to find solutions, whether it be investments in infrastructure, in the new green, low-carbon economy, in retraining, or looking at initiatives to encourage entrepreneurship. We have to look outside the proverbial box in this case.

We have to listen to people like Warren Buffett. Two years ago, everybody scoffed when he said that the financial mechanism in the US market—the derivatives; you've all heard about that being the cause of much of this. He said that the derivative scheme was like a latent hydrogen bomb waiting to explode. And they scoffed at him; this was about two years ago. The Hank Greenbergs of this world, Alan Greenspan, the head of the US Treasury, all of these people, scoffed at Warren Buffett when he said, "Don't go down this scheme of derivatives." But we all drank the Kool-Aid. We all thought, "Wow, the market is doing great in Toronto. The market is doing great in New York. Let's get those derivatives. Hedge funds, wow. We'll go that way." But, sadly, Warren Buffett was right.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add comments on the debate on Bill 114, Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, and the speech by the member from Eglinton-Lawrence. This budget bill, of course, is leading up to a planned \$500-million deficit for this year, and I say that this deficit is just something that's totally political. It is a warm-up act for this government so they can continue their out-of-control spending, warming up to bigger deficits next year, when TD Bank predicts some \$4-billion to \$5-billion deficit.

The member talked about the early 1990s. Well, I remember, leading up to the early 1990s, the last slow-down, we had a Liberal government in power at that time too, leading up to the last big recession. That was the David Peterson government, which enjoyed relatively good economic times, and what did they do? They spent every dime that they received. They greatly increased the civil service. When bad times hit they had no room to manoeuvre, no room to increase spending to deal with

the bad times. Now we have the same act being replayed again this year.

The David Peterson government increased spending by some 45%, and we see the same thing happening with this government. This government came into power, and the budget was \$68 billion; it's now \$96 billion, a \$28-billion increase in spending. This year, revenues have decreased very slightly, but the spending is increasing. They have done absolutely nothing to try to control their spending. In fact, they've made four-year commitments to a number of different groups, 12% pay increases, which are further tying the hands of the government.

I say that this \$500-million deficit is just the warm-up act to soften the general public to the fact that we're going to have much bigger deficits in years to come. This government is to blame for not controlling their spending whatsoever.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to come from a bit of a different perspective. I've got a lot of respect for the chief government whip. He and I have had to deal with things over the years and generally have a pretty good relationship. My criticism would be this: Ontario's been very fortunate over the last century in that we've been sort of in the centre of everything when it comes to the economy in North America. Our border to the United States and proximity to their market have played to our favour. Naturally, because of the seaway, the Great Lakes system and our natural geography, things came easy to us. We had the natural resources in order to supply our industry, we had abundant hydroelectric power etc., and because of that, things just happened for Ontario. Government didn't have to intervene too much, because the economy sort of sailed along on its own.

If I have one criticism, it's that maybe because it was too good for too long; governments, in this case the McGuinty government and others before it, did not do the things that we need to do in our economy in order to say, "All right, the economy is changing. We are not going to have a traditional economy as we've had in Ontario for the past century, that it's strictly a resource sector with a manufacturing sector, making automotive, steel etc." I'm not saying those industries are going to be lost, but what we've not done is we've really not thought about strategies about how we position our economy over the longer term. How do we encourage the private sector and entrepreneurs to look at what the new products are that we can be building? We saw that with RIM—obviously, I think that is a good example—but it did not happen because governments were there trying to spur that kind of development to happen as far as new technology and new markets; it happened sort of on its own.

The problem we have now is that we are not, as a provincial government or as a federal government, really putting in place what's necessary to encourage that type of innovation. I'll get an opportunity a little bit later to talk about that, but we shouldn't be thumping our chests too hard at this point because I think we're not out of the—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's my pleasure to respond to the comments made by my friend from Eglinton–Lawrence. One of the comments really struck me this morning when he stressed the need of building partnerships. We are living in an extremely globally-connected world. We're seeing the direct impact of that sort of globalization right now in our economy in Ontario and in Canada in terms of what is happening in the financial world, and I think what my friend was speaking about is how we need to build partnerships.

0920

One great example in this bill which I want to focus on quickly is outlined in schedule P of Bill 114 dealing with the Ottawa Congress Centre Act and changing the name of the Ottawa Congress Centre in my community of Ottawa Centre to the Ottawa Convention Centre Corp., and here is a great example of what partnership can accomplish. We've got three levels of government coming together—the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government coming together—pooling their resources and making sure that we take Ottawa as a hub for tourism and conventions to a whole new next level.

I'm very proud that the McGuinty government has invested \$50 million in the Ottawa Congress Centre—and the name will be changed to the Ottawa Convention Centre—to make sure it's a bigger facility, it's a facility that can accommodate much bigger conventions in the nation's capital, can bring more tourists in. I want to salute the leadership of Jim Durrell, the former mayor of Ottawa and the chair of the board of Ottawa Congress Centre, and Pat Kelly, the president of the congress centre, for really building that coalition and for all the three levels of government coming together to ensure that Ottawa remains at the forefront of the tourism business in terms of attracting large conventions. This new convention centre is going to be truly an additional crown jewel in what Ottawa has to offer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just responding to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, whom I have a great deal of respect for, I want to say that I don't think his government prepared very well for this period of time. In my 18 years, this has been the strangest year that I've ever encountered while sitting in the House. Back in June, everything's rosy. We're told, when we ask questions about the economy—and we have been doing that for three years, telling this government that the economy is going to sour, that the good times, perhaps, are gone—because we could see the trend in the US and in Europe. But this government was asleep as late as last June and July, throughout the summer, telling everyone, "Don't worry, be happy, the fundamentals are strong in the economy," and then all of a sudden we have this bill today, which I call the deficit budget bill.

It shows a half-billion-dollar deficit, which I think is clearly not correct from the get-go. We see on page 16 of

the economic statement that was delivered on Wednesday, October 22, that they have not found any of their year-end savings of a billion dollars that they were supposed to be finding over the last four years. It's still marked as a billion; in fact, it's gone up to \$1.1 billion because, in the economic statement, they said they'll try and find another \$104 million or \$100 million. So you really can't believe them. They have not set the fundamentals right.

They criticized Jim Flaherty when he tried to say, "You know, Ontario, you've got the highest corporate tax rate." Every other province—governments of all political stripes—has come to a common corporate tax rate. They are all consistently lower than Ontario. They wanted to go out and sell Canada without having to prejudice one area of the country or another. They didn't want to have to go out and say, "Oh, by the way, Ontario is the highest." But because McGuinty didn't think of the idea, or because he was being forced by the federal government to do it, he simply was stubborn and still is stubborn and will not reduce those business taxes so that the federal government can go out and sell Canada as one country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Mike Colle: I appreciate the comments from the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Timmins–James Bay, Ottawa Centre and Simcoe–Grey. I appreciate the feedback.

Ireland lowered its corporate tax rate to the lowest in the whole western world, yet the first country to suffer the economic collapse was Ireland, so lowering taxes doesn't do it for everybody.

In terms of the economy, we've got to start to understand that there's never been a time like this if we are going to really deal with this seriously. Could you have believed 10 years ago if someone had said to you that the shares of Mattel, which makes toy trucks, are of higher value than a share of General Motors, so you can buy a Mattel share—I think it was trading for \$4.60 a share, and a General Motors share you can pick up for \$4.10. You know the old adage, "What's good for General Motors is good for the rest of the economy"? Well, General Motors has already gotten a huge bailout. They are now begging for another bailout from the US government.

Why I mention General Motors, and I refer to the point the member from James Bay made, is that we in Ontario have been linked to the auto industry, we have been linked to the forest industry, and we've tried to keep those industries going because so many people rely on those industries for jobs. Hopefully, those industries and other industries will now realize that the whole paradigm has shifted, so we can't continue to pretend that the world is the same as it's always been. That's why the critical thing is to do some very innovative thinking, to find out what are the new jobs, the new economies, where we are

going, and to be positioned to do that. You've got to invest in these new ideas, and we're starting to do that.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm happy to join in the debate on the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2008. For viewers at home, this is basically a bill to implement last week's economic statement, which announced the province was going back into a deficit situation. So for the purpose of this debate, I think it would be easier if I just called this the budget deficit bill.

This budget deficit bill was introduced in this House last Wednesday by the finance minister, and as I've said, it reveals a half-a-billion-dollar or a \$500-million deficit, which should be troubling news for any taxpayer watching this debate. And actually, as I pointed out in my short response to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, I think the deficit is probably about \$1.6 billion as we speak, because you would think the government, on page 15 of the economic statement, would actually brag about some in-house savings that they made, this billion-dollar line that goes back to 2004-05. They show in each year absolutely no savings, and then they show the current economic outlook for fiscal 2008-09—they're going to try to find \$1.1 billion, because they announced in the economic statement they'd try and find another \$100 million. They haven't found the first billion, and if you can't find a billion over four years, how in the world are you going to find a half a billion over the next couple of years to get us back in the black and out of deficit? You've been able to do nothing since 2004-05, or you would have bragged about it.

Instead, you've increased the public service, and I'll talk about that in a minute. The settlements you've made with—God bless them—nurses and doctors and firemen and policemen and the broader public sector are pretty generous when you consider that 300,000 people have had a 100% cut in their pay. They don't have jobs, they've lost their jobs, and they have very little hope of training, which I'll talk briefly to in a few minutes.

With the very first settlement you made with the broader public sector, you signalled that 3% was the bottom line. You didn't start at zero going into negotiations, talking about health benefits and job benefits and stuff like that. You started at 3% and you pretty well ended at 3% each year for all of those hundreds of thousands of broader public servants. Well, that's fine. You wanted to buy off the teachers; we know that. You wanted to buy off physicians and the broader public sector, and you've certainly bought off the firemen. Great politics for you, but you were doing it at a time when we were standing on this side of the House taking heat from those groups, saying that you just can't afford to do that; you can't afford to be that generous.

I was in cabinet for eight years, fourth in the order of precedence in terms of cabinet ministers, so I had a pretty good eye on what was happening in the province. We were trying to take the province from in the red. Remember, when the PC government came in, in 1995, the

actual deficit, everyone agreed—it was signed off by the Auditor General—was \$11.6 billion a year from the NDP. That worked out to \$1 million an hour, every hour, every day of the week, every day of the year, 365 days a year—\$1 million more going out in government spending per hour than what was coming in in revenues. You could not sustain that. Now we're seeing that all over again. We're seeing the David Peterson years, the best economic years we'd seen in my lifetime up to that point—1985 to 1987—and then he called the snap election in 1987. But then from 1987 to 1990, he managed to rack up an enormous deficit. At the time, it was a record deficit—you know, the spend and tax. Also, taxes went up a record amount.

0930

I say to my honourable colleagues across the way: The member from Eglinton—Lawrence talked about how Ireland lowered taxes and now, look, they're having the same problems as the rest of the world in this economic turmoil that we're in. True, but Ireland also went from times of war and strife to great economic times that I didn't think I'd ever see in my lifetime, for quite a few years, for a decade, and were leading the world in many growth areas. Now they're suffering a bit, but they did the right thing at the time to lower taxes, as Mike Harris did the right thing at the time: lower taxes and create jobs.

We couldn't bring a policy to our cabinet, and you certainly couldn't bring a 3% boost for your interest groups to cabinet—well, you wouldn't even get in the door. Even the security guards knew enough not to let something like that in. Everything we did had to create jobs, and that's what we don't hear from this government. Everything Ireland did during that decade was to bring peace and create jobs and take people's minds off—what did they use to call it—“the worries”? Or the strife they were having, anyway. And it worked. Mike Harris—it worked. We cut taxes—business, corporate and individual taxes—by \$16 billion at the same time we were getting rid of a deficit.

It was tough, but you have to learn how to take tough decisions when you're in government. That's what you make the big bucks for. That's why you have the limousines, so you can actually sit there and think and not have to worry about using your cellphone and driving, or write your speech, like I do in opposition now, as I'm driving along the road. Mr. Bartolucci smiles because I know he had many, many tough years like that too. But you've got to take the tough decisions.

Now I think what you're going to see—you had good economic times for the first five years. I don't think you laid the groundwork properly. I think you should have kept public sector wages down; you should have kept public sector growth down. We've seen a tremendous growth in the public sector, and not just the broader public sector. You say, “Well, those numbers all include teachers and doctors and that.” Yeah, and we needed more teachers, and we certainly need more doctors. But I'm going to give you the numbers of the actual public

service here at Queen's Park. I took the Ministry of Health in 1995-97 from 11,000 bodies of actual public servants—not doctors, not nurses—down to about 6,800. And that was tough. I wasn't very popular—I see smiles across the way—but it had to be done. We had to get the size and cost of government down. You just haven't done that, and I think we're on the slippery slope again.

I think that, as my honourable colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka said a few minutes ago, this half-billion-dollar deficit contained in the economic statement, the deficit budget bill here today, is really the warm-up act for what truly has to be an enormous deficit next year. Otherwise, I think you would have shown that—certainly, I know that my honourable colleague Mr. Phillips, minister without portfolio now, who was the critic of finance most of the time that we were in government, wouldn't want to be sitting in a cabinet that was preparing to have a huge, huge deficit next year. I think there's no other way out of it.

It's amazing how, through your ability to have the media on your side—we call the Toronto Star the Liberal briefing notes—that they're not freaking out. This would be four-inch headlines if suddenly in June everything is rosy, with a “Don't worry, be happy” Premier and finance minister, when the rest of the world is certainly showing signs, real signs of economic turmoil and where we on this side of the House, for three years, have been telling you that you can't keep going in the direction you're going; you're going to have to bite the bullet, even though it's against your ideology, or you think it was our idea first, or it's a Conservative idea. In the name of jobs, in the name of the almost 300,000 people who have lost their jobs, you're going to have to bite some of these bullets, and bite them right away in terms of lowering your taxes, so that Canada can go out and be sold across the provinces with some of the lowest business tax rates in the world.

Right now, Ontario—and you don't deny it and none of your economic advisers deny it—you have the highest start-up business taxes, new taxes, for a business in North America. So if there are jobs going to be created—and yes, the world won't end tomorrow, so jobs will be created and things will get corrected, and markets will come back.

The price of oil has already gone down. It's going to be interesting who they're going to blame next month, because the price of oil is below \$66 a barrel today, so that excuse is gone. The dollar is well below 80 cents—that excuse is gone. Gee, these were all your excuses for the last four years: the federal government doing this; the dollar was too high; a barrel of oil too high. “We have no control over our economy”—so why did anybody elect you? If you have no control over the economy, even to the degree that a province is expected to have control, but you don't even take that responsibility, then we're in trouble. So it will be interesting.

The federal government got blamed for everything on this side of the House, whether it was crime, lack of nursing home beds—I don't know how you blame the

federal government for that; they've increased health care transfers—or lack of doctors—we saw that in the federal campaign. They were blaming the federal government for the lack of doctors. I was health minister for two and a half years. You can't blame the federal government. We actually started to increase the supply of doctors even though Paul Martin cut \$2.2 billion. I had been health minister for two weeks. In my second week, he cut an actual \$2.2 billion. He didn't bother to call me or have his health minister call me; I got an e-mail saying, "Transfers." All the health ministers got on the phone one night and said, "Jeez." There were Liberals and the NDP and Conservatives on the phone in a conference call saying, "Jeez."

Do you know what? The Toronto Star did nothing, absolutely nothing—\$2.2 billion. Of course, they're here for one of my "nothing" speeches again, so that's the usual attendance I get from those people. But they said nothing. In every one of my letters—you would send me a letter about some medicine that went wrong and I would add this paragraph: "Well, you should know that the federal government cut \$2.2 billion"—and that was my only way, because we weren't doing government advertising; we cut \$10 million of government advertising, so I could not take ads out, like you guys do, saying that the federal government had cut us by X number of dollars—"and that's why I couldn't respond to your health care concerns as quickly as I wanted to." But that was another thing too on how times have changed.

I'm talking about this budget bill. We're now into times changing back to where they were, into deficits, which is a shame, because when you consider the—is it a \$173-billion debt we have? I'm way off my notes, but it's in about that area. There's \$9 billion paid in interest every year. When are we ever going to start to pay that off? That works out just in new debt alone, new spending alone—you know, it took a decade to get us back into the black under the Mike Harris government. It's taken them five short years to put us back into the red, into a deficit, which I think is \$1.6 billion. The budget, over the last five years since Dalton McGuinty has come into office, has gone from \$68 billion to \$96 billion. It took us 136 years since Confederation, I believe, for Ontario to finally get to a \$68-billion budget.

If you need proof that your spending was out of control, is out of control, this economic statement and these budget bill interim appropriations don't go anywhere near far enough to putting you on the right track. But if anyone wants proof—and you don't have to listen to Jim Wilson or Bob Runciman or John Tory—you can just look online at the economic statement itself: \$68 billion. It took us 136 years to get to that government spending level, and \$28 billion and five years later, we're at a \$96-billion budget. Just off the top of my head, that's about a 42% or 43% increase in five short years—remarkable, and remarkable that you weren't written up every day and brought to account for that. We try to do that in opposition. But it's remarkable that you can spend 40% more in such short years. It took 136 years to get to a

\$68-billion budget and then you add \$28 billion—and that's just government spending; that's core government spending. Advertising—I will go through the two-and-a-half-million dollar parties at Windsor Casino and all the boondoggles. Your actual other spending is about another \$30 billion of borrowed money.

You were completely against P3s. In fact, you had interest groups actively protesting out in front of the Brampton hospital while it was under construction under the Progressive Conservative government and any other sites across the province where we had done P3s, private-public partnerships, which means the government uses a little bit of their money to leverage private sector money, you drive the best interest rate you can with those companies and you get the project built, presumably on time, because you build in tough penalties with those companies to make sure they do it on time and on cost. The other way of doing it is basically a P3, but the other partners are the banks. The biggest borrower in the country, next to the federal government, is the Ontario government. So the other P3s, in the old way of doing things, were the banks.

We came along, along with the rest of the world, and said, "We're going to do P3s." My point there is, just like they said they wouldn't raise taxes—and Dalton McGuinty looked into our living rooms through the television in the 2003 campaign and again in the last campaign and said he wouldn't raise taxes. But he's doing that. He's subtly raising fees and taxes throughout the province in many of the services.

0940

Again, these P3s: There's another \$30 billion that is going to have to be paid off that you guys don't talk about. You brag about the construction, but you don't stand there and say, "By the way, we borrowed 95% of the cost of this new school," or, "We borrowed 80% of the cost of this new hospital." You won't even release the details of those contracts so that taxpayers can determine whether it's a good deal or not. So there's another \$30 billion in spending out there. They like to brag at the ribbon-cuttings at these buildings, but they forget to tell the taxpayers. They were totally against this sort of construction and borrowing in the past, and they're doing it rampantly now. All I say is: Fine; just be honest with the people of Ontario, release those contracts, and let us determine whether it was a good deal for taxpayers.

I did the largest privatization in Canadian history when I was Minister of Energy, and that was the privatization of the Bruce nuclear plant. It turned out to be a huge success. This government's bragging about it. They actually gave them a licence to bring up one of the downed reactors during their time, so they must have had great confidence.

I released that contract when I was asked. I released it several times. I remember that Mr. Hampton, the member for Kenora-Rainy River, used to say quite frequently, "Give me the contract," and I would have a poor page here carry over those six- or eight-inch, 24-inch binders of contract to give to him. I also gave it to him in committee a couple of times.

It was a successful privatization, because there was transparency. The employees were transferred from the former Ontario Hydro to Bruce nuclear. They were members of the Power Workers' Union, and they actually ended up being better off because Bruce nuclear believed in profit-sharing, which they had done in their plants in Scotland and England. It turned out to be a huge success. In fact, to this day, thank you very much, the Ontario Power Workers' Union is my best supporter when it comes to financial contributions in campaigns. Unions are supposed to be against Conservatives, but if you're transparent, you work with them and you do things right, they can become good friends.

Which brings me to, in the final few minutes I have, one of my pet peeves and one that many of my colleagues here share: something that you could do right away to increase jobs in Ontario. We have thousands and thousands—and we've brought many of them, on many occasions, down here to Queen's Park to sit in the galleries, while we ask the government the question, "Why won't you change the apprentice-to-journeymen ratio?" Today, if you want to apprentice in the electrical field, you need to join a shop that has at least three licensed electricians or journeymen. Now, most of the shops—about 80% in the province—are small, and they might have two journeymen, which means that they can never take on a new apprentice. So they can't train any of these thousands of kids, young people mostly, who are going through college today to become an electrician.

You can work at that shop during the summer, do the same work as an apprentice, for three or four months, but then when you actually have to go into the apprentice program to get your hours towards your ticket, you can't work for that shop anymore. Many of these shops are father-and-son shops, for example, and they can't necessarily afford to hire another journeyman—well, they can't find one because none are being trained. So, it's just this total Catch-22. It wasn't an issue brought to our attention very much at all when we were in government, so you can't blame us for not having done it five years ago. You've had five years. You've got apprentices. We brought them down here so you can stare them in the eyes.

