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Thursday 27 November 2008

Jeudi 27 novembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 November 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 novembre 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2008, on the motion for second reading of 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): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate.

Applause.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank the member for Brant for his applause. He is probably expecting some reciprocal gesture, and I'm sure at the appropriate time he'll receive that.

As the critic for transportation for the official opposition, I'm pleased to make my contribution, but at the outset I want to thank my colleagues who have spoken to this bill already. As a result of their very exhaustive work in terms of bringing issues to the attention of the government, I will say at the outset that I will not repeat all of those points that have been made so very effectively.

I will be sharing my time, Speaker, with my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He will also bring his perspective to the debate.

At the outset let me say that of course, in principle, we are supportive of this bill. I want to give credit to my colleague Mr. O'Toole, who has brought successive private member's legislation before the House. In this bill,

Bill 118, the government has essentially incorporated Mr. O'Toole's bill. It's through the work of legislators like Mr. O'Toole, who have persistently, over time, brought this issue to the attention not only of this House, but by virtue of tabling the bill and the debate taking place, that there has been an increase in awareness on the part of the public of the importance of this issue.

I can tell you that I have had a significant volume of correspondence—e-mails and telephone calls—on this bill. Not all of those submissions have been supportive. So what I have said to my constituents and to stakeholders is that we will call on the government to ensure that there is an opportunity for public input, that those individuals who either have concerns with details regarding the legislation or are looking for certain assurances with regard to regulations and how they're structured—that there will be ample opportunity for that kind of input.

We are in second reading debate. It's debate in principle, basically, so when the vote for second reading takes place on this legislation, members of this House are essentially saying, "In principle, we agree with the direction of this legislation." That is not to say that a vote in favour is saying that all aspects of this bill are acceptable to this House or to members of the Legislature. Hopefully, we will have an opportunity, assuming that the government agrees, to have public hearings, at which point in time we will be able to take into consideration those specific recommendations.

I have some of my own that I would like to put forward, and will put forward during those public hearings, to get input from the public in terms of how they feel, as well as stakeholders. I have some questions, for example, for police services in the province. I have some questions as well for various stakeholders, particularly in the commercial trucking industry.

I have one concern that was brought to my attention by a former Minister of Transportation, the former Honourable David Turnbull. He is currently the president and CEO of the Canadian Courier and Logistics Association. He raised a very specific concern with me during a conversation I had with him recently. At the very outset, what I'd like to do—for the benefit of the government, they can be thinking about this issue, an area that we would like to see addressed in regulation—is read into the record some of the concerns that Mr. Turnbull brought to my attention. I will quote from Mr. Turnbull's submission:

"The Canadian Courier and Logistics Association is in support of the proposed aims of the legislation to im-

prove safety on Ontario roads. It is essential, however, that exemptions for certain hand-held wireless communications devices used for logistical purposes to dispatch, track and monitor commercial drivers be incorporated into supporting regulations.

“The courier and messenger industry depends on communications with personnel operating delivery vehicles. Safety concerns are always paramount and the industry has a good safety record as drivers are professionals who are used to operating in varying driving conditions.

“The industry consists of two main components, ‘same day’ or local messenger service and ‘next day’ or later delivery. Both segments use hand-held devices of various types.

“‘Same day’ messengers are dispatched throughout the day and provide a direct point A to point B service. Monitoring the location of a messenger at all times is essential to determine who is the nearest to a requested pickup. This segment utilizes a mix of voice and GPS-enabled communications equipment. Many use hand-held two-way radios which are attached to the vehicle, while some utilize devices such as the units marketed under the brand name ‘Mike.’ Most require only a one-button press to respond to dispatch calls. As much as possible, dispatch is done while parked. In fact, most is completed at the point of pickup and delivery while stationary. However, the ability to locate and/or dispatch on the move is essential to the routing procedures both from a competitive and environmental point of view. Response time is of the essence to customers. Environmental responsibility dictates that an already dispatched messenger close to another requested pickup be contacted on the move, eliminating the need for two vehicles.

“From time to time, a direction to a difficult to locate address is requested from dispatch or customer while unable to stop due to parking restrictions.

“‘Next day’ delivery companies, which are mostly represented by the large national and global companies, typically operate on predetermined routes for deliveries but receive requests for non-scheduled pickups. Many of these companies utilize hand-held tablets that dispatch in text form. Employees are instructed not to respond while moving, but are permitted to respond at traffic lights. This ensures that second vehicles are not required to be dispatched.”

0910

I wanted to read that particular submission into the record, because I think it’s important that the government understands there are various specific commercial applications of some of these hand-held devices that should be considered when the regulations are set, and the minister does have the right to prescribe those regulations. I think, as well, the point that Mr. Turnbull makes is that, in the case of commercial vehicles, these are professional drivers, these are people who are trained, not only in terms of how to deal with traffic situations, but also how to safely utilize this equipment. So I would be in support of the regulations providing an exemption, as has been requested by Mr. Turnbull.

I want to turn my attention to another issue relating to these hand-held devices. I have had considerable input from constituents relating, for example, to GPS units. I know that the government has already indicated through the minister, as well as the parliamentary assistant, that GPS units and similar units that are mounted on the dash would be exempted from this legislation. What I think we need to clarify, and I’m sure that we’ll deal with this in the course of committee hearings, but there are GPS units that can be rented. For example, when someone rents a vehicle and they’re uncertain about how to navigate—particularly in this city, but it applies throughout the province—it’s really much safer to have a proper GPS unit, rather than be wondering where you turn next. It’s an effective piece of equipment, but these are portable units. Having said that they’re portable units, there is the ability to mount them on a dash. These are the kinds of details that I’ve undertaken to bring forward to the minister and to the government, and I would expect that when it comes to structuring the regulations, we would take into consideration those very practical aspects of devices such as the GPS.

One of the other areas that I want to focus on this morning is whether or not this government, in bringing in this legislation, has fully considered the consequences and the penalties that are going to be prescribed here. I’ve heard from the minister that what is not intended—notwithstanding that there are some substantial monetary fines; you know, they can range from \$50 to \$500 for a conviction—what is missing here, in my opinion, and there may be some differences of opinion even within our own caucus on this, and I would invite submissions from stakeholders when this bill comes to the public hearing stage, what is lacking, are demerit points assessed on convictions. If this government passes this legislation without the penalty of demerit points in addition to the fines, then I would submit that many will consider those fines simply a cost of doing business. Another \$50, if you happen to get caught, is not a big issue for many people.

I believe that if the government is serious about wanting to change behaviour on the part of drivers in this province through this legislation, then there should also be the consequence of demerit points, because that is where drivers will in fact begin to give a second thought to using a hand-held device that will result in driver distraction. If there is no demerit point assessment in this legislation, Ontario will be the only jurisdiction, not only in Canada but in the United States and in other parts of the world, that does not have a demerit point consequence to a conviction. I would suggest that if in fact that’s the case, then what we have here yet one more time on the part of this government is an ability to present the perception that they’re serious about changing behaviour of drivers with regard to distraction, but not really willing to go the distance in terms of putting the substantive provisions into legislation that would actually make a difference at the end of the day.

I want to just very briefly refer as well to comments made by the Minister of Transportation during his second

reading debate. I find one aspect of this very interesting. I support the provision that would change the Public Vehicles Act to make it easier for people to carpool. I think, as the minister stated in his remarks, that that's a positive step. In fact, my colleague Gilles Bisson had brought this to the attention of the government through, I believe, a private member's bill. He's been lobbying for that for some time. I think it's appropriate for all the right reasons.

I want to read into the record what the minister stated during his debate, and then I want to just quickly comment on a concern that I have that relates to a more recent piece of legislation that the minister introduced from the same seat from which he made these comments:

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

Here's the irony: In one piece of legislation, the minister brought forward an amendment that would encourage carpooling, but just last week he introduced legislation in this House that restricts carpooling for young people in the province. So he's experienced a considerable backlash, especially from young people right across this province, by the thousands, who were caught off guard, who are saying, "Minister of Transportation, why, simply because I may be 21 years of age or younger, are you now saying that I can't have more than one other person in the car with me when I'm driving?"

0920

What happens to the minister's encouragement in this legislation for carpooling so that, as he puts it, when people go to school carpooling in Ontario, "this will further encourage their use and help remove single-occupant vehicles" to and from school, to and from work? I believe that again, with regard to that legislation—I support it here; I think it's the right thing to do for all the reasons the government has announced for this change being brought forward. But I would also ask that the minister be consistent, first of all, in his own thinking with regard to the issue of carpooling, and that he understand that the provision he is proposing for young drivers that restricts the number of young people in a car is wrong-headed.

I want to put the minister on notice now that I will not support the provision of the young drivers' legislation he is proposing that would restrict young drivers from having more than one passenger 21 years of age or younger in the car.

I believe we need to have extensive public hearings on that legislation. In fact, my call to the minister would have been that we have those public consultations even

before we get to second reading of that bill, so that the minister and the Premier can have direct input from stakeholders—from people across the province and especially from young people—on the practicalities of that legislation, which I believe the ministry has missed in drafting that legislation.

I want to be very clear that I support the intent of that legislation. I personally am strongly in favour of the zero tolerance level for alcohol in that legislation. But I will also put the minister on notice that it is my view that we would be much better to define novice drivers in a broader category and make it apply to novice drivers and inexperienced drivers, rather than identify the age of 21 as the target group to which that legislation should apply.

I think the issue here is not how old a person is; to victimize young people through that legislation is fundamentally wrong. I think the intent here is to deal with the issue that we have inexperienced drivers, and that inexperienced drivers should be required to adhere to a different and higher standard when it comes to blood-alcohol level.

Even before we get to the point of a broader debate on that, I would like to ask the minister, on the record, to start giving consideration to being willing to make amendments to that proposed legislation, which would remove the age restriction and replace it with, perhaps, a new definition of novice driver. I believe that will bring many more people and many more stakeholders on side to support that legislation.

With regard to the issue of speeding, no one in this House is a stronger advocate than I, as you will know, Speaker, in terms of wanting to improve road safety when it comes to speeding in our province. However, even with regard to that provision, I have serious concerns that to target young people and suggest that even with a first conviction there should be a licence suspension is not going to have the kind of public support and stakeholder support that that legislation would require.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With the greatest respect to my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, there are two bills before the Legislature that deal with the Ministry of Transportation, and he is talking about the wrong one. That one is not before the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I appreciate your point of order. I have listened very carefully to the honourable member from Newmarket–Aurora, and he has been tying the two bills together quite nicely, I think.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. If the member from Mississauga–South were, perhaps, paying more attention, he would understand—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Streetsville.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mississauga–Streetsville—he might understand how this is being tied together as well. I will try to give you some more assistance with that.

I was referring, as you know, to the Minister of Transportation, who is just joining us. I know that the reason he has come into the House now is because he understands how these two bills are tied together and he

wants to hear personally how effectively I have tied these bills together. The minister and I have had discussions, not only about this bill, which he knows I am very supportive of, but he would also know and he does know that I'm looking forward to public hearings and that much of the work has yet to be done through regulation. I look forward to working with him as do, I know, other members of this House as well as stakeholders.

Having tied the young drivers legislation into the bill before us, I want to return to Bill 118 before I defer to my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I want to say to the minister that I am supportive. I will look forward to the public hearings. I have stated a number of areas that I believe we need to perhaps have a second look at in terms of how the government approaches this. I've made the point about demerit points; we've had that discussion. I know that, no doubt, one of the concerns even from the police services is that if in fact this conviction carries demerit points, there will perhaps be more challenges in court, and the implication to our court system, then, would be that there may well be more gridlock than we have now in our court system.