It's all because you are in favour with the unions: Of the \$5 million that the unions contributed in campaign contributions to the Liberal government in the last election, last October—88% of them had a stake in this ratio business. So whether it was the electrical brotherhoods or boilermakers or machinists—there is a long list—they almost all, or through associations, gave money to the Liberals.

Why do the unions have an interest in not changing these ratios? For a mason, for example, it's 5-to-1. You've got to have 5-to-1. Good luck, if you want to find five masons in any town in this province just to hire one new student, or apprentice. I say "student" just to make it simple for everyone. So you have almost no new masons being trained in this province, you have very few machinists being trained, and yet this is a regulatory change.

It doesn't require a new law. You simply go to the cabinet, you change it, and tomorrow all these young people who have worked in these shops during the summer can now start to get their hours together towards becoming full-time professionals in their trades.

Why do the unions not like it? Supply and demand. They like to keep it low. I just moved houses. I waited weeks for an electrician—and I'm the local MPP. Generally, I can pull strings; people generally like to come over to my house and help out. But try and find an electrician, carpenter—what was the other one I had the other day who I still haven't found? I've forgotten about it. And you're paying \$60 an hour, you know? It's crazy.

Those that have a nice job in a unionized shop, that are in—I can't say that word—cahoots with the Liberal government because of all the money the unions put into—they used to put it into the NDP, by the way, but they've given up on them; now they put it into the Liberals. This political and trade brotherhood is hurting jobs. You're doing the wrong thing. I think it's immoral that you would so blatantly have this gamesmanship going on.

We can see the money trail. We know the regulations, we see the young people that want jobs—thousands—and we see your stubbornness. We see that all you want to do is blame the federal government. Good luck. There's one federal government in Canada, and every other province has done better in economic growth and jobs than Ontario. You're dead last. On the track you're on, you're still going to be dead last, and you're going to have no one else to blame.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know that the government is the party that we should be attacking as opposition parties, and I like to do that as best I can on a regular basis, but I do have a question for the member from Simcoe-Grey. The member says everything that the Conservatives did while they were in power was about creating jobs. As I remember, this is what they did: They reduced government because they say government is too big, so they cut jobs. Then they, by his own admission, cut about \$16 billion over an eight-year period. He didn't say that, but it was over an eight-year period. I thought it was \$14 billion. Imagine: They say \$16 billion; it's even bigger than I thought. So \$16 billion gone forever—just gone—which has to do with income tax cuts—and the highest-income people are the ones who benefited the most—and corporate tax cuts. So \$16 billion gone. They then sold Highway 407, gave it away for 99 years, and got about three billion bucks out of that deal.

By the end of their term, they had a \$5-billion deficit. Let's say, to be fair to them, it was \$4 billion. To be fair, let's say \$4 billion, not \$5 billion. My question to you is, how do you do that? In great economic times, you cut corporate taxes—and the Liberals are saying they did that too; they upped you a little more in that regard—and at the end of it you have a \$4-billion deficit. How do you do that in a good economy? If you were that great, you would think you wouldn't have a \$4-billion deficit. Other

people say it's \$5 billion, and I'll give you credit for \$4 billion. How do you do that in a good economy? You also had \$3 billion by selling Highway 407. Do you get the picture I'm drawing for you, member from Simcoe-Grey?

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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I will begin by saying what others have said here this morning: that I respect my honourable colleague the member for Simcoe-Grey, and I share good times and bad times with him, but he's simply misguided. That's all.

We'll answer one thing first. He talks about journeymen and apprentices. Sixty per cent of the firms in the province of Ontario have a 1-on-1 ratio of journeymen to apprentices. What we're really talking about is the other 40%, and I suppose that they are those larger firms.

I think the people of Ontario can recognize that what really happens in this place is that I stand up and say, "We did it better," and say, "It's your fault." The member for Simcoe-Grey blamed it on the previous government, the NDP; we blame it on the previous government, the Conservatives; and if ever we don't form the government in the not-too-distant future, I suspect that whoever does at that time will blame us. But we look to our history to get our advice. These folks across the way, in this case the member for Simcoe-Grey, were giving us financial advice. Well, I recall, in the early years that I was here, that Mike Harris, before he was in government, said that government was bankrupt. But what did he do? One of the first things he did was, yes, give a tax cut, but what enabled him to do that? He borrowed \$20 billion. So it seems to me that this didn't make sense, that this bankrupt government should go out and borrow \$20 billion to give a dividend to some of its corporate friends and high earners.

0950

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to add my comments to the remarks from the members for Simcoe-Grey, Trinity-Spadina, and the member for Essex as well. I wasn't in the House at that time, but I'm sure that what Premier Harris was probably referring to at the time was that they were bankrupt of ideas. It wasn't that they were bankrupt of money; it was more that they were bankrupt of ideas.

But anyway, I'd like to comment on the remarks from the member for Simcoe-Grey. He covered a number of those issues, where the spending went from \$68 billion to approximately \$96 billion, a cost of \$9 billion a year in interest; another way of putting it is \$1 million an hour in interest, \$25 million a day in interest.

The apprenticeship ratios: I think he covered that very well. That's something that in my office I hear about on a frequent basis from the people in Sarnia-Lambton, as well as, being the labour critic, from people in eastern Ontario and the rest of Ontario.

The other issue is this economic bill that we're talking about this morning, about the deficit. They promised that

there would be no tax increase, but there's another bill that's going to be introduced, I understand later today or tomorrow, and that's the WSIB bill, the labour bill, which will force a number of employers to pay WSIB premiums, which, from information we have from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, will essentially mean a \$10,000 increase to those businesses, which, in essence, would be a tax increase. So it isn't going to be a budget without tax increases. That's just one that we know of; I'll speak about those later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Seeing none, I'll return to the member for Simcoe-Grey, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'll just respond. Member for Trinity-Spadina, remember when we cut taxes by \$16 billion—you're right—over eight years? Revenues went up by \$16 billion. Just look at the facts. The best income for government is not direct taxation in terms of businesses and job-killing payroll taxes; it is a human being and the dignity of a job and income tax, because then you're not draining any of the social services. You're able to raise your family.

Mike Harris said privately—and I'll tell you this for the first time. We came into government and we were having a meeting about taxes, and if they weren't so high, we wouldn't have been able to lower them. But Mike sarcastically said to me privately one day, "Thank God they're so high; I can lower almost every one of them."

You have an opportunity, I say to the Liberal government, to lower some business taxes right now a little faster than you're planning to and to hit some of those taxes that you maybe weren't planning on hitting, but you're out of whack with the rest of North America in terms of tracking. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence, during his remarks today, talked about attracting new jobs and the new economy, and more power to you. Get out there, sell the province, find the new jobs, invest in skills, which you need to do more of and you need to do it properly. The Second Career program is a miserable failure, as you basically admitted last Friday.

Secondly, I say to the member for Essex, whom I respect very much, if 60% of the firms have a 1-to-1 ratio, let's deal with the 40% that don't, and they're not the large firms. The large firms keep most of these journeymen in-house. The Hondas of the world—don't ever talk to me about ratios, and they're in my riding. They're in-house, they're on the payroll and they want to keep the union out, they don't have a union, they want to keep their people happy; other shops just want to keep the union happy.

So let's deal with the mom-and-pop shops, the father-and-son shops. They're the ones that are lobbying us, of about 62 different trades that need these ratios adjusted. You shouldn't let the big boys push you over; you should favour the small ones. Eighty per cent of the jobs created in Ontario are by small businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to the fall economic statement. I would begin from where the member for Simcoe–Grey left off, and that is to say that during the Conservative reign, when they cut by \$16 billion in eight years, the member from Simcoe–Grey says, “But that was compensated by the fact that our economy was growing at a great rate.” It is true that the economy was growing at a fantastic rate, but they left a deficit. The reason they left a deficit is that cutting income taxes and corporate taxes along with the increased revenue did not match one with the other. Therefore, to compensate for revenues not coming into the economy with what they were cutting by way of income taxes and corporate taxes, they had to cut, and they cut everywhere. They did it with a great deal of love, it seems. They cut in education. They cut in the construction of housing; not one public housing unit was built under the Tories. There was no child care under the Tories. They decimated our elementary and secondary system. The post-secondary system started to crumble under the weight of lack of government support. That's why tuition fees began to increase in a dramatic way.

So it isn't so, by way of the arguments that the member from Simcoe–Grey makes, that by cutting taxes, our economy grows. There's really no sound economic argument to be made in that regard. It failed dramatically as a strategy, and all the Conservatives have to offer is more tax cuts to the corporate sector. It's simply not an economic strategy. It didn't work, and it doesn't work in this setting either. It didn't work then in the good economy; it's not going to work in a bad one. It's not going to work either way. In both instances, we are in trouble economically. Sadly, that is the only thing the Tories have to offer in this debate.

The Liberals, not to be outdone, by way of Premier McGuinty say, “We cut corporate taxes some more.” He actually admits that. He says it proudly, as if somehow that is a sound economic strategy. If it failed under the Tories, why would it be working under the Liberals, to cut corporate taxes even more? You would think that cutting corporate taxes even more would be creating the jobs that would pull us out of this recession, and yet it's not working. Right, Jeff, member from Peterborough? Because you've got a couple of degrees. It's not working, right?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Just continue.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is a problemo, I say to you. So we have to look beyond some of these tired propositions that political parties make.

The Liberals themselves, again not to be outdone and not to be outflanked by the Tories, keep cutting, only to discover in the end that they are short of money. That's why they had to break their promise not to tax. Thus, they introduced the health tax, which we attacked because it was an unfair tax on the middle class in particular, and the upper-middle classes escape unscathed, because if you earn over \$100,000, all you pay is \$900; if you earn \$200,000, all you pay is \$900; if you earned a million dollars, you pay 900 bucks. You understand what

I'm saying. If you are earning \$35,000 or \$40,000, you've got to pay your minimum, right? In the middle, \$40,000 or \$50,000, you've got to pay about \$600. You see how the middle class gets whacked by your Liberal proposal, member from Peterborough? It's obvious, right? It doesn't take a lot of intellect to understand that the middle class gets whacked by you fine Liberals.

Now, I understand you need money. You cut corporate taxes, yet you need money. Then you introduced the health tax. You had to break a promise. You had to, because you needed money, even in a good economy. You faced the same bright economic prospects that the Tories did for the last four or five years—the same economic prospects. You've had more revenues coming into your coffers, but you had to introduce the health tax because you needed money. You understand you needed money because the Tories took out \$16 billion. With your health tax, the unfair health tax on the middle class, you add \$2.5 billion to your coffers, and it's not enough. That's why you can't deal with a poverty agenda, even though you claim you are. That's why you built so little public housing, even though you claim you are; that's why you're doing so little by way of child care, even though you claim you're doing it, even though you never spent the \$300 million that you promised to spend on child care. Do you get the picture?

1000

Now you're in a crunch. The economy has slowed down completely. We've lost 230,000 manufacturing jobs. There are about 40,000 jobs that have been lost in related forestry industry jobs—and this is huge for a lot of places in the north, in southwestern Ontario, and many other parts of Ontario as well. So about 230,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared, and it's continuing in the other sectors of finance and construction and retail, and it's not abating one single bit; it continues and it's going to affect us in a serious way.

So the question is, when we have good economic times, what do we do? Not only are we going to judge you by what you do in bad economic times, but we have to judge you in good economic times. In good economic times, what have you done that can make you proud? You should have prepared the ground, given that the fundamentals were great, as you claimed, as Harper claims. He still claims the fundamentals are good. As Rome burns, he still claims the fundamentals are good, but so did the Liberals. The Liberals, provincially, say the fundamentals are sound. Only of late are the Liberals saying, “It's a bit shaky. Things are getting tough. We've got to prepare ourselves for the worst” and so on. The point is, what did we do in a good economy?

Instead of raising the money that we desperately need in order to deal with income inequality that has now grown worse—and I don't know what Liberals are doing about this; I don't know what Tories are doing about this, except cutting more taxes—we have growing income inequality between the various social categories. The middle class is disappearing because middle-class jobs, largely unionized, are disappearing, and as those jobs

disappear and have headed off to China and India to a great extent, you're left with a class divided: high-income people and low-income people. That is why an economic report revealed just a week or two ago that income inequality has grown. That, in my view, ought to worry a whole lot of left-leaning Liberals, because I know there are some. I know that the social Conservatives also feel a bit uneasy about that and the social lefty Liberals feel a bit uneasy about that. But the question is, what are they doing about it?

Hon. Jim Watson: What about the right-wing New Democrats?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know, Jim, you used to have an affinity to the other group a long time ago, so you fit quite nicely in the Liberal Party. I understand that. People can move between the Liberal and Conservative parties, no problemo. People have done that—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —and even Bob Rae has joined the Liberal ranks. So it's possible. Other friends up there, who don't want to be named—from Oakville used to be a New Democrat. God bless them. There are some.

Hon. Jim Watson: They're fleeing you, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, most New Democrats stay firmly here, seated, with principles, on this side of the House, unlike our opportunistic Conservative and Liberal friends who flock to the Liberal Party.

In my view, this income inequality needs to be dealt with, because unless we do, we're going to have social wars 15 or 20 years from now. We're likely to be facing that again. We thought it was a thing of the past, but it's not going to be a thing of the past; it's going to be something we're all going to have to face. As people grow poorer and poorer, they're going to mobilize in ways that we're not going to like in the next 10, 15, 20 years.

So, my humble view is, and not a lot of people like to talk about it but we've done that in several elections, and that is to say we need to tax those people who have the money. Tories don't like that. You see it in America. The Republican candidate says, "Obama is going to tax you and he's going to redistribute your wealth, and it's just not right." It's a laughable kind of claim. He's going to take money from those who earn over \$250,000, and McCain is saying, "It's not good. He's going to take your money up there"—because only 5% earn over \$250,000—"and he's going to redistribute that money, and it's just not healthy." Not healthy for whom?

And so if you are in society, you have to be part of society, and if you're part of society, assuming you're a human being of one sort or another, then you've got to relate to others, you've got to work with others, and sometimes you've got to share the wealth and spread it around, because that's what it means to be a being in the world. If you're not a being in the world, you're somewhere else.

So my view is, we've got to raise some money. We should be taxing, beginning with MPPs who earn over \$100,000—we should be taxed a little more so that we can make a contribution to those who are less fortunate.

Now, Liberals are saying, including Monsieur Dion—God bless Monsieur Dion; nice man—even he says, governments need to intervene. And that was a laughable claim. Liberals are saying, "We need to intervene. We need government involvement." He almost said, "There are government obligations," although he didn't quite say that. But it's as if he's saying the government has an obligation to help those who are more deserving because they find themselves less fortunate in these kinds of economic circumstances.

Governments need to intervene. Governments need to redistribute wealth so that we are all, as human beings in this society, sharing in the wealth that we produce. And so I say that I want to be taxed a little more, because I believe that we can be taxed a little more than those who earn \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 and even, yes, \$70,000. If we have a little more to give, we should be contributing a little more.

Where does that start? It starts from governments, so governments should be taxing a little more, but you've got McGuinty saying he's not going to increase taxes. Oh, no. He doesn't want to be worried about the Tories attacking the Liberals for raising income taxes, and at the same time they say, "But we need government intervention." What kind of government intervention is this when we're not building public housing to address the needs; when we've barely touched the child care problems that we're facing in this society, where women want to work and have to work, and they have nowhere to bring their children and find themselves in a crisis, yet we're not building child care spaces to provide for those working families, men and women?

We now have a situation where tuition fees are the second-highest in the country, and we have the highest debt levels in the country, and Liberals seem to believe that's okay. Well, it's not okay. It is not okay.

In the next year, as our economy gets worse, you will find government, this particular government—yes, even Liberals—cutting in our social sector, which includes education—elementary, secondary and post-secondary; child care; housing; infrastructure. Whatever you can think of, they're going to be cutting—yes, including health. That's what we're facing. These are our prospects. This is where we're heading.

So when you look at the fall economic statement for guidance, what does it give us?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Nothing.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It give us absolutely little to work on, except a five-point plan that they've been working on for quite some time that is clearly failing the people of Ontario. And why is it failing? Because, clearly, you've got people who are being laid off by the day. Two hundred and thirty thousand manufacturing jobs have disappeared; 40,000 forestry-related jobs have disappeared; the retail sector is tumbling; the construction sector is stopping building. We've got people worried about their pensions, people worried these days about whether or not they'll be able to pay their mortgages—and that will be coming, I suspect, in the next

year—and the five-point plan that they tout, that they say is working to help Ontarians out, is failing us.

There were no new ideas put out by this government. The Second Career apprenticeship program is failing us. It was supposed to spend \$350 million over three years, and out of the 20,000 spots that it was supposed to have created, it evidently attracted only 1,000 applicants. Out of the 20,000 spots that it was supposed to have created, it evidently attracted only 1,000 applicants that were successful. It's not working. And the reason that it's not working, in my view, is that the government doesn't want to spend the \$350 million or \$359 million they said they were going to spend. They don't want to spend the money. If you don't want to spend the money, you create barriers. You make it difficult for those applying to actually get into this so-called second career.

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So I proposed, in an interview I did last week, that we look at the Jobs Ontario plan that we had introduced in 1992-93. The Jobs Ontario plan was a good one. People still talk about it to this day, except Liberals and Tories. But it allowed, or it gave, employees 30% of their salary. That helped the employer, with that 30% of their salary, to hire employees. It gave an incentive to employees to look for work and it gave an incentive to employers to be looking for employees. It was a good plan; it's still a good idea. They're doing things like that in Britain.

I propose that we force or oblige corporations that earn over \$1 million to contribute 1% of their money to a training fund. We believe that kind of training fund is a better plan. It's enduring, it's sustainable, it's predictable, and it trains on a regular basis to match the needs of the corporate sector that is saying, "We are short of skilled workers in many of our sectors." So what you need is a universal plan that's not one year, two years or three years, but that is long, sustaining and predictable. Not one Liberal supported that plan—not one. Some who might have liked the idea stayed out of the vote, but most of the other Liberals who were present voted against it. There are no new ideas being presented by this government to help those most in need.

We proposed a number of things. We proposed a Buy Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways, buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs. They're doing it in America. They're doing it in Europe. We could do it here and should be doing it here. We proposed a five-year guarantee of industrial hydro rates so that Ontario manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable, competitive hydro policies at a time when many competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates. We've been pushing that for four years, and not one Liberal has been listening to that suggestion. We could have saved a whole lot of jobs in the north had we done that, had we listened to the leader of the third party in that respect.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Bartolucci is listening.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Bartolucci is listening, but he didn't listen to the idea: We proposed a jobs protection

commissioner to help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulties and save jobs, tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing and enhanced mandated severance; expansion of severance eligibility and an increase of advance notice in mass layoff situations; pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their employer when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy; and finally, a refundable manufacturing and resource investment tax credit.

We're saying as well that, as poverty deepens, we need to address that. The government says, "We've got a plan," and they didn't work on it when they had a great economy. Now this plan is about to be unfolded by December, and Santa Claus is going to come and announce something by December. Not last year, when the economy was still good and they seemed to have a plan. They wait until the economy crumbles to then say, "We've got a long-term plan, but you've got to limit your expectations, because what can you do?" And that was part of the Liberal plan as well: Wait for the economy to crumble and then say, "We're going to do the plan. It will be five years or it will be 10 years, and here are few crumbs for Christmas, and then we'll see what we can give you next year if the economy improves."

We need more from an economic statement than what you gave us. People are watching, people are listening, people are hurting and we're going to try to make you as accountable as we can to the middle class and to those most in need in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 10:15, I'm compelled to now recess the House. This House stands in recess until 10:30 later on this morning.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to be able to introduce the family of our page Elise Wagner, who is from Guelph. Her mom, Johanna Wagner; her dad, Glenn Wagner; and her sister, Kaitlin Wagner, are all visiting with us today.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm pleased to recognize, in the members' east gallery, Dennis Matthews and Paul Bien, graduates from my alma mater, Carleton University, one of the great institutions in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to welcome, on behalf of the member from Halton and page Adriane Pong, her mother, Sandra, and her father, Josiah. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services and page Emma Street, her father, Paul Street. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

I would also like to welcome some guests of mine today in the Speaker's gallery: Kory Preston, a former summer student in my constituency office, Kyle Hocking and Greg Evans. Gentlemen, welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Attorney General. On a regular basis, you refuse to answer questions in the House, suggesting that to do so would jeopardize the rights of accused. So I would like to ask you a question about a past court process, and it's dealing with the alleged shooter in the murder of Bailey Zaveda in downtown Toronto this past weekend, a Mr. Kyle Weese.

We now know from press reports that he was charged in a 2005 shooting, and the crown in a plea-bargain deal dropped six of the seven charges against Mr. Weese. Will the Attorney General reveal today what charges against this very violent man were dropped and explain why they were dropped?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know I have some time to address this. As we express our sympathy, not only in this Legislature but in the community, for the families affected by these tragedies, we all naturally want to know what more we can do to protect public safety.