But I submit to the minister that we shouldn't be compromising on the consequences of what I think we all agree is an important issue and an important road safety concern, namely that of distracted drivers. I believe that if we are serious about wanting to change the behaviour of Ontario drivers, then there should be a consequence there. If there is a problem with court gridlock, then the issue is that we have to resource our courts better. We have to ensure that the resources are there to deal with those convictions and appeals if they happen to come forward.

I will take this opportunity to thank the minister for bringing this legislation forward and again my colleague John O'Toole, who I believe blazed the trail on this, for his persistence. I remember when he first brought this legislation forward, there was very little support, even in this place. But over time, the evidence has become clear that it's the right thing to do. So to the government, I say congratulations for bringing this forward. Now we will wait to see how responsive the government will be when it comes to recommendations for amendments during public hearings and, of course, how responsive they will be to stakeholders, as I stated at the outset, when it comes to drafting regulations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Chair would like to recognize Mr. David Turnbull, who's with us in the galleries here today, the former member of provincial Parliament in the 35th, 36th and 37th Parliament as the member for York Mills and then as the member for Don Valley West.

Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I was not aware that Mr. Turnbull was in the gallery, and I was waxing eloquent quoting him. I should have actually asked him to do this himself. Welcome to Mr. Turnbull.

0930

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am quite sure that if my friend from Newmarket–Aurora starts waxing eloquently about someone else in the future, they too will appear in the gallery. There's no question about it.

It's a pleasure to join the debate here on Bill 118. I'm going to pick up where my colleague left off, in congratulating, finally, John O'Toole for his persistence in raising this issue in the Legislature, bringing it forth in proposed legislation on more than one occasion over the last several years. The government didn't seem to have much interest in this bill throughout their first mandate. I do have to question why, now, they're bringing out this bill. You have to wonder out loud if it isn't because they're looking to change the channel on the issues facing us here today in this Legislature on a daily basis, and that is the question of Ontario's finances and the economy and this government's lack of a plan to deal with it. So switching channels, changing the phone number sort of thing is what they're doing here partially with this cellphone bill at this time.

Having said that, for the most part I don't know that there are too many, if any, members of the House who have indicated that they oppose this bill. But as my colleague Mr. Klees and a former minister did indicate, there are portions of this bill that we have concerns about. I'm going to get to them later.

I also want to raise the issue of the fact that we already have legislation in place to deal with distracted drivers. If that's not functioning properly, then this bill is not going to take its place, because those actions are still going to be out there. We still have to be a lot more diligent about how we're dealing with distracted drivers.

There are so many ways that drivers can be distracted. We see people every day putting on makeup, shaving—not likely the same people, but that's another matter—fumbling with coffee cups to open them while driving, eating a Big Mac or a bacon mushroom melt or something like that, that's dripping all over them, and then they're driving all over the road. There are so many different things that can distract a driver. A cellphone is one of them.

So we have to be very, very diligent about how we're dealing with distracted drivers in every possible way. I've seen people reading the newspaper while driving.

I do concur, however, that cellphones—there is no question about it—are distracting. I have fallen into that trap myself, where I have been unduly distracted because of the use of a cellphone. For the most part, I can tell you that when I get into my vehicle today—and I'm not going to say that I don't use the cellphone when I'm driving because that would be untrue—I do put on the hands-free immediately so that those distractions are limited. Even with the hands-free, it's not just about where your hands are; it's about where your head is, and communicating while driving is not really the right thing to be doing. We do it, but it is not the best course of action. The best course of action is, of course, to pull over, proceed with your call and then move on. In this world, it's not always possible.

That brings me to a couple of things that I want to talk about: some possible amendments. My colleague Mr. Klees raised the issue from the Canadian Courier and Logistics Association, of which Mr. Turnbull is the president and CEO, and about how important the ability to communicate on a timely basis is for people in that business. I won't read the letter again, because we want to limit the amount of time here, but those are things that we need to get discussing to ensure that business is able to operate. Certainly I think the record of safety within that business is a very good one. So we have to understand that we can't put in undue barriers to the operations of business.

Another group that we want to talk about is the two-way radio people. A constituent from my riding, Peter DeWolf, who is also a newspaper reporter with the *Arnprior Chronicle-Guide*, raised this issue with me. He has been a radio operator for many years and actually writes a column on the issue. He has some concerns with the broad language proposed in this new law, which could be read to include the use of two-way radios while on the road. He is proposing a simple, one-line amendment to the proposed law, which would read, in the exemptions, "Communication apparatus or persons licensed to operate under the Canada Radiocommunications Act are exempt."

I think that's a very good point. People who operate logging trucks and people who dispatch vehicles in different areas use two-way radios to communicate, and it is essential that they not lose that ability to communicate because of this law. When we get this bill to committee, I think we have to take a close look at some of those things and see whether some of the things this bill is doing are necessarily what we want to accomplish with it.

I would also like clarification on GPS units. Mr. Klees raised that, and I have to be honest with you that my understanding is different. My understanding is that a GPS communication device, other than a BlackBerry or something like that, which has GPS capabilities, was going to be exempt from this law. I would certainly want to voice my concern about that. As long as you're not inputting information while driving, a GPS unit is very helpful—it's helpful regardless. You are not creating a danger if you're not inputting information while you are driving. If you put in the address you need to get to, your destination, while you are parked, certainly the unit itself giving you that information is very, very helpful. We want to make sure that is clarified.

I do want to tie in the two bills again, as my colleague so eloquently did, because we never know if we'll have the opportunity. The minister seems to be trapped by some inconsistency here: In Bill 118, and only six bills later, in Bill 126, we have a different story. In Bill 118, he is very, very encouraging and wants to make sure that the rules respecting carpooling are as broad and inclusive as possible, so that we can do the right thing and have more people in fewer cars on our highways. But then in Bill 126, we do the exact opposite; we restrict people from carpooling.

I'll give you an example. My son is 17 years old, and I would say he is at least as good a driver as me—some people would say that's not saying much.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I realize that; I knew I set myself up there.

Anyway, he's an excellent driver and a very responsible driver. In fact, I can tell you that if he is driving and I call him on his cellphone, I'll get a call back a few minutes later, because he won't answer the phone. He'll pull over before he returns that call. Last Friday night, he asked if he could have my van. I said, "Sure. What do you need it for?" "Well, a few of us are going to a movie in Pembroke." Now, we live in Barry's Bay, which is 80 kilometres from Pembroke. The nearest movie theatre is in Pembroke.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Paradise.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, they're both pretty darned nice, I might say to the minister.

If he could only take one friend to the movies, under this proposed Bill 126, that's just not right. People who live in rural areas will be so unfairly treated by this bill that it's just unbelievable. But that's another bill, and I'm sure we will have a chance to discuss it at a later time, if the ministry even calls that bill for debate. Maybe he has realized it's so wrought with holes that he's going to just withdraw it and come back with something better—I don't know. Hopefully he will, because that bill is a big problem.

Anyway, we want to get moving on Bill 118. I will be voting for the legislation, but I'll also expect to be able to discuss this in committee, so that some of the very appropriate amendments that will do everything to improve the bill have a chance to be vetted. I thank you very much for the opportunity.

0940

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to take this time to agree with my colleagues from the official opposition. There are some concerns we have about Bill 118, but the actual bill itself is a good thing. We obviously would like to deal with some of these things at committee, and I hope that the government, in its infinite wisdom, will listen to other people's ideas at the committee level. Actually, we're very concerned about transportation vehicles transporting equipment, and of course trucking firms have great concerns. These will have to be dealt with, and I'm sure that the minister will listen carefully to the people who make their living driving and transferring goods across our province and across the country.

I must also take this opportunity to commend the minister for bringing this forward. It's good legislation, but obviously there are a couple of holes in it that we would like filled. I think with some co-operation with the government at the committee level, we will address those holes.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Under questions and comments, I watched on television, first of all, the opposition critic Mr. Klees; then I had a chance to come into the House and listen to him, and then listen to my friend from Barry's Bay make a presentation; then the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—all good presentations—and finally, my good friend Mr. Turnbull, who is a former Minister of Transportation. We all recognize this.

I think the benefit I personally have found in my many years in this Legislature is the kind of debate that takes place. If the debate is meaningless in the House and in committee, then we really haven't achieved what we want to achieve. I've always said that not all the wisdom resides on the government side of the House; not all the wisdom resides in the Ontario Legislature. That means that the more input we get on legislation, the better. I am a great fan of seeing legislation go to committee, where the public gets a chance to present, and then it may go to further consideration in clause-by-clause. The government will put forward some amendments that they may steal from the opposition members who suggested them, but we will always give credit; also, the opposition members may put some forward.

I think one of the unfortunate things in the whole operation of this House over the years has been that there's always been a great reluctance to accept amendments, yet many of the amendments would make legislation better. So I welcome the input on this bill. We had a previous bill that we dealt with that's already passed the Legislature, the more secure driver's licence; we have another bill that we're considering. All the input we get is extremely valuable to us, from right across the province. I always give that very great weight and consideration, and my good friend from Barry's Bay, the critic for the Conservative Party, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and my own members I'm sure will all give me good advice.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to make just a few comments with respect to this bill dealing with hand-held communication devices.

I would echo the comments made by my colleagues the members from Newmarket–Aurora and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who have indicated our support in principle for this bill, because of course the genesis for this bill lies with the work done by another one of our colleagues, the member from Durham, who has brought a variation of this bill forward on several occasions, concerned as he is with the public safety aspects of driving while holding cellphones and so on. He's been quite tenacious in that respect.

But of course we're not happy with all aspects of this bill, nor are we happy with the aspect of the new young drivers bill that has been brought forward by the government. Certainly the Premier has indicated that perhaps they were a little bit hasty in coming forward with this bill, with some of the comments that he has been making

about backing away from some of the more controversial parts of it. I would certainly encourage the government to take the time necessary to hear all the comments to be made by both the opposition members and the public with respect to this bill, to make sure that the primary consideration, as it is with public safety, is what is actually dealt with in this bill while not compromising, of course, anything else in the process but still listening to the legitimate concerns of business in this area. I would hope that, as far as that is concerned, they would certainly do so with the next bill and perhaps even send that out for further consultation before it goes through second reading—I think that has been suggested by many people—because there are many practical considerations, particularly as have been mentioned with the prohibition on a driver with more than one friend.

In terms of practical concerns, I have three 17-year-olds who could be driving together with one friend, which I'm sure would cause some concern or at least speculation on the police having to take a look at them at any given time.

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

Seeing none, the honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I appreciate the comments from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the minister, and the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

What I heard from the minister was, I would say, a very conciliatory tone with respect not only to this bill, but the general operation of this House. I'm really pleased to hear that because, while I think there are amendments that will improve this bill, and amendments could be brought forward that will certainly make it more streamlined and easier to work, other bills maybe aren't quite the same. These amendments that we are proposing in Bill 118 are far less controversial than might be some amendments in another bill—like Bill 126, which we've talked about. I hope that the minister will be as conciliatory and understanding about, certainly, the non-monopoly of the government on the wisdom of bringing forth legislation when we're dealing with Bill 126 as well.