We knew several years ago we needed more police on the streets, so we have put more police on the streets, 1,000 more, and most recently 329 additional ones just the other day.

We knew that the laws relating particularly to gun crimes were not tough enough, so we pushed for the federal government to bring in reverse-onus bail for serious gun crimes and mandatory minimums for serious gun crimes. We know there's more to do there.

Our commitment throughout is to make sure that public safety is protected and respected at all times.

I'll speak to my colleague's question—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Hopefully, the minister will address the specifics of the question I posed.

I think, Minister, a convincing argument can be made that because your crown, the office that you're responsible for, dropped six of seven charges against Mr. Weese, he was on the street this past weekend, allegedly shooting six people and killing one, Bailey Zaveda, because of decisions made by the crown.

You are the chief legal officer for this province, responsible for enforcing the Criminal Code to protect Ontarians, and people deserve an answer. Bailey's family deserves an answer.

Why did your officials do a plea-bargain deal with someone the police describe as a very violent person with an extensive criminal record? Why did this happen?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The crown has always taken public safety as the paramount consideration, and we protect the public safety within the facts that can be proven and with the law that applies. It may or may not be the result, in all cases, that somebody who doesn't know all the facts and the law might think is appropriate.

Whenever a case is resolved by way of trial or by way of guilty plea as a result of discussions, there may be multiple charges. At the end of the day, the crown makes sure that public safety is paramount, remembering what facts we can prove and what law applies.

We have pushed for tougher laws to give our justice system the tools they require and we will continue to do that, both in terms of the sentences and the bail provisions that apply and the release provisions that apply after parole. We will protect the public—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Bailey Zaveda's family deserves specifics, not generalities. The province is responsible for the administration of justice, and this minister, day after day, blames others and accepts no responsibility for a system that he's in charge of. If the system worked properly, Mr. Weese would have faced all seven charges. If the system worked properly, the crown would have opposed the two-for-one credits Weese got at sentencing. If the system worked properly, Bailey Zaveda, in all likelihood, would still be with us today.

Minister, are you satisfied with the performance of the justice system in this case, and if not, will you accept any degree of responsibility for its failure?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: All families are affected by this tragedy, and we're all affected in our individual families, because we all have our loved ones and our friends and our neighbours whom we all want protected.

I agree with my friend entirely when he calls for an end to the two-for-one credits—entirely. We have been advocating for that as a province for years. We have been advocating for a statutory end to two-for-one credits and will continue to do so. We've been pushing for tougher laws both at bail and sentencing. We've had some success, and credit to the federal government where they've done that. There's more to do. People are asking what more can be done. I am speaking with Chief Blair and other chiefs about specific changes to the bail laws for the dangerous, the violent and the out-of-control that will further protect our communities. I look forward to my friend's suggestions—

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

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Attorney General again. Later today, we'll be debating a motion calling for a public inquiry into the bail system in Ontario. The Attorney General is responsible for what has become a revolving-door justice system in this province. People are arrested for violent crimes, gun crimes, and all too frequently, in the blink of an eye, they're back out on the street, committing additional crimes. Just this morning, we read reports of police searching for a shooter who was out on bail for an armed robbery charge.

Minister, will you stand in your place today and tell us that you are not happy with the bail system the way it's

working in this province and that you and your colleagues will support the motion that's coming forward this afternoon?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Chief Blair was asked whether a public inquiry was required and he said, "No. We know what a number of the issues are. So now"—and I'm paraphrasing—"let's get to the solutions."

The question is, in the case of the dangerous, violent and out of control, are there changes that could be made in the bail system, for example? Because there are many layers here that will further protect public safety. We've advocated for and were successful in reverse-onus bail for serious gun crimes. We've advocated for—not yet successfully—in getting the federal government to change young offender laws for the out-of-control. What further protections are there at the bail stage or the trial or sentencing stage or at the parole-release stage to make sure that the dangerous, the violent and the out-of-control are not menacing the public? I look forward to the debate and the suggestions that come.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I guess that's a no, in terms of support for a public inquiry into the bail system in the province of Ontario. The minister continues, day after day, to blame others and suggest that he's doing everything right. But we know, if we just open the morning papers, that he is not doing anything right. He has the tools available to him, through his ministry, to appeal. He said in this House last week, in terms of the individual charged with that double murder, that his officials opposed bail. I've read the transcript. They did not oppose bail. He doesn't even take a cursory look at these situations, yet he gets up in this House and, day after day, gives these large pronouncements about, "We're doing everything right." You're not doing anything right.

1040

Minister, will you stand up on your feet and accept some degree of responsibility for this revolving-door justice system you're in charge of?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I understand the passion, because we're all passionately determined to make sure that the public safety is protected. And wherever we can make improvements within the issues within our control, we will do that, and look for more. More police on the streets was an improvement we knew we could make, and have done it. What's next? A guns-and-gangs task force, because we can be more strategic about how we deploy police officers—we can do that and are doing that. A crown policy manual, which always says that public safety is paramount—and we will continue to take that position. Tougher bail laws—we've advocated for that.

Is there more that can be done? I suspect that there is more that can be done. We've advocated for some more; maybe there's more still. I return to the all too common denominator here: a national ban on handguns to reduce the risk by reducing the number of guns in circulation.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Again, he's blaming someone else and not taking any degree of responsibility. He said earlier here that public safety is the overriding priority. I think it is not. It's somewhere far down the list. What we're seeing, in terms of decisions made by the courts, the crowns, the JPs and others involved in the system, is trying to achieve some kinds of cost efficiencies and cost savings. Public safety is not the overriding consideration when making release decisions. That's clearly the case.

The minister, through his crown law office, has options available to him. They can appeal all of these bail release decisions that involve violent crime and gun crime. They can appeal them in Superior Court; they're not doing that. They can apply for dangerous offender status; they're not doing that. They can apply under Criminal Code section 810.2, to have electronic monitoring; they're not doing that. There are all kinds of tools available to this government, but this minister and his people are not following through and not utilizing them. Why doesn't—

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: On the latter point, I believe the last five years will show that we brought more dangerous offender or long-term offender applications than ever before in this province, and we'll continue to do so to keep the most dangerous out of the community. We must always, whether we take a position to oppose bail, whether we take a position at a trial or a sentencing, abide by the law that exists, which is why I say to my friend, let's work together and work with the federal government to make sure that where the law needs to be changed, it can be changed. We deal with different governments with different jurisdictions, but we all must share the same goal. The people want to be protected in their community. We have taken steps within our jurisdiction so far. We'll continue to do so and continue to work with the federal government. Indeed, I'll be calling them when the new ministers of justice are appointed to see what else we can do with the law—

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

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Acting Premier. We know Ontario has lost over 230,000 good jobs and is losing thousands of good manufacturing jobs virtually every week. It was incredible in that context that the McGuinty government's economic statement last week hardly mentioned the issue of job loss and certainly had no strategy to deal with job loss. Today, we learn that the auto parts sector is in grave danger of losing thousands of more jobs and needs short-term financing because it can't get loans from the banks, due to their liquidity problems.

My question is this: At a time when we've lost thousands of good jobs, and obviously 72,000 auto parts

sector jobs are at risk, why has the McGuinty government no strategy? Why did the economic statement not—

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

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: With respect to the request for a loan, as the finance minister said, the government is open to working with the federal government and with our auto industry to deal with the liquidity challenges that are facing that industry right now, as we speak. I spoke yesterday with leaders in the manufacturing industry, the Ontario Economic Council, including the auto industry, to discuss our strategy. The strategy is the Ontario automobile strategy that invested dollars directly in the establishment of a burgeoning, growing—we at the time sought to improve productivity by making investments in the auto industry in exchange for the companies themselves making those investments.

The additional strategies, I'm happy—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I don't think the minister's answer would give many Ontarians much confidence. What Ontarians have seen is that the McGuinty government gave General Motors \$175 million and then thousands of GM workers were given pink slips by GM. The McGuinty government gave \$100 million to Ford before Ford sent thousands of workers out the door with layoff slips.

My question is this: Since there was no jobs strategy in the economic statement, and since the McGuinty government's auto sector strategy is full of the holes I've just mentioned, can the McGuinty government assure us that the auto parts sector will get meaningful help from the McGuinty government, and in return the McGuinty government will demand job guarantees?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The government has provided support to the auto industry as part of its strategy by making a half-billion-dollar investment in that industry. That created jobs across this province, jobs that I know this member would support. I understand that the member takes issue, but I would hope he would stand up and say that the auto strategy was a solid strategy.

Secondly, the advanced manufacturing loan strategy allows for companies to come forward—and auto parts companies have come forward—to individually apply for loans. Ninety million dollars has been spent through the advanced manufacturing fund in that regard. In addition, there's the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, which I will speak about in the supplementary.

But to answer the member's question, the government has said it is open to working with the federal government, as governments in other jurisdictions are doing, to—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government says that its strategy in the auto sector has been a success.

I invite the minister to go to Windsor and talk to all of the laid-off auto workers there, or go to Chatham or go to St. Thomas and talk to all the laid-off or soon-to-be laid-off auto workers there, or go to Oshawa and talk to all of the laid-off auto workers there. It's obvious when you talk to those laid-off auto workers that the strategy they have seen so far is not working.

What I'm seeking from the McGuinty government is a commitment today that it will not be the same old, same old, which obviously hasn't been working, unless you count workers going out the door on layoff a success. Will the McGuinty government commit to providing short-term loan financing to the auto parts sector in exchange for job guarantees? Yes or no?

Hon. Michael Bryant: This government established a program well before it hit the front pages of the newspaper, I say to the leader of the third party, and well before this letter was received by the finance minister, in order to be there to provide loans to the advanced manufacturing industry, to provide assistance to the auto parts industry, just exactly for some of the reasons that the member has said. Moreover, this was in advance of the credit crunch. This was established far before the recent events which have led to the loan request in particular. So I say to the member that this government anticipated the need for upgrades and assistance with loans and investments in this industry, and that is on top of the half-billion-dollar investment in the auto industry. This government has made huge investments and has made a massive commitment to the auto industry, and I can assure the member that it will—

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

1050

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Acting Premier: We learned yesterday that the McGuinty government, in one month, spent \$4 million in advertising on its Second Career program, and yet only 1,300 laid-off workers have been able to gain access to the Second Career training program. That works out to \$3,100 in advertising per unemployed worker who has been granted access to the program, and that \$4 million was just the advertising bill for the month of July.

I want to ask the Acting Premier: Can you tell us, how much money in total has the McGuinty government spent advertising a second-careers program that has so far only signed up 1,300 laid-off workers for training?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I want to begin by clarifying for the member that I know he would never want to leave the impression that Second Career is the only program that's available for laid-off workers.

I'll give him some figures that he'll want to remember. First of all, Employment Ontario, which is the main body which deals with those in Ontario looking for jobs, serves

about 900,000 people every year. In terms of laid-off workers, we have a system of action centres across the province which, in one year alone, dealt with about 53,000 individuals. We have a number of programs that are available for people looking for a job, including short-term training. We've seen about 13,000 people come forward.

But the one gap that we acknowledge is that there was no long-term training. So in June of this year, we brought forward the Second Career strategy and, yes, we brought forward an advertising campaign to make sure that people knew about this new strategy—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Speaker, you have to help me out. It was a simple question. I simply want to know: How much money has the McGuinty government spent advertising a second-careers training program that has only succeeded in getting training for 1,300 laid-off workers? I don't think that's too difficult.

But I want the minister to know about Jeremy in Hamilton, a welder who lost his job a year ago. Jeremy started attending Second Career meetings last spring, hoping that he could learn another trade. He was told, however, that because he already had a first career as a welder, the Second Career program would not pay for him to get a second career. After filling out many forms and going to countless meetings, Jeremy was rejected because he didn't have enough employers saying they wouldn't hire him as a welder. That's his experience.

I want to know: How much money has the McGuinty government spent advertising such—

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

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, the Second Career program is a new program; it was introduced in June. I would like to inform the member that we've spent approximately \$4 million on print, radio, TV and online ads informing Ontarians of Second Career. We've also worked with Service Canada to send information on Second Career with EI cheques. Since launching the advertising campaign, we've seen results: almost 7,000 people a day visiting the website. Approximately 22,000 people have called the Employment Ontario hotline, and we've had about 6,000 people come forward for various EO training programs through that—Employment Ontario training programs.

The honourable member asked about criteria. He should be aware that last Friday, we announced changes to the criteria to remove obstacles for workers across the province and allow them more access to this long-term training program, which, combined with short training programs and a whole menu of services, serves about 900,000 people every year.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Speaker, you have to help me out here. I'm not sure if the minister can't add or if the minister is deliberately trying to avoid answering the question.

The Second Career program has been around for seven months. We know that the McGuinty government spent \$4 million advertising it in one month, the month of July alone. My question is: In total, how much money has the McGuinty government spent on a second-careers program that has only found training for 1,300 out of 230,000 laid-off workers?

It would seem to most workers that this program is all about giving the appearance that the McGuinty government cares about laid-off workers, through all kinds of advertising, but in fact doesn't help laid-off workers.

I ask again: How much money has the McGuinty government spent advertising this program that obviously—

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

Hon. John Milloy: I think the honourable member needs to get his facts straight. Second Career was introduced on June 1. We began the advertising campaign in July. To date, we have spent approximately \$4 million to advertise a brand new program, unique in its kind across the country.

But this is more than about figures; this is about individuals. Let me tell the honourable member about some more individuals. Let me tell him about Andrew Machan. Andrew lost his job last spring following the first round of layoffs at Sterling Truck in St. Thomas. He heard about Second Career through the action centre that was set up at the plant. Andrew is now registered at Fanshawe College's engineering technician-industrial controls program.

I'd like to read a quote from Andrew. Andrew said: "Second Career has given me another chance to do what I've always wanted to do. Being in school and doing well at it has given me a more positive outlook about my future prospects. Next to marrying my wife, this is one of the best decisions I've"—

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

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Attorney General. I'm looking for answers to questions which he failed to respond to with specifics earlier, dealing with the prior charges against the man who is now accused of Bailey Zaveda's murder and the shooting of five other people on the weekend. Apparently, back in 2005, he was charged with—among other things—assault with a handgun and aggravated assault. He ended up pleading guilty to discharging a firearm with intent to wound. All of the other charges were dropped.

Again, the minister has had adequate time. Given the gravity of the situation on the weekend, surely he can tell us, tell the family: What were those charges that were dropped and why were they dropped? Why did the crown plea bargain with this man?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know, I have a 23-year-old. I can't imagine what any family goes through when they lose their loved one. We all share the deter-

mination to make sure we're doing everything we can so that we can protect the public safety.

The resolution of charges, whether through trial or plea, depends on the evidence and the law. I can't change the evidence as Attorney General. I can advocate for but can't change most of the law. We can take the tough positions to advocate for public safety, which is always paramount in every case, and that is what we do. That is our policy, to protect—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'd like to ask the crown and the police if those six charges that were dropped were not warranted. That doesn't sell. The reality is that we're talking about court backlogs, efficiency in the system. That's why public safety is being jeopardized on a regular basis by this minister and the system that he is supposedly responsible for but won't accept any responsibility for the bad and faulty decisions being made.

We should ask about this individual, and I'll put it on the record again. The police describe him as a very violent man with an extensive criminal record, yet your officials decided to drop six very serious charges against this man. When he was sentenced and completed his sentence, why didn't you apply under Criminal Code 810.2 and make an application for electronic monitoring of this individual so we could at least track his movements in the city?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I repeat: Without speaking to the specifics of an individual case which is now the subject of a police investigation for some very serious charges, my friend would know that the resolution of charges in what he calls "plea bargaining" has been around long before I started practice. It was around when he was a Solicitor General. I don't think that he would suggest that plea bargaining when he was the Solicitor General occurred only in circumstances to clear backlogs, to get rid of charges. I think he would suggest that he took a tough position, as a member of a government, on crime, as do we: Public safety is paramount, the resolution of charges always dependent on the facts of the case and the law that applies. That is—

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

1100

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

My colleague the MPP for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and grandparents who are raising their grandchildren are rallying right now in Hamilton, as I speak. They want the ministry's Hamilton staff to comply with the minister's response to my colleague's question on October 7 about eligibility for temporary care assistance funding. The minister said, "I'm not asking the director of services to not use his or her judgment for special circumstances."

Each of these grandchildren who live with their grandparents do so under very, very special circumstances. Will this minister direct her staff to recognize these special circumstances and ensure that they're eligible for full temporary care assistance funding?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from the third party for her question.

Again, I'm going to repeat it: Every grandparent who qualifies for temporary care assistance will receive temporary care assistance. It is temporary. And, yes, the director of the program in each municipality has some flexibility, because we cannot establish every rule so clearly to make a decision as to who is entitled and who is not entitled. The rule has not been changed. It was the same rule when the third party was in power, and we will continue to apply it. Every grandparent who qualifies will receive the money.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister appears to be really desperate to find someone else to fault in this situation, and now she's even faulting her own staff. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek was very clear—and last time, she actually accused him, accused the member asking the question, of somehow interfering with the process and advocating a means test, which is absolutely unacceptable.

He and the grandparents are asking the minister to commit to three very fundamental, basic things: that all at-risk grandchildren being raised by their grandparents are eligible for temporary care assistance; that "duration of assistance" means that no time limits are set on the availability of TCA, which may be needed for years and years, as the minister knows very well; and that "settled intent" is not grounds to deny temporary care assistance.

Will this minister finally take responsibility for this fiasco and reinstate the directives and interpretations that ensure grandchildren—

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The member is right. The member from Hamilton East blew the whistle because the program was not applied equitably across the province; we reviewed it, and that was true. So we made sure that every grandparent who qualifies for temporary care assistance will receive the benefits. However, they want the program to be income-tested. It's not income-tested right now. Again, if it's income-tested, 75% of grandparents will not qualify. Do they want us to change the rules? The question is theirs.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Minister, over the last several weeks and today, my constituents have heard conflicting stories about your ministry's temporary care assistance program. Opposition members have accused your ministry of cutting off grandparents from this program, which offers assistance to children most in need. The member for Hamilton

East-Stoney Creek has continually suggested that you have changed the rules, forcing many to exit this program.

Minister, the people of Ontario deserve a clear and honest response. On behalf of grandparents across the province, could you please stand in your place and clear the record?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the MPP from Guelph for her interest in the lives of Ontario's most vulnerable.

The member is right. The people of Ontario deserve the correct information, so let me make this very clear. My ministry has not changed the rules in regard to eligibility for the TCA program. The budget has been increased again this year, to \$12.8 million. This is almost 14% more than the year before. This December—

Interjection.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, this has changed. This December, they will receive a 2% increase. What did these two opposition parties do? They voted against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I note in the record in Hansard that it's not just the NDP who have been attempting to spin this issue. In fact, last Thursday in the House, the Conservative member for Dufferin-Caledon stated, "The minister must know that once an Ontario resident turns 65, they no longer qualify for social assistance and would be turned away."

Minister, is that true? You suggested on several occasions over the last two weeks that if grandparents were ineligible for the temporary care assistance program, they could apply for some of Ontario's long-term social assistance programs. Minister, can an individual over the age of 65 be eligible for Ontario Works?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci again for the question. In fact, all individuals over the age of 18 may be eligible for Ontario Works basic financial assistance if they meet program eligibility requirements, including those over the age of 65—again, including those over the age of 65.

But the member from Dufferin-Caledon was on a very slippery slope when she was talking about our record. Let me quote from the years 1997 to 2002: The budget for the TCA program went from \$14.5 million to \$8.9 million. So the Conservative Party slashed a very, very important program. This party is an uncaring Conservative party.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Attorney General: A year and a half ago, I told this Legislature about an incident involving a military assault rifle being carried behind Caledonia's Notre Dame elementary school. Turtle Island News reported that Mr. VanEvery "threatened another man in his late twenties with an AK-47 rifle." He then shot up a smoke shack on provincial Highway 6 in Caledonia. At the time, he already had 74 previous convictions, 43 of which were gun-related.

How does one get 43 convictions, gun-related convictions, and still be allowed to walk around free with an AK-47 on the Ontario-government-owned Douglas Creek Estates, to walk around behind a school and to shoot up a smoke shack?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I think the member asks an important series of questions. I don't have all the details about the specifics of the case that he raises, so let's deal with some of the policy issues.

If he asks our position with respect to whether we think handguns should be in greater circulation or lesser circulation in the province of Ontario, I say "lesser circulation," and that would apply to AK-47s as well. If he asks whether we need to take a look at the laws that apply to those in possession of firearms, I say "absolutely." My colleague Michael Bryant and Premier McGuinty pushed hard for reverse-onus bail and mandatory minimums for serious gun crimes. Is there more to do? There may well be—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Attorney General, VanEvery was sentenced to four and a half years in jail just the other day. He'll probably get out in a year and a half. There was plea bargaining, where 13 counts of attempted murder were dropped. The same four-and-a-half-year sentence was given to VanEvery almost a decade ago for selling illegal weapons imported into Canada.

Why are your crown attorneys pleading away offences like 13 counts of attempted murder, using an AK-47, a military assault rifle, for a man with 74 previous convictions? How can the public respect the administration of justice? Is this yet another example of your catch-and-release justice system?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: People must have confidence and will have confidence that when cases are resolved in the context of the Criminal Code in our courts, they're resolved on the basis of what facts can be proven and resolved on the basis of what law applies. It is challenging sometimes, when we hear the short question or the headline, to wonder what happened, but the crowns begin from the position that public safety is paramount, and that's determined on the basis of what we can actually prove in the courts—which is where it counts—and what law actually applies.

As far as federal parole law is concerned, I think he and I are happy to have a discussion about that, but we know that I can't change it. It would have to be the federal government that changes that.

1110

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Yesterday almost 400 people gathered at Queen's Park to tell the McGuinty government to make poverty reduction a priority during this economic showdown. They told the government that it must, at a minimum, reduce poverty by 25% in five

years; at a minimum, include a poverty-proof minimum wage, new affordable housing and child care, and livable social assistance rates; and, at a minimum, significantly invest in poverty reduction in the 2009 budget. My question is simple: Will the government's poverty reduction strategy meet the group's minimum expectations?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for his question and his ongoing advocacy for those who need a little extra help. I welcome the support of members from all sides of the House as we collectively work to reduce poverty in this province.

I'm going to take this opportunity—I know I will have a supplementary—to say thank you to the members of 25 in 5. They have done an excellent job in raising the issue of poverty across this province. They have come together to work with government to help us understand their issues—and the other way around. They have been a tremendous force in getting communities across the province sitting around a table and talking about solutions to poverty. So I would like to say thank you to Pat Capponi and the leadership of 25 in 5 for the excellent work they have been doing in this province.

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is not about the group, because the group, of course, is doing excellent work; my question is about whether or not this government is going to meet their minimum expectations. Ontarians across the province expect a serious poverty reduction strategy from this government: 88% of Ontarians want at least a 25% poverty reduction in five years; 87% want a minimum wage above the poverty line; 92% want more affordable housing.

My question again: Will the government listen to Ontarians and commit to strong action on poverty this December, or will you continue to sentence families to a lifetime of poverty?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite that our poverty reduction strategy will be a very serious strategy indeed. We have brought together an unprecedented combination of ministers. This entire government is working together to develop a poverty reduction strategy. I would be hard-pressed to think of any government that has ever put this kind of inter-ministerial approach toward a common goal. So I can assure you: Yes, of course it will be a serious poverty reduction strategy, and I look forward to its release by the end of the year.

FOODLAND ONTARIO AWARDS

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Constituents in my riding have acknowledged just how important it is to their health and local economy to buy locally grown and locally produced foods, certainly supported by Ms. Herma van Beek, the president of the Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture. Buying local is a great way to promote the local agricultural economy while at the same time protecting the environment, because food

travels a shorter distance when you are able to secure it locally.

Another important component of an effective strategy to increase the demand for locally grown and produced food is to recognize the important work that has been undertaken by industry partners. I noticed in my local paper an article about Mr. Dave Morello, the owner of Morello's Your Independent Grocer store in Peterborough, who won a Platinum-All Seasons award for the eighth consecutive year under the Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards. Minister, could you please tell this House more about this wonderful awards program?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First, I'd like to say, congratulations to Mr. Morello. I'm happy that the member has asked a question that allows me to talk about the great work that is happening in the grocery sector with respect to promoting Ontario food products.

Earlier this month, my ministry was pleased to announce the 2008 Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards. This is an annual event, and it's a tremendous opportunity to support Ontario-grown fresh produce. The outstanding and innovative efforts of 37 grocers across the province were recognized in this year's awards. There are five award categories, including a new category under Pick Ontario Freshness, and the five categories are Platinum All Seasons Award, which recognizes merchandising excellence; a Gold Category Award that is given to the chain and independent stores that showcase seasonal, creative and cross-merchandised items—

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Minister. Recognition for retailers who have caught the wave of the locally grown food movement is critical in the sustainability of this movement. Buying food produced locally in Ontario just makes sense. The food is fresh and healthy and it is helping our local farmers, who in turn add significant value to the local economy. The agri-food sector contributes billions of dollars to Ontario's economy.

These retail awards will go a long way towards advancing our goals of having a more self-reliant food system in Ontario. It's good to know that some of these major retailers are taking an important first step towards the availability of local foods in their stores and the promotion of these great products.

Minister, you mentioned that there is a new category this year, the Pick Ontario Freshness category. What is this category for and who were the Pick Ontario Freshness award recipients this year?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Yes, we do have a new category. Foodland Ontario is over 30 years old now and has done an excellent job promoting Ontario food products, but they are also working to partner with our \$56-million Pick Ontario Freshness strategy. We now have a new award, and it is given to retailers who have expanded their in-store programs to promote the broader range of Ontario food products that are now under the Foodland Ontario umbrella. That includes meat products, processed foods, eggs, breads and so on.

Some of these award winners include the Sobeys food chain for their Compliments private label promoting fresh Ontario beef, pork, chicken and poultry, and Highland Farms for cross-department promotion of fresh Ontario food products. Loblaw Companies Ltd. is promoting Ontario corn-feed beef, and Longo's is promoting Ontario pork, lamb and veal.

We very much appreciate that these larger chains are getting on board—

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

VIOLENT CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Attorney General. We've just found out that a 14-year-old was stabbed at Don Mills Collegiate this morning. Over the weekend, another 14-year-old was stabbed at a birthday party, and two weeks before that, a 14-year-old was stabbed to death on his way home from school in Brampton.

You've had the Curling-McMurtry report since May of this year. When are you going to take action to protect our young people?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Of course, we're very saddened by any violent events, and our hearts go out to the families affected. I say with respect to the roots-of-violence report, the Curling-McMurtry report, that the Premier will speak to that. It's a report to him. We're looking forward to its release.

Our position as a government generally has been that we want to be not only tough on violence but tough on the causes, which is why, for the past couple of years in particular, several ministries have been investing in communities to make sure that our young people have the opportunities that will keep them out of violent behaviour. The TAVIS project, which has often looked at crime enforcement, actually involves making very positive community contacts with students, school authorities and other—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Attorney General, people are outraged that this sort of activity is happening in our communities. Public safety is clearly at risk, and this is not a time to sit around and think about things. The time is now for urgent action. What are you planning to do?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Just hot off the press, to correct a misapprehension, we're looking forward to receiving the Curling-McMurtry report. It has not actually yet been delivered. But, you know—

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Sorry. You proceeded on an assumption. What is important, and I think what my friend and I will share, is how to invest in communities that in some cases had not been invested in for many, many years to make sure that young people have the educational supports, the post-secondary education and training supports, both of which we have supported

significantly, the other community investments which we've undertaken over the past couple of years in conjunction with the city of Toronto, and looking forward to what to do next to make sure there is a positive future for every young person in our most challenged communities.

1120

WASTE MANAGEMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre des Richesses naturelles. As of October 31, the 400 residents of Estaire, an unorganized area southeast of my riding, have been given notice by the MNR that their waste transfer site will be closed. Minister, these residents want to be part of the solution in establishing a new waste management strategy, yet the deadlines given by the MNR are impossible to meet. What is the minister doing to help unorganized areas like Estaire manage their waste in a responsible way?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to thank the member for the question. It's an issue the north is facing that's quite significant, and that is: As the landfills are filling up, what are we going to do with the waste?

There have been a number of proposals brought forward by the communities themselves. I was really pleased to hear about the innovative approach that a number took, Schreiber being one of them, to look at a different approach to collection of waste and maybe utilizing that waste into electricity. That, I understand, is under way as an opportunity maybe to work with the— the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority. How quickly one forgets. Anyway, that was one.

The other is that we are sitting down with the communities to look at what the alternatives are, as opposed to the fact that we know there is such limited land space available for waste management.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We understand that MNR is getting out of the waste management business, yet no financial assistance has been given to the people of northern Ontario and arbitrary deadlines are being set. More or less, people in northern Ontario are left holding the bag, and we all know what is in that bag.

The decision by the MNR means that residents have no choice. They end up putting their garbage on back roads, in the bushes, basically anywhere they can get rid of it. Is it the intent of the MNR that the bush in and around unorganized areas becomes a great big dump site, or does the minister have a plan to help unorganized communities like Estaire develop doable waste management? Don't leave them alone.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Actually, I don't believe that the people of the north would be so foolish as to just dump their garbage. They are actually into recycling, reducing and reusing. They know they have a challenge around their waste management, and I don't believe their answer is to dump their garbage somewhere else. They are looking for solutions and working with us on how we can manage this very difficult challenge, recognizing that they have very limited space with which to work.

Having said that, I'm more than prepared to sit down with the member on any specific site to work out with the community how we can move forward. We know this is a challenge in the north, and we'll continue to work with the communities wherever it's possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. In my community, like most across Ontario, environmental issues are of increasing importance. The Ontario government employs tens of thousands of employees across the province. What are you doing to ensure the government is reducing its environmental footprint and leading by example?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate that important question by the honourable member opposite. Like people in his community, our public service is absolutely committed to a greener future. We have captured OPS creativity by establishing a permanent OPS ideas program which encourages public servants to suggest ways to enhance high-quality, cost-efficient services to the people of Ontario. To date, we have received over 2,000 great ideas. A number of these are in support of our desire to be a government that is keen and green.

One great idea was to use LED light technology in traffic lights. This was adopted by the MTO. Today, all MTO traffic signals have been converted, saving us 80%. These lamps, by the way, last five times longer. That's what I call a bright—

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

Mr. Reza Moridi: I applaud the initiatives of the OPS. We are lucky to have such a talented group of individuals working across the province. It sounds like good progress is being made, but I'm concerned that there isn't a coordinated approach to these kinds of initiatives in government, and I am not the only one who is concerned about this. In his latest report, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario recommended that the Ministry of Government Services establish a central greening office that would oversee such initiatives, as well as encourage environmentally responsible practices.

My question is: What is being done to ensure that these kinds of efforts are coordinated and are not just isolated one-offs?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm happy to inform the House that in September of this year, we created a green office within the Ministry of Government Services. It's going to play a key leadership role in coordinating the numerous exciting green initiatives across the OPS. With support from the climate change secretariat, the green office will support policy development, tracking and reporting employee engagement and education as related to sustainability. In addition, this team will drive cultural and behavioural change within the OPS. It's going to save us money. It's going to reduce our energy costs and reduce our overall environmental footprint. With an OPS so brimming with keen and green ideas, I think that augurs

well for the future of Ontarians as we attempt to reduce our carbon footprint across this great province.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. On August 22, the minister, through the OPA, released the RFP for renewable energy supply III. Since then, the world economic situation has severely limited access to capital. This will surely result in higher bids as developers face significantly higher and increased costs of financing. Minister, these costs will ultimately be borne by the electricity consumer. Will you do the prudent thing and extend the deadline for the RFP for 90 days while markets stabilize, thereby protecting electricity consumers from higher-than-necessary electricity costs here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's not surprising that the honourable member, who comes from a party that had no energy action or policy, is now asking the government that has one to stop. I want to say to the honourable member that it is our determined view that here in the province of Ontario a good part of the green economy will emerge around the ongoing efforts to bring more renewable energy to life in the province of Ontario.

Over the course of the next few weeks, three large new wind farms will open in the province of Ontario, reasserting our leadership across the country and, within one year actually, nearly doubling the amount of energy that we're receiving from wind power alone. We are pleased with the billions of dollars of investment that have resulted from our efforts so far, and we will continue to lead forward in the province of Ontario, implementing renewable energy strategies and enhancing our ability to lessen and lighten the load on Mother Earth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're all interested and encouraging the development of more renewable energy, Mr. Minister. However, it's your responsibility to see that we get there at an affordable cost. Your Premier and your Minister of Finance, last week, said it is no longer business as usual. You should have taken a hint from that. In fact, you've delayed the IPSP yourself here in the province of Ontario.

Minister, subscribers to this program have said to you that because of lack of access to capital, costs are going to be up during this RFP. If you extend this deadline, those costs should go down. Will you not stand together with energy consumers in the province of Ontario and recognize that you have an opportunity to do the right thing for them by extending this deadline in very volatile times in a world market? You can help energy consumers by extending this deadline. I ask you again: Will you extend this deadline for 90 days while the world market stabilizes?

Hon. George Smitherman: They're back at it again. The same party that, through a lack of action, deprived Ontarians from the opportunity to get off coal, stands in the Legislature today, in a time when most people say it's

appropriate to look for investment in infrastructure—and energy is certainly an important element of infrastructure—and says, “Let’s take a 90-day time-out,” as if the honourable member has some magic connection to officials that indicates what the implications are for 90 days.

Of course, there are challenges out there, but so far, in the responsiveness to these programs, we have seen investors—the private sector, entrepreneurs—step up to the plate, working with local communities, and turn those things that are renewable like the wind and the sun and the water into opportunities to power our homes. We will continue to make investments alongside those individuals, and enhance our use of renewables and our opportunity to lighten our impact on Mother Earth.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Last week, I asked you when you were going to direct Ontario Northland to stop crossing the picket line at the Xstrata strike in Timmins. Can you tell us, now that you’ve had a chance to review the situation, when you gave the directive to them to stop doing so?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you, to the member, for the question. Indeed, as you know, I did contact the ONTC after you asked the question. They did indeed provide that service to the company as one of their major customers, but they were apprised of the concerns that were there and they committed that that will not be happening again. So that was a one-time instance. It won’t be happening again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, we’ll be monitoring the situation, but here is the interesting part. Now we have Ontario Northland lending equipment to Xstrata in order to move trains on their property.

I ask you again: When is the McGuinty government going to tell the ONR to stay out of that picket line and allow the parties to resolve their issues and not cross the picket line by way of either staff or using crown equipment to go on to that property?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, thank you very much for the question. Indeed, that was a one-time occurrence, as I indicated. As the ONTC acknowledged and recognized, it will not be happening again. Certainly, there are other measures that have been put in place to try to deal with some of the implications of the loss of revenue to one of their main customers. But I can assure you that the determination was made very clearly to me that that was indeed a one-time occurrence. It was an opportunity for them to recognize that there were some concerns expressed about this, and an opportunity for me to express our concerns and our belief in and support for the collective bargaining system. I can tell you that that indeed was a one-time occurrence and it will not be happening again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1133 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We have some special guests with us here today. I’d like to introduce Bill Nicholls and Alex Lolua from the Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, Andrew Sefton from the Ontario Painting Contractors Association, Ian Cunningham from the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, and Richard Lyall from RESCON.

Mr. Frank Klees: I’d like to introduce Mr. Bill Murdoch, who is visiting the chamber today.

Interjections.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: For five years, the McGuinty government has been whistling past the graveyard as jobs disappear in record numbers. They wring their collective hands, display concern for the media, tell everyone that the fault lies elsewhere and then they do what they do best: They appoint a member of the government to study the situation, hire a bunch of new staff, spend millions of dollars and present the people of Ontario with little more than a large travel and hotel bill. Nothing really changes, but that Liberal member gets a whole whack of air miles.

With the situation getting worse instead of better, the government must recognize that what it needs to do is get out of the way. The Ministry of Natural Resources must end its fixation with unnecessary and expensive regulatory burdens and help our businesses compete. When I look at what is happening in the forestry industry under the Liberals, I have to ask myself: How much more can they stand? The operators in my riding are facing the worst of times with the closure of the Smurfit-Stone pulp mill. What they need right now is the government to stand with them, not against them. There are some possible alternatives that would provide new markets for their wood residue, such as cogeneration and wood pelletization. What they don’t need is a government whose *raison d’être* is, “How can we act as an impediment? How can we make it difficult?” I ask the minister today to commit to a new partnership with the province’s forest industry, with a new mantra: Let’s get people working again. Let’s get it done.

FORESTVIEW PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Kim Craiton: I’m pleased to have the opportunity to share some good news with this House. I had the opportunity to attend the opening of Forestview

Public School last week, and I was impressed with the students who gave performances, especially Jessica Mucciante, who delivered an outstanding solo version of O Canada. I also enjoyed the opportunity to speak with the many parents who are so engaged in their school community.

I want to tell you that at Forestview Public School, students will receive the kind of education that allows them to reach their full potential, to learn, to share and grow alongside their peers. As well, I want to tell you that the school was built with sustainability in mind. The school is extremely efficient. It was constructed using the most environmentally friendly practices available, but the school is so much more than just bricks and mortar. It's about creating the kind of caring and supportive environment that allows students to learn, grow and share alongside their peers, as I said.

I would also recognize the hard work and staff of Forestview school, led by the principal, Todd Bright. I ask this House and everyone across Ontario to congratulate the district school board and the staff at Forestview Public School for their beautiful new facility and their commitment to student success in our community.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett: A number of young farmers have regrettably fallen through the cracks instead of getting assistance from the Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture program. Yesterday I toured a 600-sow wing of Bartside Farms. It's a hog operation between Empire Corners and Sinclairville. It was set up by the Bartels family in 2005.

Wayne, age 35, and his brother Geoff, 28, invested \$3 million just to build two barns. Now they're in trouble. Their father is disabled by a brain tumour. Their line of credit just dropped from \$250,000 to \$170,000 and they've eaten up most of a \$400,000 loan just over this past summer. They have missed out on the \$100,000 that they expected from the program.

We discussed a number of questions yesterday:

(1) Is Ag Minister Dombrowsky making any headway, now that she has been fully briefed on this shortfall in the program, on the fact that many young and beginning farmers have been missed, not only in hog production but also in beef and horticulture?

(2) Will Minister Dombrowsky meet with these overlooked farmers?

(3) Will this Ontario government be working on a new program to assist those farmers who had little or no financial data available between 2000 and 2004? After all, young and beginning farmers are dealing with the same lower commodity prices, the same higher input costs, the same decline in value of inventory and related financing challenges as those farmers who did receive the assistance.

FIREFIGHTERS' MEMORIAL

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise in the House today. I want to tell you about a generous donation

that has been made by the Oakville Professional Fire Fighters Association to the Ontario fallen firefighter memorial restoration fund.

On October 17 of this year, the Oakville Professional Fire Fighters Association was the first association in Ontario to donate \$2,000 to the restoration fundraiser, and that's an amount of about \$10 per member.

Earlier this year, members will recall, the memorial was vandalized. What was vandalized that day were the names of 420 Ontario firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty, and their names are engraved on this memorial.

Each year, the names of fallen firefighters are added to the memorial in a special ceremony. The memorial is a measure of our gratitude in Ontario to those firefighters who paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to their community, and to their colleagues, who continue to risk their lives for us each and every day.

I'd like to thank the Oakville firefighters for their generous contribution, and hope that this challenge will instil a sense of pride in all associations in the province to follow the lead set by Oakville. If every firefighter in the province contributes his \$10, the cost of the restoration will be covered. But anybody in the House, individuals and corporations can also make contributions to the Ontario fallen firefighter memorial restoration fund by visiting any TD Canada Trust branch in the province of Ontario.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: I've long believed that our free flu shot program, introduced by Elizabeth Witmer when she was Minister of Health, has saved lives, and today's Globe and Mail confirms it. Each year, our flu shots are saving over 300 lives, preventing 1,000 hospital admissions and avoiding over 30,000 visits to emergency rooms. This comes from a study published in the prestigious medical journal PLoS Medicine, which implicitly acknowledges the faith and foresight of the Ontario government of the day.

There is still no jurisdiction other than Ontario that offers a free flu shot to anyone who wants one. Those of us who were in the Legislature in the late 1990s remember the clogged emergency departments and Elizabeth Witmer's determination to solve the problem while increasing health funding overall.

The chief medical officer of health for Ontario at the time was Dr. Colin D'Cunha. It was his idea that free flu shots, made widely accessible, would reduce the pressure on our emergency departments.

1510

I remember that there were skeptics. In those days, I had the privilege of serving on the cabinet committee on health and social services, but I remember the focused resolve of Elizabeth Witmer, who, as Minister of Health, championed the idea and saw it through. The member for Kitchener-Waterloo demonstrated exemplary leadership. Ontarians continue to benefit from her accomplishments

during her tenure as Minister of Health. Ontarians will continue to benefit from her service in this House for many years to come.

CANADIANS FOR CHILDREN AT HEALTH RISK

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about a small charitable group called the Canadians for Children at Health Risk. It is led by a wonderful woman by the name of Zolen Georgievska, and she and her small band of people try very hard to raise funds for people in the Third World and people in Canada, particularly our aboriginal communities, who are at risk due to war, disease, deformity and poverty. They work doing a lot of really good stuff for people but they also work with Canadian artists, who donate works of art to them so that they are able, in turn, to auction them off and raise funds for the charity.