I do look forward to this bill going to committee to ensure that the best piece of legislation to improve highway safety is what we get at the end of the day. I want to ensure that they do take into consideration those issues we've raised, such as the communication issues for the Canadian Courier and Logistics Association, which has raised some very significant points with the ability for their businesses to operate efficiently. We have to remember that if they can't operate efficiently, it means more expenses to us in the long run.

I'm just looking at 133—and you're getting up. What's the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Your two minutes have more than expired. Unfortunately, the clock—we had a little malfunction there, but thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to discuss Bill 118. Once again, I commend the minister for bringing forth this legislation, and I'd also like to send a thank you to Mr. O'Toole for his persistence on bringing this legislation forward over the past couple of years.

I must say at this point that I'm glad to hear the Minister of Transportation stand up in a voice of co-operation at the committee level but, frankly, I must confess I haven't experienced that in my year that I've been here. We've brought forth several good ideas to committees which fell on deaf ears, and the government did not want to even discuss them and just squashed them. Once again, I'm frustrated with the lack of co-operation by the government as to the opposition parties, who have excellent ideas that fall by the wayside—unless it's the government's idea. I must put that point in.

Moving on to the bill itself, this kind of legislation just makes sense. Drivers, pedestrians and cyclists have all had at least one bad experience with a distracted driver talking on their cellphone or other equipment. I myself have had near misses and, frankly, since I've had the privilege—I don't know if it's a privilege—to use the BlackBerry, have been distracted while driving. I don't think it's a very good idea, and I am dead set against those types of devices in cars.

Even back in the days when we didn't have cellphones, iPods and BlackBerries, people had found other ways to distract themselves, whether it be a sandwich or doing their hair or makeup or reading a paper or doing all kinds of things in the car that they shouldn't be doing, so I don't think we need to add to that.

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We wonder why it's taken Ontario so long to move forward with this type of legislation. Quebec, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, many of the states in the United States and 30 other countries have restricted the use of cellphones while driving.

There is a significant amount of evidence to support tighter restrictions on the use of cellphones while driving. In Australia, a study in 2005 showed that motorists who used cellphones while driving are four times as likely to crash, causing serious injury to themselves or to other people. The find was supported by the University of Toronto analysis of accidents in Toronto. Another study, out of the University of Utah, concluded that talking on a cellphone while driving is as dangerous as driving while intoxicated.

The Ministry of Transportation has indicated that fines will be \$50 to \$500, and no demerit points will be taken for the violations. I find this not a good idea. I believe that there should be points attached to these violations, because for a lot of these business people, \$50 is no big deal. They could spend that at the local pub or spend it at the variety store quite as easily, and it doesn't faze them.

So \$50 to \$500—I think there should be a fine as well as demerit points attached to this bill. I think they've missed the boat on this one. The fine structure will determine whether the legislation works. I think that without demerit points attached to that, this system could run into problems if it's not dealt with at committee.

We should look to the other provinces in determining what fines are necessary in preventing the use of cellphones while driving. There's enough evidence in Canada to undertake the analysis. For example, Quebec had a three-month grace period followed by a \$100 fine, compared to Nova Scotia's \$165 first-time offender fine and a \$335 fine for the third offence.

Along the same lines, enforcement is crucial. Police resources are already stretched and strained to the limit, and enforcing the new law can be resource-intensive. We hope the plan comes with additional financial resources for the police departments to enforce this new legislation, because you can have a fine and demerit points, but if they're only spot checks I don't know what kind of an effect that's going to have. I think you need to send a strong message to the public, and the only way you can do that is with proper resources. So I hope the government has taken that into consideration on the budget level in these hard times when they've called for people to cut back on their spending and to be cautious of what companies are doing. The government also has to follow that line. When they attach new rules, there's always money that goes along with it. So I hope they can find the resources to back up their legislation.

One of the issues we have with the way the legislation is written is that it may capture some uses it wasn't intended to cover. For example, the bill prevents driving while using a hand-held entertainment device. Does that include iPods to car stereo systems, whether through FM transmitters or physical attachment? Pods are no different from stereo systems, and we worry that they are banned because they may fall into the entertainment category.

Also of concern to us is that many companies use hand-held devices or certain types of tracking equipment in transporting goods. We should allow these companies to continue using their equipment in a safe manner, because obviously the hub of our province is the transportation of goods and services. We must not find ways to impede it, because we're facing infrastructure and transportation problems as it is, whether it be the border or whether it be our crowded highways. To further impede people doing their business of transporting goods in this province could be counterproductive.

We're pleased that the government took this opportunity to amend the Public Vehicles Act to end the antiquated restrictions on ride sharing and allow green companies like PickupPal to operate. For those who don't know, PickupPal is a company that arranges ride sharing over the Internet. They don't take a fee for arranging rides and make money through Internet advertising. This helps people carpool to get to work or to go a longer distance, and it also allows people who may not have known someone on the next street or in the same town going in the same direction on the same day, at the same time, to the same place of employment. This service was definitely a benefit to a lot of people in the province. In the time of pollution control and resource control, this makes sense to us, but because the bill hasn't passed yet, the Ontario Highway Transport Board went through with

issuing a decision against PickupPal, ordering the company to cease most of its operations, which we think was a negative move. We hope they would consider reinstating this service because it was very beneficial to a lot of communities, and a lot of rural communities too, that go further distances, maybe into the city for their employment. We urge the minister to find a way to allow PickupPal to continue operating, even though an order has been issued against it.

We look forward to getting this bill to committee because we feel that there are many experts out there who must be heard, whether it be transportation experts or logistics experts. Actually, experts from individual municipalities would be a crucial part of this exercise because some communities, whether they're rural or urban, require different types and modes of transportation to deal with their daily issues. I would like to see rural people who have long ways to go and urban people—city planners and engineering people would be involved in some of these discussions, because I think it will have a very major impact on our municipalities throughout this province.