They are holding their ninth annual art auction this Sunday, November 2, between 2 and 5 o'clock, at the Balmy Beach Club in the heart of the beach right at the foot of Beech Avenue, south of Queen. I, again this year, will be their auctioneer. A delightful time is had by all.

We hope that people will come out. We hope that they will bid and come out in great numbers and collect some really wonderful art, things that can be used for Christmas presents and the like. For further information, I invite the public to call 416-762-3541 or to contact Canadians for Children at Health Risk at childrenathealthrisk.com for further information. Hope to see you all there.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I'm pleased to rise today in the House to inform all the members that 2008 has been an excellent year for wine producers in Essex county. Thanks to our region's dry, sunny summer weather, wineries in my riding expect the best 2008 vintages in all of Ontario.

Until the end of the 19th century, the Lake Erie North Shore region of southwestern Ontario was the earliest and most vibrant commercial wine-growing area in Canada. Today, as a designated viticulture area, the Lake Erie North Shore region is home to 13 wineries, and that number is growing, re-establishing its reputation as one of the best wine regions in the world. Ontario's wine sector extends past the juice which is pressed from this beautiful fruit, to employing approximately 6,900 individuals, research and innovation opportunities, and it attracts tourists from around the world.

During 2006-07, 54.1 million litres of Ontario wine were sold in our province, and 80% of Canada's grapes are grown there. I encourage all members to attend the wine-tasting reception on November 5, next Wednesday, hosted by the Speaker and the Grape Growers of Ontario and partake in the selection of the 2008-09 Ontario legislative wines, and taste, judge and enjoy the best that Ontario wine producers have to offer.

GARY MORDEN

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Yesterday I was honoured to attend the funeral of Mississauga Fire Chief Gary Morden, who lost his battle with cancer last week. Chief Morden began his career with the Mississauga Fire Department 31 years ago and became the city's fourth chief in 1999. Chief Morden always took a hands-on approach to his job and advocated for aggressive fire prevention and public education programs, believing there is no honour in fighting a fire that can be prevented. Chief Morden's work in the area of emergency medical response was so exceptional, it earned him the nickname "Doc."

On behalf of the city of Mississauga and everyone here in this Legislature, I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to Chief Morden's wife, Denise, his two sons, Jason and Shawn, and the entire Morden family. Gary was a true hero, and his contribution to our community will be remembered forever and never be forgotten.

DIWALI

Mr. Kuldip Kular: South Asians throughout the world are today celebrating the festival of Diwali. Known as the festival of lights, this auspicious occasion holds spiritual significance for Sikhs, Hindus, Jains and, more broadly, is a national festival for Indians and Indo-Canadians. Diwali is traditionally marked with the decoration of homes with lights, displays of fireworks and the sharing of gifts and delicacies.

For Sikhs, this festival celebrates the return of their sixth guru, Guru Hargobind Ji, and 52 princes who had been detained as political prisoners in the Gwalior Fort. As the guru liberated the 52 princes, so the sixth Guru Ji is known as Bandi Chhor—liberator.

It's a day that reminds Hindus of the spiritual victory of good over evil, an awakening to inner peace. Jains, meanwhile, recall the moment Lord Mahavira attained nirvana. For all South Asians, however, Diwali is a celebration of the conclusion of the harvest season, similar to Canadian Thanksgiving.

As is customary, I wish to convey my best wishes and warmest regards to the constituents, colleagues and to all who observe this festival for a peaceful, prosperous and joyous new year. Happy Diwali.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 85, An Act to permit the issuance of photo cards to residents of Ontario and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act / Projet de loi 85, Loi permettant la délivrance de cartes-photo aux résidents de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires au Code de la route.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1517 to 1522.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour of the Standing Committee on General Government and Bill 85 will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Arnott, Ted	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bailey, Robert	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Barrett, Toby	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Bentley, Christopher	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Crozler, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wilson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Naqvi, Yasir	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	O'Toole, John	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill
Gélinas, France	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Hillier, Randy	Miller, Paul	Tabuns, Peter

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 44; the nays are 9.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Report adopted.

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

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: During the course of that vote, we all heard the unmistakable electronic noise of a BlackBerry. In view of the legislation that we anticipate from the Minister of Transportation, I say to you that you can resolve this issue for this chamber by using your power to ban BlackBerries in this chamber so those sorts of disruptions simply don't happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member for the point of order. I will remind all members

and the table as well of the importance of not having their BlackBerries present, particularly when a member is speaking.

To the point of order that was raised by the honourable member from Welland, I would welcome the opportunity that it be discussed amongst the House leaders. We have a Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, and I think it would be a very good topic for discussion at the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Perhaps the Chair, the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, would consider that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On that point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have a different point of view.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I would like to speak on that point of order also. We in this corner would agree with the member, Mr. Kormos.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's nice to know that there's unanimity in the House and that the independent caucus is 100% behind the proposal of the member from Welland.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the October 28, 2008, report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 107(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

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

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

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

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I will reserve that for the time of ministerial statements.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Mr. Fonseca moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 119, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'll make a statement during ministerial statements.

1530

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise in the House today to address the Legislature about a significant public safety issue. Research tells us that drivers who use cellphones are four times more likely to be in a crash than a driver who is focused on the road. Drivers who are busy text-messaging, e-mailing, dialling or talking on their cellphones are too preoccupied to properly drive their cars. Transport Canada tells us that driver distraction is a contributing factor in about 20% of all collisions in this country. A recent Ontario Medical Association study urged the government to take action to address driving while using a cellphone.

Around the world, approximately 50 countries, such as Australia and the United Kingdom, have banned the use of cellphones by drivers unless using them hands-free. In the United States, there are bans in California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, New Jersey, New York and Washington. In Canada, similar bans already exist in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

We know that these new technologies have created some tremendous conveniences. But we know something else: Deep down, we all know it is dangerous to use them while driving. In the past, the McGuinty government has taken tough action to deal with drivers who continue to

drink and drive and those who think our roads are meant for street racing. Today, I'm asking you to take another important step to save lives, prevent injuries and keep our communities safe. The legislation I'm introducing today will, if passed, fight driver distraction by banning text-messaging, e-mailing, dialling and chatting on hand-held cellphones and other electronic entertainment devices while driving. Anyone who chooses to break this law would face a fine of up to \$500.

We are also proposing to broaden the current ban on televisions that are visible to the driver to include other devices with display screens, such as DVD players. That does not mean that other distractions are not important. Drivers must take extreme care when doing anything, including using hands-free devices, that would divide their attention from the task of driving even for an instant. Drivers who do not focus on the task of driving should not be driving. Those who put others at risk by allowing themselves to become distracted—for any reason—could be charged with careless driving under the Highway Traffic Act or even dangerous driving, a criminal offence.

It is time to take a tough stand. We need to stop this danger on our roads. Our "eyes on the road, hands on the wheel" bill could prevent tragedies before they happen. With the use of cellphones and other hand-held electronic devices on the rise, we must deal with this issue now.

We're not alone in our thinking here. Our government has the support of many organizations, some of which are represented in the gallery today. Earlier today, I was joined by the Ontario Medical Association, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Ontario Safety League and many others who stood beside us as we announced our plans.

Innovation in safety and public security has been one of the defining characteristics of this government. This new legislation could be another part of that agenda of innovation. We must continue to ensure that we address new risks and hazards as they arise. As with all of the safety reforms we have introduced, our purpose is clear: It is to preserve and strengthen Ontario's outstanding record of public safety on our roads, a record that has been in effect for many years, through many governments. The proposed legislation supports the McGuinty government's commitment to prevent injury and reduce traffic collisions.

Our government believes that road safety must be a top priority. Our goal is to keep Ontario's roads among the safest in North America. We must ensure the safety of every Ontarian, protect families, keep communities safe, and create better health for Ontarians.

But this bill is about more than safer roads; it is also about cleaner air. You may have noticed that our proposed legislation is entitled the Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act. I would like to take a moment to explain to all members the green component of this legislation.

Encouraging more Ontarians to carpool is part of Ontario's plan to reduce harmful emissions, ease traffic

congestion and fight climate change. That is why the proposed legislation also includes measures to remove the existing red tape associated with forming carpools in Ontario.

At this time, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge all of those who have made a contribution to this particular effort, including my colleagues in the Legislature who offer, from time to time, much advice to us. Those would include, if I can go to the last piece of the legislation first: Mr. Gilles Bisson, the member for Timmins–James Bay, who has introduced a bill regarding carpooling; Mr. John O’Toole, the member for Durham, who has on numerous occasions introduced such legislation and who expressed his views so well on the radio this morning, as I was listening carefully to his counsel and advice; and my colleague Mr. Kevin Flynn, who introduced legislation that would have banned electronic devices being used by young people who are in the formative days of driving.

In this Legislature, not all of the good ideas exist in one caucus alone or among one group of individuals; they exist amongst all of us. I always look forward to the wise counsel and advice I get from my critics in the opposition, from my own colleagues in government, from everyone in the Legislature and from interest groups and individuals who have much to say about how we can improve our roads and road safety.

I urge all members to support this bill, and I thank you for your attention and for your strong support to this point in time.

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I’m pleased to introduce proposed amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, that, if passed, will be good for our province’s construction industry and fight the underground economy.

The proposed bill, if passed, would extend mandatory workers’ compensation coverage to independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in a partnership and executive officers of corporations in the construction industry. These individuals are not currently required to purchase Workplace Safety and Insurance Board coverage. However, because of the transient nature of construction and the difficulty determining on-site who is eligible for an exemption, there has been abuse of current exemptions by certain individuals and companies wishing to gain a competitive advantage. These unsavoury practices undermine legitimate contractors and reduce health and safety on construction sites.

By doing this, we are helping legitimate construction employers be competitive in the marketplace when bidding on construction jobs. If the proposed amendments are passed, they would not fully come into effect earlier than 2012. This time frame will allow the WSIB to make the necessary technical and administrative changes and speak with construction stakeholders about how the proposed changes would be implemented. The

three-year implementation period will also allow business to properly understand and prepare for the new rules.

We have listened to stakeholders and have proposed an exemption for mandatory coverage for those individuals who exclusively perform home renovation work and are retained directly by the homeowner, family member or occupant of the home.

1540

As a result of our working with our stakeholders, we have received support for our proposals from leaders in the construction field. Bill Nicholls, who is with us here today, president of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, commented on our proposals, saying, “The industry has been working to end this unfair practice for a very long time.” Doug Chalmers, director of Aluma Systems in Sarnia, Ontario, has said, “This will make Ontario a safer place to work and improve the quality of life for all of us.”

My colleagues, I am sure, have heard stories, many of them at our constituency offices, of some independent operators in construction who unfortunately have been injured on the job and did not have insurance coverage and now find themselves without assistance. If they could turn back the clock, many would gladly have paid the WSIB coverage in order to be eligible for compensation and provide support for themselves and their families. Insurance costs money but it provides peace of mind.

Some will say that private insurance can do the same thing that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act coverage does. Let it be clear, however, that private insurance is not an alternative for Workplace Safety and Insurance Board coverage in this case. WSIB coverage includes a sophisticated prevention component, return-to-work training and other services which are provided by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

In conclusion, this proposed amendment is one more important step the McGuinty government is taking to promote healthier, safer and fairer workplaces as well as fight the underground economy.

At this time I want to commend my ministry office staff, in particular Rob Walters and Julie Garner and the rest of the staff who are working diligently on this, as well as the entire Ministry of Labour for all their work, and also the stakeholders who have worked diligently to bring us to this point. Many of them are here today. I want to thank them for all their work.

This is good public policy and something that those in construction who play by the rules need and deserve.

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

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O’Toole: I’d first like to thank the minister for his imitation or reflections on the history of the bill. I think any form of imitation is a compliment in itself.

That being said, I want to thank our critic Frank Klees and indeed our caucus, because we’ve always been very

strongly in support of legislation that makes our roads safer, like the speed limiter bill from Laurie Scott, as well as the street racing bill by Frank Klees.

I would also like to say that this is the first time I will be supporting, probably, a Liberal bill that proposes a ban of any sort, like sushi and pit bulls.

I would encourage public hearings on this bill first, and in that I would like to think that we have also worked with the stakeholders, the insurance bureau, the CAA, the OPP and the Ontario Medical Association, as well as recognize that business today is a mobile activity for many places. Trucking and transport and logistical companies are certainly going to be interested, and it should be a priority here for the minister to listen.

Since I introduced my bill in 1999 I have seen, witnessed and participated in other provinces'—in fact, in all three provinces I have spoken directly with their ministries of transportation. I encourage the minister to move forward, but to do so with consultation. Importantly, there must be resources allocated which would indicate the need to educate the public. The most important first step is to educate the public, and then the resources for policing on the enforcement side of the issues.

Not to be cynical, but to turn the clock a little bit, I hope that Premier McGuinty's staff didn't force Minister Bradley to introduce this bill as a distraction from the real issues facing Ontarians: the issue of the economy, which is on a collision course for the people of Ontario. I caution the minister not to take this too seriously. The economy is issue number one. Jobs and the deficit are issue number one.

My advice to all those listening—to the minister and to the drivers—is that driving is a privilege, not a right. Keep your eyes on the road, your hands on the wheel and your mind on the job. Drive safely.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: On behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to respond to the Minister of Labour's announcement about extending mandatory WSIB coverage to the entire construction sector. This bill is not only ill-conceived, but the timing of it couldn't be worse. I've thought a lot about this, and I think the actual title of this bill should be Working Families' Payback Time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member of standing order 23(i). I would just remind him of that standing order.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you for that reminder, Mr. Speaker.

At a time of economic crisis—someone will have to look that one up for me—the government has decided to make it even more expensive to operate a small business in Ontario. This announcement today is effectively a new tax increase that will cost small construction companies up to \$11,000 per year. That's all this is. The government should be trying to make it easier to do business in Ontario, not more expensive.

I'm not sure how the government and the minister think that extending mandatory WSIB coverage will help solve the problem of uninsured workers. If making false claims to the WSIB is such a big problem, instead of focusing on an approach that won't even get to the underground economy, the government should direct the WSIB to move on with current discussions in bringing in a named insurance system, as the Premier promised to do. Doing so would allow the WSIB to track those who are covered and those who aren't. That's the way to eliminate fraudulent claims. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said as much to you last week when they delivered over 25,000 faxes from their concerned members.

It's clear from the minister's statement today that he doesn't have a clue about how the system works. His three predecessors did. The Honourable Chris Bentley, the Honourable Steve Peters and the Honourable Brad Duguid, after consulting on mandatory coverage, each came to the conclusion that it was not the right way to go. Were they all wrong, Minister?

Besides it being a new tax, our side of the House has a problem with the fact that these new rules are going to force independent operators, owners, officers and directors of companies to pay for insurance that they are never going to use. When was the last time that anybody in this House heard of a small business operator taking time off from work? Never. They can't afford to. Talk about insult to injury.

In the end, all this legislation will do is enlarge the WSIB's coffers—

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

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to respond to the Minister of Labour's statement. It's a privilege for me to respond to this statement that finally addresses mandatory workers' compensation and benefit coverage for construction workers not covered now. This legislation would mean more security for about 90,000 workers and their families. On behalf of the NDP caucus, I want to thank the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario for their advocacy on this issue over the last 15 years.

Two years ago, the council raised its concern that the use of independent operators has resulted in thousands of workers in the construction industry potentially being deprived of coverage and has created a group of employees who are entitled to claim benefits but for whom no contributions have been made. With the amendments that we will suggest, the final legislation will achieve coverage for these vulnerable workers. The NDP supports the thrust of this legislation. It's time the independent operators loophole is closed, that all construction workers are covered and the freeloading problem is solved.

We are concerned about exemptions related to private contractors dealing directly with homeowners and will be

addressing these during the bill's committee process. We will be closely scrutinizing the clauses relating to the questionnaire to ensure that they are deleted or, where necessary, so clear that manipulation and error are not possible, as should be the case with all clauses and regulations.

The opportunity is now before us to ensure that the full health and safety committees' procedures and practices are required and implemented in these dangerous work sites. Workers and contractors will now have both the desire and the legal imperative to ensure safety first. As the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council stated in its brief for the Minister of Labour in 2006, "In the case of medical aid, the burden is shifted to the health care system without being handled by the WSIB, as it should be."

1550

A new prescribed prevention funding formula, which will help health and safety services like inspection and enforcement, will also be on our list of amendments. The NDP will be advocating for implementation no later than January 1, 2010. The amendments that we will propose will be in the best interests of the industry and the many construction workers who face unprotected risk every day that they go to work. But I must say that, unfortunately, it's my understanding that this full implementation could take between three and four years. This is unacceptable. This legislation should move more quickly and should be dealt with expediently.

I commend the minister for moving in this direction, but of course he knows that my pet peeve is not being addressed. There are things in this WSIB ministry that have to be dealt with. Experience rating is high on my list and the process of deeming is high on my list. When—and I hope it's soon—this minister will make a real, true effort to rectify this injustice with this experience rating system, I will be in full support of his changes, which will be beneficial to the workers of Ontario.

I know that it's a big portfolio and I know there's a lot more to be done, but I must confess I'm glad to see that this new minister is taking an initiative. It's not everything we'd like to see, but I hope he will look at the other areas and not just focus on one, because there are a lot of things in the WSIB program that need to be addressed. I hope I can sit down and, as the government always says to us that they want to work with us to better the lives of the working people of Ontario, I'll be the first to sit down at the table with the minister for improvements in other areas in his portfolio.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A bill has been introduced in the House today in order to ban cellphones, maybe not in the Legislature but certainly in cars across Ontario. We are supportive of this initiative. I would just say to the minister that there are a whole bunch of other activities in the car that we should be look at during the process of this committee hearing. For example, I was driving down the

401 the other day to go to a leadership event in London, and some guy was driving with his knee on the steering wheel, eating a hamburger with two hands. Maybe we should be banning hamburgers from cars. It wasn't me, I've got to say. I don't like hamburgers. But my point is that we need to look at other distractions going on in cars when people are driving, and hopefully during the committee process we'll get a chance to do that.

PETITIONS

EMERGENCY DISPATCH SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with 911 services in Muskoka and Parry Sound, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition.

POLICE RECORDS CHECK

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition here signed literally by hundreds of people across the length and breadth of this province. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, under current practice, police services across Ontario retain records of accompaniment to the hospital for mental health assessment. Accompaniment to the hospital is permitted under the Mental Health Act. Many employers, volunteer agencies and educational facilities request a police records check prior to hiring an applicant or allowing them to volunteer if they will be working with children, seniors or persons with disabilities. Most police services release Mental Health Act records as part of the police records check. In order to continue the application process, the applicant must

disclose the record to the potential employer or forgo the position out of fear of further discrimination and the desire to keep health information confidential. The practice of releasing these records violates the privacy rights, as well as the human rights, of Ontarians with Mental Health Act records. We ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass legislation that would prohibit the disclosure of Mental Health Act records as part of the police records check process;

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

“The current practice of disclosing information regarding non-criminal contact with police pursuant to the Mental Health Act discriminates against Ontarians with both diagnosed and perceived mental health disabilities. We believe this information constitutes personal health information and as such should not be released as part of a police records check. Only criminal convictions for which a pardon has not been granted and records from the pardoned sex offender database should be released on a police records check.

“We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass legislation which would protect the human rights of all Ontarians by prohibiting the disclosure of Mental Health Act records.”

I am in agreement with this, and I sign my name thereto.

DIALYSIS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here from the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada from Branch 365, the Beaver Club in Barrie, Ontario, on George St. This is from Neil McKinnon, the president for 33 years, who sends this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we wish to express concern and frustration over the lack of an in-hospital dialysis clinic within the city of Barrie. At present the RVH dialysis clinic has reached capacity with a waiting list. These patients are residents of Barrie and must receive life-sustaining treatments outside our city limits. We respectfully request that the assembly review the business plan submitted to the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN that requests funding for the aforementioned clinic development.

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

“The patients and concerned family members and friends receiving care at the Royal Victoria Hospital dialysis clinic wish to express concern and frustration over the lack of an in-hospital dialysis clinic within the city of Barrie.

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request that the assembly review the business plan submitted by North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN, which requests funding for the aforementioned clinic development.”

I support this petition and I support the good veterans at the army, navy and air force Branch 365 in Barrie, Ontario.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition is to the Parliament of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

As a proponent of that bill, I’m pleased to affix my signature and thank former MP Jesse Flis for submitting these petitions.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

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

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

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

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

I have signed this.

1600

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

“Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings ... even with the Ontario Ministry of Health’s largest-ever expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

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

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

“That the Central East Local Health Integration Network ... and the Rouge Valley Health System ... board of directors review the Rouge Valley Health System make-up and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

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

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

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have in my hand thousands of petitions from across the province of Ontario for gas tax fairness. Today I read one from the town council of the town of Hawkesbury and signed by many of the residents there.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas residents of Ontario have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

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

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

Of course I sign this petition, as I support it, as I am the originator of it.