The bill restricts the following: equipping a vehicle with a television, computer etc. where the screen is visible by the driver—a big distraction—other than the ones that entertain the kids in the backseat to keep them from being a little bit anxious during their rides to wherever they're going. That's not such a bad idea, but to have it in the driver's view is a big mistake. There are enough distractions on the road without watching your favourite *The Young and the Restless*, or whatever you're watching.

Exceptions are made for GPS devices. Yes, I believe these devices are good for when you're lost; their tracking devices are great. But I think you should be pulling over to the side of the road when you're punching in where you want to go or where you're lost, because that's extremely distracting too. I've even had friends who have almost hit other vehicles because they were lost and trying to find out on that device sitting on their dash, or even on the window of their car, where they're going. But I do believe that the voice-activated ones that say, "Turn right here, turn left there," would be beneficial if they were put into a position in the car that doesn't distract the actual driver. I'm sure the passenger could handle any directions with ease with these additional devices.

Trucking equipment, collision avoidance systems, fire and ambulance uses—driving while using a hand-held device capable of being a phone or for sending e-mails, text messages: big mistake. How can you drive? Some of these BlackBerries are so small that you have to really concentrate. You may have a large finger and push two letters at the same time or miss the call, or someone is trying to get hold of you—a big, big distraction while you're driving. It shouldn't be allowed, and I think that's a thing we really have to enforce.

I'm in favour of the hands-free mode. I believe that, attached to your dash, voice-activated measures that

don't require distraction by you while you listen or respond while watching the road, not while looking around for your device, would be beneficial as well. The restriction includes streetcars, snow vehicles and other types of vehicles. I'm not quite sure about snow vehicles on the trails. You may require this equipment, if you get stranded or are in a bad blizzard, to find out where you are. But there's no reason why you couldn't pull over your snowmobile, your racing boat or your Sea-Doo or Ski-Doo to find out where you are and how to get back without being distracted from your driving ability and endangering other snowmobilers, other boaters or other modes of transportation.

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For those people who are concerned about this, I do believe we can straighten this out in committee. I hope this government will take it upon themselves to listen to us and actually listen to some of our amendments and not just—I mean, for the last bill we did clause-by-clause with the government, I had 17 amendments, and the government didn't look at any of them, didn't want to deal with them. They just moved on straight ahead, tunnel vision: They know better than us; we don't know anything.

It's very unfortunate that in my short tenure in this building I've seen this type of people dealing with situations, and I hope that changes in the next session. I hope they are going to entertain some of our bills, whether they be private—just because they're a private member's bill doesn't mean they're bad. Private members' bills can be amended, too; they can come up for discussion. The government can throw in their two cents on what they don't like about a private member's bill, but they don't even bother to do that. They don't even want to deal with it. That's amazing. I can't believe how this government functions when they pass up hundreds of excellent ideas and input from all members on this side of the House.

Until governments in Canada and Ontario and anywhere else start to learn to co-operate and use all the people in this House to the fullest of their abilities, use their contributions, then I think we're falling far short of what should be for the people of this province and what's best for Ontario. In closing, maybe this time they might listen to us.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague. Certainly, we in the NDP are going to support this bill. It's a nice little bill; there are four pages to it.

I, as well, urge the government to look at amendments. Clearly, we've heard some of the problems, enforcement being a huge one. I know that the Police Association of Ontario laughed at it when they came to lobby me and said, "Our officers are so overstretched and so underfunded; how do they expect us to ever enforce this sort of legislation?" They thought it was, more or less, a joke. So certainly we would push for financial resources to add to the policing services so they can enforce it.

But more importantly, if you were just a Magna worker who was laid off and went home and turned on the

television this morning and expected to see your elected representatives deal with the real crises in Ontario, the fact that we've lost over 250,000 manufacturing jobs and just lost another 850 this morning in the auto sector—and we still have a government that hasn't come forward with a plan for the auto sector. This is what we should be dealing with in this House.

Is this a nice little bill? Yes. Is it something we should do? Absolutely. But what I think all Ontarians look to their government to do is to take real action, not just to make the chairs more secure and safer on the Titanic, but actually to look at the direction the ship is sailing in—and hey, maybe the berg has already hit us. That's what Ontarians expect when one in six children live in poverty.

Yes, this and other bills that the government brings forward: nothing wrong with them. I'm sure 90% of Ontarians support them. But this is a government with a huge majority. This is a time for bold action. They could take that bold action. They can do anything they want. Why don't they do something about the real issues that are facing Ontarians? Why don't they help that Magna worker who just turned on the television set, who just found out that she had lost her job? Let's deal with that.

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

Seeing none, the honourable member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, if you would like, you do have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to make a short comment. I would like to thank my colleague. She makes a very good point: that since I've been here, we've dealt with some bills that have to be done eventually. But I would say the important things—the economy, jobs—really have fallen short on the list of things to do. Some people in this House have called some of these bills “fluff bills,” bills that are just filling in time, filling in talking, filling in space. But for the real bills that should be dealt with, the government has no answers.

It's tough times, I agree. But in tough times, tough people come out. In tough times, people make good decisions; they make strong decisions. I can't say I've seen this from this government.

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

Seeing none, Mr. Bradley has moved second reading of Bill 118, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of devices with display screens and handheld communication and entertainment devices and to amend the Public Vehicles Act with respect to car pool vehicles.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred? Agreed.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I just had a note brought in. There's no further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1005 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased to inform the members of the assembly that recipients of the 2008 Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction will be visitors to the gallery this morning. They're victims of crime whose courage and dedication raised the profile of victims' issues in Ontario as volunteers and professionals who provide outstanding service to victims. They are Louise Russo; Travis Bailey; John Dick; Mike Neuts; Glenna Byers; Kathleen Fitzgerald; Brenda LaForme; Danielle Ridge; Céline Pelletier, au nom de l'Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes; Carol Barkwell on behalf of Luke's Place; Nigel Couch, on behalf of Multi-cultural Council of Windsor and Essex County; Joan Chandler, on behalf of Sheatre; and Shirley Hickman, on behalf of Threads of Life. Please join me in congratulating them on the work that they do.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted today to have Mr. Pulcini and the 10th graders from Cardinal McGuigan separate school. They are in the east balcony here today. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park. I hope they will enjoy their visit today.

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm pleased on behalf of page Kush Thaker to welcome and introduce his uncle, Rakesh Joshi; and his cousins, Raj Joshi, Ashka Joshi, Keyor Joshi and Mansi Joshi. They're sitting in the public gallery.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to welcome my dear cousin from British Columbia—Vernon, BC—Virginia Wolfe, and her husband, David.

Interjection: Who's afraid of her?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: No one's afraid of Virginia.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to welcome the grade 12 students and their teacher from St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School, from my riding, to the Legislature.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I want to take the opportunity to welcome page Rohan Pavone from the Scarborough part of the riding. His family is here today: his mother, Dr. Rosemarie Lall; his father, Dr. Leo Pavone; his sister Damiana Pavone; his brother Sanjay Pavone; and his grandmother Francesca Pavone. They're in the public gallery today.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to welcome, in the west members' gallery, members of our model youth parliament, Mac Moreau, Kurtis McAleer and Brooke Longhurst. These involved youth are from my riding of Ajax–Pickering. Welcome.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to welcome teacher Darshan Harricharran and the students from T.L. Kennedy Secondary School here to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Luis Vera, we'd like to welcome back a family friend of his sitting in the west public gallery, Pat Taylor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Today, 850 employees and their families find themselves trying to cope with the shocking news that two Magna plants are shutting down in Newmarket and Aurora.

The auto sector is in a crisis, and this government has no response. Two months ago, I asked the Premier to look into why an auto sector business in my riding had been approved for funding earlier in the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, and yet not one cent had been received.

To the Premier's credit, he obviously looked into it because the next day that employer got a call from the Ministry of Economic Development saying a cheque will be prepared and it should be there soon. This morning, I spoke to the president of that company, who has yet to see one red cent. What he has received is more red tape.

I want to know this from the Premier, or the Minister of Economic Development if the Premier isn't here: Why, on the one hand, can they continue to boast about a \$1.5-billion aid plan and not one red cent is being delivered to the businesses that need it while plants are shutting down in this province?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Firstly, obviously, everybody here knows that the news from Magna yesterday was brutal news for those workers. We do, in our government, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, make people available to try to assist those workers. They will be laid off in June, it was announced. It is brutal news, it is tough news, it is news that will have a very devastating effect on those families and, of course, as well, in your community.

I did speak with senior executives at Magna today. They reassure me that Magna remains the healthiest auto supplier in North America, with significant liquidity. As a result of the 30% contraction in sales of automobiles, as a result of the shrinkage of that demand, there has been shrinkage of supply, and that accounts for what has happened, which makes it tough news for the people in your riding—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: What I want the minister to address is the fact that back in March they announced a \$1.5-billion jobs fund. Applications have been made—no response from this government. I want to know from the minister why, as recently as yesterday, his official told the president of Axiom Corp. that they could expect to

receive no funding from this program until February of next year. What is that all about?

Hon. Michael Bryant: This is a program that, in fact, provides dollars that are leveraged into an even greater investment. It is a grant. It is a subsidy by the province of Ontario with taxpayer dollars, used to create more investment and more jobs. That is what this program has done and will continue to do.

I note, though, that this is a program that the member voted against. It is difficult to see why, on the one hand, the member can say he's against subsidies and then, on the other hand, say, "You're not spending the subsidies fast enough." It just doesn't make any sense. In any event, we take, nonetheless, that particular application very seriously, and we also want to make sure that the taxpayers' money is given the attention that it deserves.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: The fact of the matter is that this company has been told repeatedly that it's approved, that the money is coming. The fact of the matter is that now, a program that was announced last March, he and his ministry are saying, won't be delivered until February of next year. What is happening here? This is a sham. What I'm asking the minister to do is tell the House, do you have a program? Is the \$1.5 billion there? And if it is, why isn't it in the hands of the businesses that need it rather than being tied up in his ministry in red tape?

We approved of the fact that this government has a program, if it's real. But it's not real. Tell the truth. Either you have a program, and if you do, get it into the hands of the businesses that need it, or fess up and say that it is a—

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: Well, the member should tell the truth too about how he voted with respect to this subsidy program. He says he's in favour of it now. He probably says it to the company that's in his riding. He probably says it to a lot of the companies in his riding, that in fact this is a great program and "Boy, I'm holding their feet to the fire." But the truth is he voted against it. This side of the House and that side of the House stood up in support of this auto program, stood up in support for the auto suppliers. That side of the House—what do they say? "The market will take care of it. Don't worry. Just cut taxes and somehow, magically, that company is going to find itself with additional investment." Well, it doesn't work that way.

This government will continue to actively intervene to assist those companies that meet the test under the public interest, so that we can grow our auto supply industry. That side of the House, in fact, is totally against that approach and he should stand up and say it.

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HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health.

Minister, as you well know, hospitals today are operating at almost 100% occupancy. The population is growing and, regrettably, aging. There are more complex needs. We also have areas of growth in the province. Earlier this year, your government committed \$120 million over three years in additional funding to those hospitals in growth areas.

Minister, you were quoted in the Canadian Press today as saying that, yes, hospitals needed more money in growth areas; however, you were not sure that you were going to be able to maintain the funding increase in the next two years. Would you confirm that hospitals will, indeed, receive the growth funding you promised?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, what I did say to the reporter from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record was that many communities have experienced growth pressures in the province of Ontario, and prior to this government coming to office, it was never recognized by previous governments.