FERTILITY TREATMENT

Mr. Pat Hoy: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the prevalence and growing incidence of infertility in our population is a medical issue that demands the attention of our public health care system and should be placed on the agenda for funding;

“Whereas fertility treatment, including in vitro fertilization, is a proven medical solution that is unfairly limited to those with the financial means to pursue it, and it should receive significant coverage through the Ontario health care system as soon as possible;

“Whereas in vitro fertilization should be fully funded when deemed medically necessary, without discrimination based on cause or gender; and

“Whereas it is long overdue that financial assistance for fertility treatment be offered to Ontarians. We are residents of the province of Ontario and request that the Ontario provincial government address this important issue.

“We, the undersigned, strongly support the inclusion of financial assistance by the Ontario Ministry of Health under the Ontario health care program for all fertility treatment for Ontarians, male and female.”

This is signed by a number of residents from Chatham, Ontario, and I affix my signature.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and I’ve signed it.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition against illegal guns in cars.

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

“Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

“Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

“Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver’s licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities.”

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

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Toby Barrett: These petitions are titled “Delhi Wants Its MTO Office Back,” and they’re to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the community of Delhi has historically had a driver’s licence issuing office; and

“Whereas the current government set out a request for proposal for a new operator of a driver’s licence issuing office in Delhi; and

“Whereas many individuals in the town of Delhi responded to the RFP and paid \$68 in application fees to the Ontario government; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government, after collecting this money from Delhi citizens, has decided against reopening an issuing office in Delhi; and

“Whereas the residents of Delhi are currently being forced to drive 20 kilometres to the nearest issuing office;

“We, the undersigned, demand the McGuinty government revisit the proposals already received and reopen an office to meet the needs of residents within the community.”

The signatures: many are from Delhi, also Windham Centre, La Salette, Langton and Simcoe.

OPPOSITION DAY

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Whereas the alarming number of murders and other violent crimes allegedly committed by violent criminals who were out on bail for other alleged violent crimes in Ontario raises Ontarians’ fears for their safety and shakes the public’s confidence in the administration of justice in Ontario; and

Whereas the issue of violent crimes alleged to have been committed by people out on bail when they should have been behind bars based on their past criminal behaviour is a serious public safety problem that the McGuinty government has failed to address since being first elected in 2003;

The Legislature of Ontario calls on the McGuinty government to call a public inquiry into Ontario’s bail system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day number 3. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition to lead off the debate.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I appreciate this opportunity. Given the rulings of the Chair and comments by others in the past, including the Integrity Commissioner, there is obviously some concern about the sub judice convention, and I will be cautious with respect to my remarks and certainly make every effort to respect the standing orders of the Legislature.

The catalyst behind this motion—from my perspective, in any event—was the double murder of two women in Scarborough on October 13. I went to the funeral of the two ladies. It was a very emotional experience. There were over 1,000 people at the funeral. The evening before the viewing, they estimated that in excess of 4,000 people attended the viewing. This was for Mrs. Saramma Varughese and her daughter, Susan or Suja John. I just want to read a bit about Saramma, which is in the booklet that was distributed at the funeral.

“Saramma, as a wife, mother and grandmother, was humble, devoted, loving and selfless in all that she did.” And Suja: “As a loving and caring mother, Suja inherited most of the qualities of her own mother, the late Saramma. In addition to her humble and gentle nature, she had a giving heart and always put her family and friends before herself.”

1610

This is a situation where Chief Bill Blair, the Toronto Police chief, for those who don’t know who Mr. Blair is, said that these murders were completely unnecessary, that they shouldn’t have happened. He says that because the gentleman in question, the individual who was accused of these outrageous murders, was out on bail, released by the Ontario courts. He was put into house arrest and put into a neighbourhood where the neighbours had no understanding or appreciation of who was in their midst, and of course these two wonderful women were murdered in the sanctity of their own home.

It’s a real tragedy, and with my experience as both a justice minister for almost six years and a critic for many more in the justice area, I think this is the most egregious failing of the justice system that I have witnessed. I believe that if we look at the papers on an almost daily basis, we see example after example of the system failing the people of this province. I just opened the Toronto Sun this morning. There was a story in there about an individual who was wanted by the police for a shooting in a Toronto neighbourhood, a high-density residential neighbourhood. The police described this individual as someone who was out on bail for charges of armed robbery. This goes on and on, and all too frequently we see instances where innocent victims, innocent bystanders, are caught in the crossfire of individuals whom courts have allowed to return into society.

We could go on, and this doesn’t necessarily touch on the bail issue, but it touches on the issue of confidence in the bail system, and I referenced it in this House on a couple of occasions over the past two days: the shootings

on the weekend, which resulted in the death of Bailey Zaveda, who came from Brockville, my home town—her mother still lives in Brockville—an innocent victim who happened to step outside a local pub and was caught in the crossfire of an individual who had been charged in 2005 with another shooting, had been charged with seven charges that were going to court in 2006, and the crown dropped six of those seven very serious charges. As a result of that, along with credit for time served awaiting trial, the individual in question was out I think after 25 months and back on the streets. I've made the argument in the House today that if the crown had fulfilled its responsibilities and pursued all of those charges, which the police and the crown felt had merit at the time that they were laid, that individual would not have been out on the street this past weekend and Bailey Zaveda could well have been in our midst today and not been the victim of a random shooting, in the sense that she was in no way involved.

This is really about a court system that is failing Ontarians, and we continue to ask the Attorney General questions on this in the House, to raise these issues, and he continues to defend a system that clearly is not working in terms of public safety for Ontarians. I'm not sure why he's doing that, why he feels he has to do that. We were hopeful—I was hopeful; I'm being quite sincere here today, given what's happening in our midst on an almost daily basis—that he and his colleagues would be supporting the motion today to have an inquiry into the system to find out what's wrong, to pull back the curtains, expose the weaknesses in the system and work together to correct it, to ensure that the public can be as safe as we can possibly make in it terms of the way the justice system operates in this province. But, regrettably, he has taken a different view, and continuing to try and keep the inner machinations of the system from public view.

My colleague the House leader for the NDP, who I believe will be speaking to this later on, is a former defence lawyer. He and I were chatting about the system earlier and he had a very apt description for what the justice system looks like in Ontario today. He described it as a "sausage factory." There is so much truth to that description. I know a great many police officers look at what's going on in the courts, the costs associated with it, the delays associated with it, the ill-prepared crowns and the sort of cursory look at so many areas that are significant in terms of public safety.

I suggested to the Attorney General today that a lot of the rationale behind some of these decisions—the suspicion is that this is all about court backlogs, full dockets and crowns who don't want to be involved in bail hearings. It's all about a system that is in a mess, and the people responsible don't want to publicly own up to it or do something about it.

Again, I said I don't want to find myself violating the sub judice convention. I gained access to the bail transcripts for the individual accused in the double murders of the two women in their home in Scarborough, and I

want to correct the record. Earlier today, I indicated to the Attorney General in a question that the crown had not opposed bail. That was from a quick reading this morning of the transcript. What, in fact, occurred—the judge makes reference to the fact that the crown seeks to detain. That is the only reference I could find. I'm not going to get into specifics again. There is a publication ban as well. But I can say that when I scanned the comments of the crown, there was no comment whatsoever with respect to bail or concern about bail. The only reference I could find was the comment from the judge presiding who said, as I said earlier, that the crown seeks to detain.

If you look at the rationale—and I won't get into the specifics again—they boggle the mind. I think it's public knowledge, so I believe it's safe to repeat this, but you never know any more. This individual was charged, and these are two cold cases—this is gleaned from the media, not from the transcripts—of violent sexual assaults, and the charge initially was delayed on the basis of DNA evidence linking this individual to the crime.

It's difficult for me, and I suspect for most in the public, to look at a situation like this where there are clear DNA linkages to a crime and a court will make a decision to release. This was, in my view, clearly rolling the dice with public safety. The crown, in my view, did not do its job, number one, by not appealing to the Superior Court. They have a 30-day period in which to do so, and if the Attorney General wants to complain about federal legislation, I suppose, if the federal court upheld the bail decision, perhaps he could have a valid argument. But when his employees in the crown law office fail to do what I believe is their clear responsibility in situations like this, I think he has to assume responsibility for decisions taken by people within his employ, and that didn't happen. He continues to refuse to accept any degree of responsibility for what's not happening within the ministry he's responsible for.

We hear, continuously, arguments in this House about the federal government. We're blaming the federal government for not moving quickly enough in this area or that area. They're not supporting us in this initiative or that initiative.

1620

Well, that may all be well and good, and there may be instances when we can be in full agreement with the Attorney General and the government in terms of legislative changes or initiatives that can be taken to improve public safety, but the other side of that coin is that the provincial government and the Ministry of the Attorney General have a clear set of options and tools available to them to make sure they are doing the best they can to ensure public safety.

I mentioned a few of them. Appeal, obviously, is one where they can appeal to the Superior Court. They can request electronic monitoring of an individual that they feel continues to pose a danger. Perhaps the Attorney General, when he speaks, can talk about electronic monitoring. I understand as well that they have diminished our capability in this province to electronically monitor

individuals. Perhaps that's the problem: The request is not going forward. I don't know. Again, so much of this is behind the curtains, behind closed doors, and we're restricted from gaining access to that by so many rules and regulations which do not take into consideration the rights of victims, in many instances, or the good of the population at large.

I know a lot of members want to speak to this issue. This is a genuine concern. I would hope that members of the government would speak in a positive way about this as well. I'm not sure who the MPP is who represents the two women who were murdered in their own home, but I hope he or she is here today. I hope he or she will participate in this debate. I gather there's a petition with something like 15,000 names on it, sponsored by the church that the two ladies attended, calling for a public inquiry into the bail system. Hopefully that member is listening to his constituents and is as concerned as I am and as my colleagues are with respect to the revolving-door justice system that currently exists in this province.

I just want to quickly say that I think we have to try to find ways to address the situation in a non-partisan fashion. We've talked about this earlier; we talked about it in a resolution on the economy. We get into these battles across the floor which serve no one well. I think we have to accept that we're trying to be sincere, we're genuinely concerned about public safety in this province, and we're raising these issues as a responsible opposition. We're not trying to score political points, as some would suggest. We have a responsibility in this place to make sure that these issues are brought to the floor and that the government responds to them in an appropriate manner.

I just want to quickly say that under the Criminal Code there are three provisions that the court has to consider when they are making a bail release decision: (1) the likelihood of the accused to return to court; (2) the likelihood of reoffending; and (3) the possibility of bringing disrepute to the justice system. Well, I think disrepute has been brought to the justice system, not just in this particular instance but in so many on an almost regular basis. That's the reality, whether the minister and his colleagues want to accept it or not.

I think in this instance, the likelihood of reoffending was substantial. I can't say this was a real breakdown in the system, because this may be par for the course in the system. If you look at the transcript, and I encourage anyone to take a look at what happened here, you have to be shocked. You have to be shocked by the conversation that occurs, and you have to be shocked by the lack of concern for public safety. You have to be concerned about the lack of opportunity for police officials to have input and the lack of, I think, steel-minded determination on the part of the crown to stand up for public safety—completely missing. This is all kind of routine business: "Let's get on with the next case and move it through the system." That's the real problem. That's the reality of the justice system in the province of Ontario today.

Regrettably, the minister has fallen into the pattern of defending all of this instead of standing up and saying,

"You know, we do have real problems here. I'm going to work with you. I'm going to work with all members of this place to ensure that we improve the system to give the greatest degree of public safety to the public as possible."

I get frustrated about this because it goes on and on and on and we don't get any substantive answers. We always get: "We're going to be jeopardizing a future court case. We're going to be jeopardizing the rights of the accused." Well, I think it's about time we started giving greater priority to the rights of innocent people in this province.

That's what this motion is all about. We're trying to open up the system. Let's see what's wrong, let's correct it and let's make Ontario a much better place in which to work, live and raise a family.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion, and I will be joined by my colleague Peter Tabuns, the member for Toronto—Danforth, who will be addressing this motion as well.

During the course of this afternoon, I want to commend the Leader of the Opposition, Bob Runciman, the member for Leeds—Grenville, for bringing this motion forward. I have known him for all of my 20 years at Queen's Park. He's got a little more seniority than I do, but I have known him consistently, during those 20 years, to be a tireless advocate for victims of crime and a courageous spokesperson for victims here in this chamber and, indeed, outside this chamber, and he bears some of the scars that people who crusade in that manner almost inevitably acquire.

This is a deadly serious matter—yes, it's a deadly serious matter. I can say that when one rises as Mr. Runciman did or as I suspect his colleagues will, as I do today, to express concern, it is reprehensible to try to translate that into some sort of disdain for our justice system. As a matter of fact, if anything, standing here today expressing concern is, I tell you, an expression of my incredible interest in ensuring that the Canadian justice system remains the model for democratic countries to emulate. Look, when people don't have confidence in the justice system; when victims don't have confidence; when, quite frankly, accused persons don't have confidence; when the public doesn't have confidence, we all suffer, we all pay a price, because the regard for law and order, then, is diminished as well, isn't it? It's incredibly important that our courts—and again, for the good chunk of time that I've had the opportunity to know judges at all levels of our courts, we probably—no, not probably. I, without hesitation, say that we have the best bench, certainly in Canada and internationally admired as well. I have no hesitation in saying that to you. The quality of our judges is superlative.

I've known a whole lot of crown attorneys and prosecutors as well. Again, they're hard-working women and men, most of them working for modest pay—I tell you, you don't get rich being a crown attorney or a

prosecutor—and working incredibly hard under incredibly difficult conditions. So you see, when I stand here, I'm not being critical of the judges in and of themselves, and I'm not being critical of crown attorneys. I'm certainly not being critical of the cops, and I've heard the Attorney General respond to Mr. Runciman, saying, "We've got a thousand more police on the street." Well, that's the whole point. If you think, as a witness via the newspaper, this is frustrating, imagine how frustrating it is for the cops who do the hard work, who do the heavy lifting, who piece together little bits and pieces of evidence gathered from across the province—and it was the most arduous of work—who then see their efforts frustrated by a system that's not working as well as it should. I'm being incredibly generous when I say that.

1630

Look, I am convinced because I've sat in enough bail courtrooms—I'll refer to them as that—and let's understand, I think it's fair to say that most people who are arrested are released without ever seeing a courtroom. They're released by the arresting officer; they're released at the police station by the officer in charge. Most arrested people never see the inside of a courtroom until their first court appearance.

Let's understand as well that I'm convinced there is an unacceptable number of people who cool their heels here in the Toronto Don Jail or metro east or metro west, waiting day after day for a bail hearing, who everybody knows are inevitably going to get released and should be released, but because the system is so clogged and suffering so many ailments, you've got people who are going to be released—make no mistake about it—who end up spending more than a few days in detention centres. The triage, if you will, isn't particularly effective, is it? I'm convinced that it's not unique to Ontario. I'm convinced it's happening across Ontario. There hasn't been an Attorney General since Ian Scott who hasn't had nightmares about Askov. One of the observations is that there's incredible pressure on our criminal justice system, and the pressure is evidenced from time to time, more often than anybody would want, by charges being stayed because of delays in prosecution.

Nobody from over here is questioning the need for the judiciary to be independent, and I've spoken out about our very good judiciary. Heck, we were supportive of the government's efforts some short time ago to upgrade the quality of justices of the peace. I've known a whole lot of justices of peace over the course of many years, and I tell you in Ontario we had justices of the peace who ranged from very, very good, quite frankly, to embarrassingly bad. In the case of most accused persons—it wasn't in the case of the notorious case that's been referenced—the justice of the peace is the front line. That's the first judicial officer that an accused and his or her lawyer and the crown attorney and the police have to deal with. I'm concerned that, notwithstanding legislation that was passed, we still haven't done enough to upgrade the quality of justices of the peace across the board here in Ontario.

The Leader of the Opposition attributed to me the comment that our courtrooms have a very unfortunate similarity to sausage factories. The rate at which cases are expected to be processed and the pressure on crown attorneys and their offices to deal with X number of files in a certain period of time is a pressure that I suggest to you gives rise to plea bargaining. We heard from the Attorney General in his discussion about plea bargaining, and plea bargaining is as old as the system itself. But we're talking about concerns about inappropriate plea bargaining, the goal or purpose of which is to simply clear the docket, when plea bargaining is the result of pressures on the crown's office and on the courtroom in terms of the courtroom space and on the availability of judges and on court staff.

How many victims have you spoken to? I suspect as many as I have, who have been the victims re-victimized by a plea bargain deal, who understood the rationale when the crown attorney said, "We weren't sure that we could get a conviction on the aggravated sexual assault, as compared to the common assault, that was pleaded to." But I've got to tell you, every single one of the victims I've talked to would far sooner have had their day in court and let a judge make a determination at the end of the day—far sooner. We have a Victims' Bill of Rights in this province that's been ruled to be effectively not worth the paper it's written on, and we've had no response—notwithstanding that it's now into its second term—from this government about giving the Victims' Bill of Rights the teeth that it needs to ensure that it's more than a declaration for office walls, or lip service.

And then of course the question is, could the Attorney General insist that his crowns oppose bail? I'm not about to suggest that the Attorney General told us anything other than what he believes to be very much the truth. But one can oppose bail vigorously, with evidence that's been put together and witnesses that have been presented to the court, or one can oppose bail in a somewhat more perfunctory way. My fear is that—and again, the pressures on crown attorneys in our courts are tremendous. While there may be the very, very rare—I'll suggest, an anomaly—crown attorney who would have a cavalier attitude towards it, I suggest to you that crown attorneys take their jobs very, very seriously. But if we don't have a standard being set by the Attorney General himself about the fact that you prepare for a bail hearing as thoroughly and with as much investigative work and presentation of evidence as you would a full-fledged trial, then we're going to have tragedies.

The public is outraged at the prospect of somebody being charged with serious, serious aggravated sexual assault being released on bail so that he or she has the capacity to commit yet further crimes and find him or herself charged with them. They don't feel protected by the system. The public has the right to feel protected by the system, don't they? The public has the right to know that—I'm not critical of the Charter of Rights. The public understands the Charter of Rights. The public understands how important a charter of rights is in a free and

democratic society. The public understands how important the presumption of innocence is. We all do; I hope we all do. The public understands that. The public wouldn't for a minute advocate doing away with the presumption of innocence. But as hard-working people, as people who pay taxes, as people who are prepared to invest in safe communities and police officers and their police forces, as people who are prepared to invest in ensuring that their kids are safe on the streets, whether it's downtown Yonge St. or downtown Welland or downtown Timmins, people want to know that that justice system is there to ensure that no innocent person is ever convicted. But it's also there to ensure that guilty people are dealt with appropriately and that people who pose a danger to the public are contained so that they can't have access to the public.

One can only guess at what motivates any judge at any given point in time to make a release order when any one of us would say, "Well, that's strange," because you take a look at the evidence that was presented to the judge and you take a look at the standards that are applicable in bail hearings, and it seems to me the judge could have made a detention order as readily. What the public doesn't understand, and notwithstanding that they understand very clearly the need for the independence of the judiciary, is why the Attorney General, then, if that office is so adamant that crown attorneys detain people in custody when they're charged with serious, serious offences like aggravated sexual assault—aggravated sexual assault is as horrific as it sounds. The public then says, "Why doesn't the Attorney General order reviews?"—effectively an appeal of that release.

1640

The Attorney General—and he may today stand up and say, "Well, the laws have to be changed." I'm not sure that the laws regarding detention have to be changed. I'm not sure that they don't warrant review. Of course. But unless and until those reviews are conducted, and if in fact they uphold the release orders that we find at the very least curious, then I say the system is breaking down, and it's not because of any absence of provisions in the Criminal Code, although one could be critical at any point in time of any part of the Criminal Code.

What does this motion ask for? We see it very clearly: a thorough review of how bail is granted, how bail is acquired, how release orders are obtained, how release orders are given; a thorough review of the resources that are available to cops and crown attorneys; a thorough review of the ability of the courts to properly conduct bail hearings in such a way that they can hear all of the evidence so that their decisions can be based upon all of the facts, not just some of the facts; an understanding of the quotas, formal or informal, that crown attorneys' offices may be under in order to get cases processed through; an understanding of why it is that some people cool their heels for days at a time charged with somewhat minor offences when you know that they are going to be released one way or another because the law is so, so clear, when others are released in what seems to be, as I say, such a perfunctory way.

Why is that information in any way dangerous? It seems to me very valuable information. It seems to me very important that we understand that. It seems to me that if we're going to—because I believe the criminal justice system has suffered from any number of phenomena, but certainly as a result of the phenomenon of people being released on serious charges only to commit offences equally serious or more serious again. It seems to me that we owe it to the system to find out what the shortcomings are, what the flaws are, what the defects are, what the problems are.

So I tell you, Speaker, that I intend to vote for this motion. I plan to stand with Mr. Runciman as he advocates and fights on behalf of victims of crime, and I do so with no hesitation, with no shame; in fact, with pride, because if that isn't one of the things that we should be doing here at Queen's Park as elected people, then we should all go home. If we can't raise these issues, if we have to function under a cloud of fear about raising them, then the problem extends far beyond our criminal justice system, doesn't it, Speaker? If a member of the Legislature has to risk censure or other consequences for conducting himself with integrity and in good faith on behalf of victims of crime, then I say to you, sir, we've got a fundamental problem here, not just in our court system.

The Criminal Code is federal; we know that. But the administration of those courts, the role of crown attorneys in the largest number of cases, and the conduct of bail hearings is entirely within the scope of the province of Ontario and its Attorney General, and Solicitor General insofar as the police are concerned. I say that we in this chamber have an obligation as provincial legislators to ensure that if there are flaws, if there are defects, if the system is ailing, then we diagnose those flaws, defects and ailments fast and we do everything we can to fix them. That's what Mr. Runciman's motion, in my view, is designed to do.

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the members opposite for the comments already.

I want to say several things at the outset. To the families, to the communities affected by these terrible tragedies, our sympathies are with them. Tragedies like these naturally raise very important, troubling questions, and I wish to say to all that we share everybody's determination to do whatever is necessary to protect the public interest. The question is, what more can we do and must we do to ensure public safety, to prevent tragedies from happening in the future?

We act in the public interest; we always have. Public safety is paramount in that public interest. Although we as a country share jurisdiction in criminal law with different levels of government, we all serve the same people and we all work to protect the same communities. So in standing here today, I would echo the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition when he said this is not a partisan issue. It is not; it is an issue about ensuring the

protection of our communities, ensuring that we're doing whatever we must and can to protect those communities.

To the motion, which has at its heart a call for an inquiry, I say simply, "Inquiry no, but more action. Whatever we must do, we'll do." I say that we have moved where we recognize the need, we have advocated where it's clear that it was not within our power to move, and we will do whatever additionally is required within our power, and we will advocate for whatever further action we need to advocate for when the changes are not directly within our power but within the jurisdiction of another government.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition and members of the third party, what we're all interested in are the approaches and the solutions. As we proceed in the days, weeks and months ahead, I invite my colleagues opposite, as I do the members of our caucus and community members, to continue the work that we're doing with the police, with the crowns, yes, with members of the public, victims' rights advocates—with all of us who have a shared determination. Let's identify the actions that need to be taken to further protect public safety where we can.

It would be correct to say that we have moved in a number of different ways over the past five years, a number of which hadn't been identified when we came to be the government in 2003. We recognized at the time the need for more police officers, and we ensured there were more officers on the street: 1,000 additional officers, and another 329 announced just last Thursday. But we also recognized that there was an additional approach required for the very challenging issues that are presented by gun crime, by gangs, so we brought in the guns and gangs initiative—the operations centre, the task forces—and supported that further with the TAVIS initiative, which is for the greater Toronto area, and the PAVIS initiative, which is beyond, which is a different approach to the very serious issues posed by the dangerous and the violent. That is at the heart of discussion we're having: What further must we do to ensure that the dangerous, the violent and the out-of-control do not pose a risk to our communities?

There are initiatives that have been taken at the federal level to strengthen the legislative framework which binds judges, binds justices of the peace, binds the crowns, and yes, the defence counsel, which operate within them.

1650

Our government has advocated for a number of years for reverse onus bail for serious gun crimes and for more mandatory minimums for serious gun crimes. I have supported and congratulated publicly the federal government, the Conservative government, on the initiatives as they took them through. We have supported them publicly and privately as they moved through passage. We have been strong in our determination to make sure that the law reflects the needs of our communities, but we started that advocacy when there was a government of a different stripe federally. We started it notwithstanding that it might not have been popular with the government of the day. We will always advocate in the best interests

of the people of Ontario and always advocate for their safety.

There are some further actions that we have been advocating for which we believe would assist in protecting our communities, again, I say not as a partisan matter and not as the final answer to all issues. So with respect to young persons, there was legislation before the last Parliament, federally, dealing with changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. We advocated and pointed out—and we were not alone; there were Ministers of Justice or Attorneys General from across the country who said that for the out-of-control youth, the bail provisions were not strong enough in that amendment, and by definition, they're not strong enough in the existing legislation, and that the sentencing tools and provisions available to judges were not strong enough in the existing legislation for the out-of-control youth and in the legislative amendments. They needed to be toughened.

At the same time we advocated for that, I congratulated, publicly and privately, the Conservative government in Ottawa for proposing the introduction of deterrents and denunciation as important sentencing principles in their legislative amendments. This is not a partisan issue, and I join my friend the Leader of the Opposition when he says that. We may disagree about specific initiatives, we may disagree from time to time about the policy, but I suspect we share a passionate determination to protect public safety.

The issue has been raised in debate by my colleague opposite from time to time about pretrial credit for time in custody, an issue which is an old issue but has been increasingly used over the last, I would say, half dozen or so years. It sometime manifests itself in two-for-one credits, sometimes three-for-one, sometimes even more, when it comes to sentencing. We have called on the government, federally, to change the sentencing provisions within the Criminal Code which provide guidance to judges in determining the type of credit that can be taken into account. That has been an issue at federal-provincial-territorial conferences; an issue which has guided many.

I know my colleague opposite has spoken to it, so I expect we have, without knowing for sure, pretty close to a common interest on moving on this issue. We will renew our call when the new government is sworn in in Ottawa, not as a partisan issue, because I expect my colleague opposite, long before I was a member of this Legislature, might have said a thing or two about that; I don't know for sure, but I expect he might have—but as an initiative where we had taken a strong position as a provincial government to advocate for change in legislation. Advocating for a change does not make it partisan. It means that it's our respectful view that the interests of Ontarians demand that we end the automatic two-for-one or multiple-for-one credit of pretrial custody when it comes to sentencing, that the automatic imposition does not advance the principles of sentencing, with the greatest of respect, and that we should change that legislatively.

There have been and always will be comments about what somebody might have done by taking a particular

snapshot of a particular case. Unfortunately, we almost never have the facts or the law which must guide those decisions at the time the comment is made about the case—we don't have the full facts or the full knowledge of the law before the people who are hearing the snapshot comment about cases.

I would say this: The public should know that the people who work within the crown's office, within the police force, and, yes, as my colleague in the third party said, the judiciary, are determined to achieve justice. The crowns who take positions on cases take those positions placing the public safety as a paramount consideration. They take those positions knowing that whatever they personally may wish to happen, whatever they personally may believe that others would like, the positions taken must reflect the facts that can be proven in court and the law which guides the determination of any judicial proceeding. We take the strong, determined position to protect the public safety when it comes time for bail, when it comes time for the trial or guilty-plea resolutions of cases, and we will always do that.

So I say in outlining our approach to the specific request of the motion that it's action that we all want. It's whatever action is required to protect our communities that we all want. It's supporting—yes, supporting—innocent Ontarians that we all want. It's ensuring that we have done and that we do whatever needs to be done to protect them. When it's within our control as a province, we will take that action, and I look forward to my discussions with Chief Blair, other chiefs of police, the police community, the crowns, yes, community advocates and victims' rights advocates, and discussions with my colleagues and the suggestions as we move forward. I look forward to my discussions with the federal government and the new Ministers of Justice and Public Safety when they are sworn in, and I look forward to the determined effort to protect public safety, protect the rights of all of us in our communities. That is our responsibility. That's my responsibility; that is our collective legislative responsibility. I look forward to those suggestions.

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

1700

Mr. Toby Barrett: In my view, a public inquiry into Ontario's bail system would just be one step to help restore the public's confidence in our justice system. I think of the chaos and the mayhem and the violence in the Caledonia, Haldimand and Brantford area over the last two and a half years with respect to land disputes. These troubled times have generated, locally, the phrase "catch and release." It's used by people on all sides of the issue, and all too often if someone is actually arrested, they're often merely given a slap on the wrist and then they're out in short order, oftentimes to reoffend. But all too often, as well, people are not charged.

During John Tory's visit to Caledonia quite recently, I was presented with a baseball cap that was emblazoned with the words, "What law?" People in town have

bumper stickers and window stickers that state, "Caledonia: No sheriff."

What we're seeing in Caledonia and throughout the area is oftentimes a refusal to apply the law to the facts. What's missing is an application of the law to the facts. In our society, one tenet is non-negotiable: The law applies equally to all. Everyone is equally subject to our laws, without exception. No one is above the law. No one is beneath the protection of those laws that we have in our society. Regrettably, this tenet does not apply in much of Dalton McGuinty's Ontario and certainly in part of my riding in Haldimand-Norfolk.

We know that "justice" is a term that's bandied about with respect to the violence associated with these native land disputes. Justice lies with the courts. I'm not a lawyer or a judge, but in my view justice is served by decisions rendered by our courts after a complete, balanced and open hearing of all the facts, coupled with a reasonable, objective and fair application of the law to those facts. However, locally, people question whether justice is being served.

I raised an issue in the House today with respect to Mr. Don VanEvery in Caledonia; it would be a year and a half ago that I raised the issue as well. He shot a person and very recently was sentenced to four and a half years in jail. During this court case, it became known that he had 74 previous convictions; 43 of these were gun-related—again, a recent example of why we need an inquiry into the administration of this catch-and-release justice system. This fellow was arrested perhaps 10 years ago on, at that time, many, many charges: possession of restricted weapons, smuggling guns into Canada. At that time, another 40 charges were withdrawn, and upon sentencing, the judge indicated that it was an astonishing array of offences.

This government has to take cues from our election platform. We have to be more proactive in appealing these kinds of orders.

Keep these people out of our communities and right some of the wrongs by supporting this motion put forward today. I put to the members opposite that if you're serious about restoring public confidence in this justice system, it's time to step up and support this motion by Bob Runciman.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: On behalf of the NDP, I certainly welcome this opportunity to address the resolution that's been brought forward.

I want to start by sharing with everyone here in this House and in this province my sadness at what has happened recently on our streets. I know that for people who have suffered a loss or suffered injury, this was nothing small in their lives. This was huge in their lives. There were losses incurred that can never, ever be replaced.

Certainly in my riding, Toronto-Danforth, one of the most recent notable killings happened at the Duke of York Tavern—an innocent young woman, standing out in front of that tavern, gunned down. She was just out in the evening air.

So when we discuss these issues, when we consider these issues, we know that there's substantial personal human cost that's attached to the decisions that we make, to the decisions that are made by this government. We owe it to the people of this province, to the people of the families that have been hurt, injured, who have suffered great loss, to deal with these questions substantially, to deal with them thoughtfully and to deal with them effectively. We want, everyone in this House wants and I know everyone out in Ontario wants action taken to stop violent crime.

I have to say it's surprising to me that I would find a common point with the leader of the opposition on this issue, because generally we start from very different philosophical bases—very different. There's no question in my mind that if you want to reduce violent crime, there's a whole host of actions that have to be taken around the social sources of crime if you want to come to grips with it. That being said, there still is the simple reality that in Ontario we have a justice system—judiciary, police, crown attorneys—that deals with the social failures that this society produces, the social mistakes that we as a society perpetuate that put us and our families, our children, at risk.

But the official opposition has a point that in fact there are substantial concerns that people have to have about the administration of criminal justice and the administration of the bail system. It isn't as though we have a perfect system. I was listening to Mr. Bentley, the Attorney General, who was saying, "Whatever we must do, we must do." I would urge him and I would urge his government to take this motion seriously and look at exactly how our bail system works, and focus in.

The decision around granting or not granting bail is a substantial, significant one in our criminal justice system. I've talked to criminal lawyers who've told me that they have clients—and Mr. Kormos here has spoken about this as well—who were taken in on minor charges and held for days at a time before they got a bail hearing. In fact, I've been told by criminal lawyers that one of the things that most often determine whether a person is going to plead guilty or not guilty is whether or not they're still in jail. Police and others make mistakes. So when you have a bail system, a justice system, that takes people and determines right off the likelihood of their pleading guilty or not guilty by whether or not their bail hearing is dealt with in a speedy and intelligent and thoughtful way, then you know you've got a problem.

I say to the government, you have a problem right across the system. What's been raised by the opposition is the whole question of people being released on bail who shouldn't be on the streets after they've been picked up, people who should be held until a trial is convened and it can be determined whether they're innocent or guilty but who, on the basis of all the evidence, the knowledge that a person would have before them, should be treated with extraordinary caution. But this system is one that we hear regularly allows people on the street who engage again in other crimes. Frankly, you have to ask, "So how thorough is this system?"

I was talking to the member from Welland before this debate who suggested to me, and he's right, that what you need is a system of triage, a rapid one, where you're evaluating risk, clearing out the people who are engaged or have been picked up on minor issues because they're clogging up the system, and where you have a substantial issue, a real problem, focusing your resources there and dealing with the problem so that this society is protected.

Again I have to say that the resolution before us asks for an inquiry. It doesn't ask to rewrite the law. It says, "We appear to have a problem." This problem is putting people's lives at risk, and I would add that this problem is putting people's criminal records, their status in society at risk because there are mistakes made in both directions. But all that's being asked for is an assessment of what appears to be a clear problem. If the government is concerned about the issue, if the government sees that there are problems, then this inquiry, this gathering of evidence and making of decisions, is one that it should welcome because, in fact, people recognize that there's a problem. Again, as the minister said, whatever we must do, we must do. I would say to the minister: You have a suggestion, it's a reasonable one that could be supported by people from a variety of different political perspectives, and you should take this resolution to heart and act on it.

1710

When we look at the numbers in Ontario, when we look at the numbers across Canada, there's no question that in Toronto, as compared to a number of other jurisdictions, in Ontario, as compared to a number other jurisdictions, you can say that we have better numbers on violent crime. But that doesn't mean that there is no problem, and it doesn't mean that there's not a problem that needs to be assessed, analyzed and acted upon. If in fact the government was willing to take this on, they would have the information in their hands to reshape the system because they run the police and the jails. They have the opportunity, through directions to justices of the peace, to make sure that this particular problem that has been cited by the opposition is dealt with.

One of the concerns I have, even though I support this resolution, is the track record of this government, and unfortunately others, of commissioning reports on justice reform and then letting them sit on a shelf and gather dust. After there has been the initial press conference, a media conference, the presentation, the praise for all those involved, the high-sounding words from the government, then the report is put in storage and not seen again until we have this debate and it's mentioned.

We've had a lot of thoughtful recommendations made over the years. They haven't been acted on. I'll give you one instance. The McMurtry report regarding crime victims: The government dismissed one of the more important recommendations—setting up a victims' advocate—just dismissed that out of hand.

So I ask, if we have had these reports, with intelligent recommendations, why is the minister saying that we will do whatever we must do? I think the reality is that that is

not the case, that is not what has been happening. That is why the kind of resolution that has come forward today from the opposition is before us and being debated.

We have a system that's clogged and overflowing. I know the member from Welland can speak to that, but in my riding I have a parole officer who deals on a daily basis with people who have been put on parole, on probation, and who have to report to him. His experience is a fairly straightforward one: The jails are so full that even when people violate the terms of their parole or probation, they come to him, he cites them for that, they go before a judge and they're given more probation—it's extended. So, in effect, he has no power to enforce those conditions. When you go to provincial court—and the member from Welland can detail it in a very colourful way—you have this incredible assembly line process of people moving through. But do we have the kind of considered, thoughtful analysis, weighing of the reality, weighing of the consequences, weighing of the facts before us that we need in this society to protect us and to protect the innocent? Apparently not.

We ask the government to take on this resolution, to adopt the resolution, to do the assessment and bring the responses back to this House so that we, here, can make a determination—and frankly, if there are changes that are needed in the Criminal Code, if the federal government has to take on issues, then let us present the evidence. Show us the failings in the Criminal Code, and I would not be surprised if there were failings, based on evidence and make the political argument.

I agree with the member from Welland. There are people who are quite dangerous who need to be contained. I grew up in the east end of Hamilton. The good, working-class area had some people in it who were pretty rough—some of the kids who went to school with me, one of whom I last heard was in Millhaven for having been a major, large-scale cocaine dealer, and I have to tell you, as a child I could have predicted that. There are people who are, in fact, not particularly rehabilitatable. There are people, in fact, who should be set aside in this society.

When you have a system of evaluating those who have been arrested and deciding who can be released because they aren't a threat and those who should be held because they are a threat, it appears to the public and it appears to me and it appears to many members of this Legislature that that system is failing. When this opposition comes forward and says, "You've got a problem. You should be examining it. You should be doing a detailed assessment of whether or not this system is holding up properly so that you can make a decision," then they're acting responsibly. I'd call on the government to act responsibly as well.

The Attorney General talked about the support he has given to initiatives at the federal level, which is all well and good, but here is an area where he doesn't have to advocate to another level of government. He has the power in his hands. He can make the decision. He can set the policies. He can make sure that you have people hired

as justices of the peace who have the legal training. Those who don't perform well can be weeded out. All these things are in his hands.

There are times when it's useful to go to the federal government to say, "Look, you have a problem here. You have to act." But too often it's a great excuse for doing nothing when in fact the power is in your hands—the power to make a difference, to address issues that people in this province are deeply concerned about, the power to, from time to time, ensure that someone is not getting bail because they shouldn't be getting bail, and the power to ensure that those who have been picked up on matters that are fairly minor, where there is no threat to the public, are not held for multiple days in jail.

I want to make one last point: The minister talked about two for one, and that people who had time served in a facility shouldn't get double credit for that time on a pretrial basis. When you talk to defence lawyers who have gone into the Don jail, where you have three prisoners to a cell, one of whom sleeps on the floor, whose choice is to have their head at the toilet end or the bar end where the light comes in, you have, to be kind, a Dickensian situation. It is no wonder that any judge who goes in and sees that says, "Anyone who's served time here should get a lot of credit for it because these conditions are intolerable, unsupportable." When you have at the one end that kind of treatment of people who may well be innocent, and at the other the lack of caution and prudence dealing with those who may well be very dangerous, then you have to say, "You have a system that needs to be re-examined."

I call on everyone in this House to support this resolution.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion. First and foremost, let me express my utmost sympathy and condolences to the families and friends of every single victim to a senseless crime, the types we have witnessed in the last few days here in Toronto. I think we all collectively agree that there is no justification of such taking away of life, and our hearts, thoughts and sympathies go to the families and their friends. That's why it's extremely important that we discuss this motion and its impact on our judicial system.

1720

I speak today as a member of this House, obviously, as a lawyer and as a member of my community in Ottawa, which is a large urban metropolitan area. I think we all know that the bail system, as created in Canada, is created at the federal level. That's the first thing you're taught in law school when you're trying to learn between the various jurisdictions and sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution Act. The law around the system, the substantive provisions as to the principal standards to be used, are all dictated or written down in the Criminal Code, which is within the sphere of the House of Commons federally in Ottawa. The case law that emanates is

also within the purview of the federal government. So we have to be very careful as to what that bail system comprises. The substantive law, the procedures which are outlined, are not something which we, through this Legislature, can tinker with or alter. Of course, we have to be mindful that we ensure that we enforce the law in a manner that is effective, that provides for public security and community security.

That's why, for me, one of the most important things that I think the majority of us in this House agree we should be striving towards is the banning of handguns. To me, it absolutely has not yet made sense as to why in our society, in this day and age, we allow handguns. They are used to kill people. We've seen killing after killing in which handguns have been used, and we need to make sure that those handguns are banned.

But community safety is a collective effort. We will be debating on Thursday a private member's bill that I have tabled in this House, Bill 106, the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, which talks about closing properties that have been used for illegal purposes, such as gang houses, crack houses, booze cans and marijuana grow-ops. I urge all members in this House to support that bill so that we can clean up illegal properties and illegal activities in our communities and neighbourhoods to make sure that our community, Ontario, is a safe place to live.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased today to join this debate today in support of the leader of the official opposition's motion to the Premier with respect to bail and the process surrounding bail here in the province of Ontario.

We've heard from some people who have legal experience—lawyers—and that's great and that's important. I'm not a lawyer, but I do talk to people on the street. One of the first things they ask, and one of the first things they're concerned about is—they shake their heads when they listen to the news in the evening or read the papers in the morning and there's a story about a person out on bail with a record as a violent offender committing murder. It sends shudders down their spines, because it can't help but undermine the confidence we should all have in the legal and justice system. But it also puts them in a state of fear, because if you as a member of the public expect that the justice system is there to protect you from violent criminals, and then you read about those violent criminals not only being out and free on bail but committing murder while they're out on bail, you ask yourself, "Who is really protecting us, the members of the public?" That's a fair commentary. That's why whether the Attorney General wants to agree to the leader of the opposition's motion here is not really the relevant fact. We're quite certain they're not going to support this motion. But I don't think he can stand there and deny that the system surrounding bail and the release of violent prisoners in this province is not functioning—certainly not functioning properly; in fact, not functioning at all, probably.

The government will get up and talk or there'll be stories about a raid, a big day, guns and gangs, 60 arrests. I was listening to a news report a couple of weeks ago where they did a big guns-and-gangs sting several months ago. Not one of the people arrested is currently in custody; not one. That's the big news story: "Let's get a lot of arrests; we'll get guns off of the street." But the reality is that as soon as those criminals are released, the guns are back on the street. They resupply. It's not about guns; it's about people. That's the problem. The bail system is about dealing with people and criminals, and it is not functioning. Until the system does function properly, we're going to continue to have repeat incidents such as the one we're talking about today. We're not speaking about the specifics, but we all know what has driven this debate and the reason for this motion. We're going to hear about more of these until the system that deals with violent offenders and their release on bail is dealt with and fixed. That's what the public inquiry would get to the bottom of. That's why I'm supporting this motion, and I know we have other members of this party who wish to speak on it.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to speak to this. I want to pick up on something that the member for Toronto—Danforth, Peter Tabuns, referred to. He said that the key to this thing is setting up the bail system so that there's an opportunity to do that thoughtful, careful analysis to get that bail decision right.

I just want to speak for a moment about how the system actually works. I'm probably the only member here who's actually worked in the bail courts. I've worked as a crown attorney in bail courts in Brampton and Peel and old city hall here in Toronto, albeit 15 years ago. But those are two of the busiest jurisdictions in Canada. Here's what my experience has been. You're dealing with complicated facts surrounding a crime. You're dealing with victims' rights. You're dealing with the protection of the public. You're dealing with the rights of the accused. You've got very skilled and sophisticated defence lawyers, very skilled and sophisticated prosecutors and a very skilled and sophisticated judiciary. The common interest that they all have, in my experience, is to get the bail decision right. Getting the bail decision right is a balancing act: the victim's rights, the accused's rights and society's rights. In my experience—

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's excuses.

Mr. David Zimmer: This is a serious debate. Why don't you listen to what I'm saying? We're talking about victims' rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to make his remarks directly to the Chair, and I would ask all members of the House to allow him to make those remarks.

Mr. David Zimmer: All of those parties in that process are trying to do their best: They're trying to get the right decision. They're doing that in the context of hundreds, indeed thousands of cases a week there. My

experience has been that the vast majority, the overwhelming majority of the decisions, getting that bail decision right—whether it's to release, whether it's to detain, whether it's to protect the public, whether it's to exercise some discretion one way or another—they get it right. Sure, from time to time in all of those hundreds and thousands of cases in a busy, busy jurisdiction like Peel or downtown Toronto, something falls between the cracks. But the solution here is to give those parties the resources that they need, the training resources—more justices of the peace, more crown attorneys, adequately fund the defence lawyers in the legal aid plan who are doing all of this work—so that all of those conscientious parties to that bail decision are best resourced to get the decision right. We don't need a public inquiry here; what we need are more resources. I call on the federal government to step up to the plate and help us provide funding for those resources, so that all of those parties to that bail decision can get the decision right.

1730

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to speak on the opposition day motion. I just want to be on the record first as saying that I would be in support of the motion for all the reasons that have been stated. But why I have a particular, deliberate interest is, some months ago—in fact, over the last year or more, the domestic violence issue has engaged me in a general sense across the province with the Lori Dupont Act and the inquest there. I did try to work from the point of view of victims' rights, I guess, and then the right to get a restraining order. That's what my private member's bill, Bill 10, the Lori Dupont Act, is all about.

In speaking with the family, I felt immediately the sense of the victim's perspective. In fact, there had been other reasons to suspect that the perpetrator, the offender, had threatened Ms. Dupont, and it ultimately ended up, tragically, in her death. It's in that case, even as Mr. Runciman was speaking today, that I thought of the mother and her daughter being victimized. If there's some evidence that the person who perpetrated this act had prior convictions and offences proven in some process or court, how could they possibly be on the street?

That's what this is about. It's about the victims' voices being heard in the justice system, and the Attorney General responding to it. In fact, if you look at statistics on bail, which is one of the issues being covered today, the public accounts statistics on that issue are open to the public in Canada, the actual events of bail violations. The people out on bail who have bail violations is increasing. In 2003, in Canada, it was 101,100; in 2006, 106,000—people on bail who are actually off committing another offence. In Ontario, in 2003, it was 35,000, and 400 people re-offended when on bail or at least were charged again; in 2006, it was 37,000. Clearly, crowns and others in this justice system need to focus on the balance that we've heard discussed today.

I would expect that most members would support this because it's an open review. In my notes, as far back as

2004-05, I can tell you that our platform called for this whole thing of visiting the prohibition on violations of people on bail and breaching bail, and that has been debated in this Legislature several times since I've been here. So I expect members would support this opposition day motion and give the Attorney General some real powers to move forward and modify the justice system so it addresses the rights of victims.

With that, I'll relinquish the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I, too, would like to express my sympathy to families of some of these crimes recently, which have been extraordinarily senseless and very disturbing, obviously, not just to the families but to all of the citizens of Ontario, and to assure listeners that in fact we very seriously take our responsibility to try and make Ontario a safe place for its citizens.

One of the things that is inevitably confusing, especially to those of us who are not lawyers—and I'm not a lawyer—is the way in which the jurisdiction is divided up between the province and the federal government. Clearly, the federal government is responsible for setting the criminal law, for setting out bail requirements and protocols, for setting out sentencing requirements and protocols. What the province is responsible for is policing, corrections and the administration of the courts. In those areas where we are responsible, we have made some significant changes. We recognize that there is a backlog in the courts. We have hired more crown attorneys, more judges and justices of the peace. We have hired more probation and parole officers on the corrections side. We have provided funding for police forces to hire more police officers. So we are doing our part. In those areas where we can make application, for example, in making application for dangerous offender status, we have done more of those than any other previous government.

But there are still some areas where the feds clearly set the rules and set the protocols. I'd like to speak briefly about sentencing, because I was for a while the parliamentary assistant in Community Safety and Correctional Services. One thing that is problematic is this business of giving double or triple credit for time spent in jail awaiting trial. In my part of the world, unlike what the member from Toronto-Danforth was describing, there is a new jail at Maplehurst. If you are in detention awaiting trial, you're in one wing. When you move to the other wing, if you have been sentenced and convicted, you're simply moving within a building from one wing to another. Nevertheless, the sentencing practice continues to be that judges are giving double or triple credit for the days spent. That's not something that we can fix; that's something we need to have the federal government fix. We've made representations, and I hope that in fact they will listen to that in the future, so that when people are convicted and sentenced, they do serve more of the term to which they have been sentenced.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am the final speaker from the official opposition to speak in support of this motion today, and I have to say at the outset that I am very proud that the leader of the official opposition has persisted in bringing this matter forward. Public safety, as the member from Welland has indicated, is probably one of the most important things that we have to deal with as legislators in this place, and it is really a shame that it was necessary to bring an opposition day motion forward in order to provoke any kind of debate on this topic.

Meanwhile, public confidence in our justice system is eroding quickly, and this has very serious implications because, of course, our rule of law depends upon the effectiveness of our justice system. My colleague the member from Haldimand–Norfolk quite rightly pointed out in his comments that the Caledonia situation is a situation where the rule of law has been seriously threatened over the past two and a half years, and that situation has continued unabated even up to the present time. Yet time and time again, every time we persist in bringing this matter before this Legislature, all we hear from the members opposite is their concern that we need to pressure the federal government to either ban handguns or to change the bail system. But with respect, that's not what this debate is about. This debate is about what this provincial government, the McGuinty government, can and should be doing to make sure that our justice system functions effectively.

The catalyst, of course, for this debate arises out of the violent sexual assaults and deaths of two innocent women in the security of their own home. The person who was accused of these assaults and murders had been released previously pending trial on six counts, including two counts of aggravated sexual assault. But, of course, we're not here to discuss the merits of this particular case, because this matter is before the courts, nor do we want to place the blame, quite frankly, on any one person or judge. And again, the member from Welland quite rightly pointed out that we have an excellent bench here in Ontario. Their credentials could not be challenged and I wouldn't challenge them. I believe we have an excellent bench here in Ontario.

However, there is clearly a systemic problem with our bail system here in Ontario that needs to be addressed, yet it hasn't been, to date. But the problem here is that we don't even know the nature and extent of the problem. How can the Attorney General continue to say that he wants to work with our justice partners to improve the system when he doesn't even know what the problem is? We don't keep statistics regarding bail violations and repeat offences committed by people out on bail, which is inconceivable to most people. This is a government that keeps track of the number of eggs laid in Ontario, but they're not keeping these important judicial statistics.

1740

The argument has been made that we can't keep these statistics because it will threaten judicial independence, but we're not talking about that. When our leader brought forward the Truth and Transparency in the Justice

System Act in December 2006, what we were talking about was changing the Courts of Justice Act in order to keep general records of what is happening in the courts and where the problems are so that they can be addressed. How could we possibly start trying to fix a problem when we can't even articulate what that problem is?

I would say that when this bill was voted down by the government, we lost an opportunity there to do something concrete in order to fix our justice system, but something has to be done now. This is an opportunity for this government to take the necessary steps to commence this inquiry to find out what's wrong because, if this situation continues, quite clearly we're going to have a situation where our rule of law is going to completely break down. If that happens, there are going to be dire consequences for this province.

I implore the government members to reconsider their position on this bill. Please support it. Please do what you need to do to find out what the problem is so that we can collectively work on a solution. People in Ontario expect us to do that: to work together to find a solution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Let me start by expressing my own condolences, and I think any member of the House would express those condolences to any family that's been touched by violent crime or by the types of actions we witnessed over the weekend. It makes you think, as an individual who has grown up—I'm now 53, but I grew up during most of my early days in Canada, and you really wonder: Have guns and violence become much more prevalent in our society? Have they become more acceptable in our society? Are they something that we choose to accept or that we hear more and more about? Is it just that the information is there, or are we finding out about the crime?

I spend a lot of time talking to the chief of police and the police association in Oakville, in the region of Halton. We've got a fantastic police association there who are very quick to provide information to you as—you would know this, Speaker—a member of this Legislature who needs that type of information. I've always found the police association to be a good group of reasonable people you can go to and you can get that information. The chief of police and the other members of the Halton Regional Police Service provide that information as well.

Lately, they've been talking much more about the gang issue. It used to be that in Oakville you didn't hear about gangs. Gangs were something that happened in the urban setting, or perhaps you heard more about them in the rural setting. But as populations have grown, as we've seen the effects of urban sprawl, we've watched that crime start to creep into our own community. I don't want to come across as a bleeding heart, because I've got absolutely no sympathy for anybody who uses a gun in the commission of a crime or even carries a gun. I just have no time for that. That's not a part of what I think is a reasonable human being who belongs in our society.

But sometimes you see things that happen, as we've seen on the weekend, and yet, when you look at the crime stats in Ontario, they're the lowest in Canada. When you look at the crime stats, you also find that places that you think are safe are actually among the least safe in Canada. I think, as a case in point, that Victoria, BC, which I've always thought of as a quaint little community where grandmothers may go and drink English tea in the afternoon, actually has a very high crime rate. So sometimes the stats and the information you receive through the media are not exactly up to date.

We put 1,000 police officers on the street, we've got more crown attorneys, more judges, justices of the peace, more parole officers, probation officers, and you really have to wonder where the guns are coming from. How do we stem those guns? I think we need a multi-faceted approach to this, but clearly it's an issue that perhaps calls for more action. The last thing that I think we need to do at this point in time, despite the member's bringing it forward, I think, with the best of intentions and bringing an important issue to this House, is to have a gabfest and sit around and have a public inquiry—perhaps some more action, perhaps some improvements, but certainly it's a time for action and not a time for talk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I, too, am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion today. I had an opportunity to speak to the original motion last week with some concern, but I am pleased today to be able to join with my colleagues in definitely passing on our condolences to those families who have been impacted by violence in their lives in our communities. Be it in their own homes or out on a Saturday night, I think we're all shocked to hear of the level of violence in some of these circumstances. I think it's very important that we address these things, and certainly the McGuinty government has been addressing them over the last five years.

I was pleased to note that the member for Whitby–Oshawa now joins with me in seeing that discussing specific cases is inappropriate in this House, in this Legislature, and that in fact they did change their motion to talk about a broader topic of discussion. But again, I wish the members opposite would take up this issue with their federal brethren.

I am encouraged by the fact that Ontario continues to have the lowest crime rate of any province in Canada, and I think it's important that we not lose sight of that. I am also encouraged by our government's position in pushing the federal government for a stronger bail system. We pushed the federal government to set out in the Criminal Code of Canada the availability and procedures for accused persons to seek bail, and we've made changes to those provisions. We pushed the federal government to bring in reverse-onus bail provisions for serious gun crimes, and we were successful in that. We pushed the federal government to bring in more mandatory sentences for those who use guns in crimes, and we were successful in that.

We've also asked the federal government to limit any sentencing credit for pre-trial custody to a maximum ratio of 1.5 to 1 generally and a maximum ratio of one to one when the accused has been detained due to a prior criminal record or for having violated a bail condition. We will continue to press the federal government to strengthen the Youth Criminal Justice Act to protect our communities from youth who need to be kept in custody.

But we have been tough on crime, and as a government we have made unprecedented investments in fighting gun crime in particular and supporting anti-violence strategies across the province. We've put more than 1,000 police officers on the street, and of that I am very proud. We have a comprehensive four-point plan to stop the proliferation of gun-related crime. This plan includes tougher, more effective laws relating to firearms, including calling on the federal government to bring in a national handgun ban. Again, I take this opportunity to ask members on the other side of the House to join with us in this request of their federal brethren and see to it that we do limit the number of handguns out on the streets.

We also have anti-gun-smuggling measures to prevent the flow of illegal guns across the Canada-United States borders. We have requested this a number of times from our federal cousins, and again it falls on deaf ears. I know that as the members opposite are so committed to this particular issue, they will be taking this up with their federal cousins.

We are also looking for the strengthening of law enforcement. As I said, we have put 1,000 police officers on the street. We would like to see our federal counterparts come to the fore and meet the obligations and commitments that they've made.

I would quote the Canadian Police Association president, who noted that public safety—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Please take your seat.

I would ask the members of the House to refrain from heckling the Minister of Tourism so that I can hear her.

I return to the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually couldn't hear myself speak because of the member from Ottawa. It's awfully nice when you can manage to contain it somewhat.

I was trying to quote the Canadian Police Association president, who stated:

“Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day has fumbled the ball and failed to deliver on a key government commitment.... We have been waiting two years for this minister to deliver on the Prime Minister's promise, and we are disappointed by the short-sighted and inadequate response.”

This from the Canadian Police Association on the need for more municipal police officers—failure on the part of the federal government to provide that kind of leadership.

Again, I'd like to just reiterate our government's commitment to safety and to the safe well-being of our citizens across the province. I note again with some optimism that we do maintain our status as the province with the least amount of violence, but it is something that we have to continue to work on as we see these violent incidents erupting in our communities of late. It is of deep concern to us that all people in the province feel safe, be they in our rural settings or in our municipal settings.

I know that it was with the greatest of intentions that the member for Leeds–Grenville brought forward this motion, but I would agree with my colleague who sits behind me that in fact this is not a time for more talk; it is a time for action. I would ask that the members opposite turn to their federal cousins and ask for some action on this file and join with us in encouraging the federal government to take more action with respect to our bail system, with respect to gun violence, in our province and across the country.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The time for this debate has expired. Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day number 3:

“Whereas the alarming number of murders and other violent crimes allegedly committed by violent criminals who were out on bail for other alleged violent crimes in Ontario raises Ontarians' fears for their safety and shakes the public's confidence in the administration of justice in Ontario; and

“Whereas the issue of violent crimes alleged to have been committed by people out on bail when they should have been behind bars based on their past criminal behaviour is a serious public safety problem that the McGuinty government has failed to address since being first elected in 2003;

“The Legislature of Ontario calls on the McGuinty government to call a public inquiry into Ontario's bail system.”

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.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day number 3. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert	Kormos, Peter	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Murdoch, Bill	Yakubski, John
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	
Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Bartolucci, Rick	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Greg
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Duncan, Dwight	Moridi, Reza	Watson, Jim
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Naqvi, Yasir	Wilkinson, John
Hoy, Pat	Pendergast, Leeanna	Zimmer, David
Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 16; the nays are 41.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

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	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
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Joyce Savoline
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Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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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

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Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Kim Craitor, 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

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Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
Peter Shurman
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Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 28 October 2008 / Mardi 28 octobre 2008

Opposition day motion

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 3623

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2008 (No. 2), Bill 114, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2008 sur les mesures budgétaires et l'affectation anticipée de crédits (no 2), projet de loi 114, M. Duncan

Mr. Mike Colle..... 3623
Mr. Norm Miller 3624
Mr. Gilles Bisson 3625
Mr. Yasir Naqvi 3625
Mr. Jim Wilson 3625
Mr. Mike Colle..... 3626
Mr. Jim Wilson 3626
Mr. Rosario Marchese..... 3629
Mr. Bruce Crozier 3630
Mr. Robert Bailey 3630
Mr. Jim Wilson 3630
Mr. Rosario Marchese..... 3631
Debate deemed adjourned..... 3633

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Liz Sandals 3633
Hon. Jim Watson..... 3633
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 3633

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Violent crime

Mr. Robert W. Runciman..... 3634
Hon. Christopher Bentley..... 3634

Violent crime

Mr. Robert W. Runciman..... 3634
Hon. Christopher Bentley..... 3635

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Howard Hampton 3635
Hon. Michael Bryant..... 3636

Skills training

Mr. Howard Hampton 3636
Hon. John Milloy 3636

Violent crime

Mr. Robert W. Runciman..... 3637
Hon. Christopher Bentley..... 3637

Child care

Ms. Andrea Horwath..... 3638
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur 3638

Child care

Mrs. Liz Sandals..... 3638
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur 3639

Violent crime

Mr. Toby Barrett 3639
Hon. Christopher Bentley..... 3639

Poverty

Mr. Michael Prue 3639
Hon. Deborah Matthews 3640

Foodland Ontario awards

Mr. Jeff Leal..... 3640
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky 3640

Violent crime

Mrs. Christine Elliott..... 3641
Hon. Christopher Bentley..... 3641

Waste management

Mme France Gélinas 3641
Hon. Donna H. Cansfield 3641

Environmental protection

Mr. Reza Moridi..... 3642
Hon. Ted McMeekin 3642

Renewable energy

Mr. John Yakabuski 3642
Hon. George Smitherman..... 3642

Labour dispute

Mr. Gilles Bisson 3643
Hon. Michael Gravelle 3643

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Peter Fonseca..... 3643

Continued on inside back cover

Continued from back cover

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Forest industry	
Mr. John Yakabuski	3643
Forestview Public School	
Mr. Kim Craitor	3643
Assistance to farmers	
Mr. Toby Barrett	3644
Firefighters' memorial	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	3644
Flu immunization	
Mr. Ted Arnott	3644
Canadians for Children at Health Risk	
Mr. Michael Prue	3645
Wine industry	
Mr. Bruce Crozier	3645
Gary Morden	
Mrs. Amrit Mangat	3645
Diwali	
Mr. Kuldeep Kular.....	3645

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on General Government	
Mrs. Linda Jeffrey	3645
Report adopted	3646
Use of electronic devices in House	
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	3646
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	3646
Mr. Gilles Bisson	3646
Mr. Bill Murdoch	3646
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	3646
Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	3646
Report deemed adopted.....	3646

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, 2008, Bill 118, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2008 visant à combattre la conduite inattentive et à promouvoir les transports écologiques, projet de loi 118, M. Bradley	
First reading agreed to.....	3646

**Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act,
2008, Bill 119, Mr. Fonseca / Loi de 2008 modifiant
la Loi sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance
contre les accidents du travail, projet de loi 119,
M. Fonseca**

First reading agreed to.....	3647
------------------------------	------

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Road safety	
Hon. James J. Bradley	3647
Workers' compensation	
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	3648
Road safety	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3648
Workers' compensation	
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	3649
Workers' compensation	
Mr. Paul Miller.....	3649
Road safety	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	3650

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Emergency dispatch services	
Mr. Norm Miller.....	3650
Police records check	
Mr. Michael Prue	3650
Dialysis	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	3651
Pope John Paul II	
Mr. Frank Klees	3651
Child protection	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	3651
Hospital funding	
Mr. Joe Dickson	3651
Gasoline prices	
Mr. John Yakabuski	3652
Fertility treatment	
Mr. Pat Hoy	3652
Sexual reassignment surgery	
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	3652
Firearms control	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	3652
Driver licences	
Mr. Toby Barrett	3653

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Violent crime

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	3653
Mr. Peter Kormos	3655
Hon. Christopher Bentley	3657
Mr. Toby Barrett	3659
Mr. Peter Tabuns	3659
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	3661
Mr. John Yakabuski	3662
Mr. David Zimmer	3662
Mr. John O'Toole	3663
Mrs. Liz Sandals	3663
Mrs. Christine Elliott	3664
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	3664
Hon. Monique M. Smith	3665
Motion negatived	3666