When my colleague the finance minister delivered the budget last March, which, I would point out, this member and her colleagues voted against, we recognized that the GTA-905 and other areas of our province are experiencing population growth and unique needs. We have a coordinated plan to address these needs that includes capital investments and wait times initiatives. The 2008 budget announced \$120 million invested over the next three years to help hospitals in the areas experiencing high growth meet the anticipated demand—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It becomes more clear every day that this government doesn't have a plan and any changes that are made in health care funding seem to be done in a haphazard manner.

In the North Bay Nugget of April 7, your Premier said that he was going to protect public services. Despite this, hospital services are being cut. Despite the fact that you've collected \$12 billion from the health tax, you're cutting funding to the hospitals. We've got St. Mary's, Quinte Health Care, Cornwall, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Hamilton Health Sciences, Rouge Valley Health System, and the list goes on and on and on. I ask you today, Minister, why have you broken your promise? Why, in tough times, is the first thing you're cutting health care?

Hon. David Caplan: The member is incorrect. I completely reject the premise of her question. In fact, we are providing additional assistance and support to our hospitals and to our health care partners.

I do recognize that we are in challenging economic times and that our partners must work within the budgets and within the funds that are allocated to them to be able to meet the demands. That's why we've created a plan, which began in 2003, to create local health integration networks made up of people from local communities, working with local partners, whether they be hospital- or community-based providers, to provide the community

services and the hospital-based, institutional-based, services.

The member is incorrect in her assertion. In fact, hospital funding this year is increasing; next year, it's increasing. That was not the case when she was a former Minister of Health and when she was a member of a government which immediately upon taking office—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The reality is that hospitals this year are receiving a 2.4% increase in funding; next year, it's 2.1%. Regrettably, this government has negotiated contracts with doctors, nurses and others; salaries are going up. Hydro and heating costs and other fixed costs are increasing at a rate of about 4% to 5%. Hospitals are going to have to make cuts. The money is simply not there. We have 100% occupancy today.

We have St. Mary's hospital in my community cutting 10 beds, three outpatient clinics and 17 full-time jobs, including nurses; Quinte Health Care cutting 45 nursing positions; Cornwall has closed their critical care units and one of their two emergency rooms; CHEO is closing six beds; Hamilton Health Sciences, 485 jobs.

I ask you today, why are you cutting health services that your Premier promised to protect?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the member points out in her question quite rightly that we are increasing funding, and then she ends her question by saying, why are we cutting funding? She is fundamentally inconsistent. I would quote, for example, that on November 9, 2000, Elizabeth Witmer told hospitals, "'Hospital bailouts can't last,' Witmer warns. Money needed elsewhere." She said, "We need to consider that the economy may not always be as strong as it is today, in the year 2000, and it may not be possible to provide in the future the size and kind of investment we have seen this year."

Of course, the member went on to point out that we needed to invest in home care, in mental health, in chronic diseases, and I quite agree. In fact, that is the plan that has been implemented by my predecessor, by myself and by this government. This member should in fact stand up and correct her record, because she has pointed out fundamentally incorrect and inconsistent information in the question she asked, and the plan that has been presented in fact is working throughout—

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

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Acting Premier. Suddenly the McGuinty government is talking about spending restraints for MPPs. This looks remarkably similar to the playbook of Stephen Harper: When faced with the loss of hundreds of thousands of good jobs, find something, anything, to distract the public's attention. My question is this: Will the McGuinty government admit that its sudden new focus on so-called restraint is simply a cynical attempt to distract the public of

Ontario from the real issue? Hundreds of thousands of good jobs are being destroyed in the auto sector, the forest sector, the manufacturing sector, and the McGuinty government has no plan.

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite just simply isn't correct. First of all, we are taking a balanced and prudent approach. We began that in the fall statement last year with respect to expenditures and we're doing so in a manner that protects public services. We have said for some time now that the province of Ontario, indeed Canada, was facing an economic tsunami. Unfortunately, those realities are coming to bear. We are continuing to take a balanced approach to overall spending. In my fall statement we did announce a number of measures which were designed to be prudent that at the same time would protect public services.

These are challenging times. We've also had billions of dollars in stimulative initiatives, many of which the member voted and spoke against. We will continue this balanced and prudent approach to help lead Ontario through these very, very challenging economic circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I don't think the public is going to be fooled by McGuinty government double-talk about restraining MPPs' salaries when it's the McGuinty government that has implemented a 40% pay increase for MPPs over the last year and nine months. I think people are going to see through that.

I also think people will see what the real issue is: When tens of thousands of jobs were lost in the forest sector, when hundreds of thousands of jobs are being lost in manufacturing generally, the McGuinty government had no plan. Now, with the credit crunch threatening hundreds of thousands of indirect and direct auto sector jobs, the McGuinty government's solution is not to have a plan but to talk about symbolic restraint.

My question is simply this: When will the McGuinty government stop the diversions and the distractions and come to grips with the real issue? We're losing hundreds of thousands—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the fall statement of 2007, in the budget of 2008 and in the fall statement of 2008, this government introduced almost \$10 billion in infrastructure expenses, and that member voted against every dollar. This government voted to put into place a billion dollars in retraining money to help address the needs of unemployed Ontario workers, and that member and his party voted against every single measure. This government has put into place a system to assist and help our manufacturing sector, including grants, including capital cost allowance, including the refund of capital tax to get cash into their hands in these challenging times. That member and his party voted against every single measure.

All of us have to work together as we get through these challenging times with clear—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want the public to understand what the McGuinty government means by "working together." The McGuinty government passes 40% pay increases for MPPs while hundreds of thousands of working Ontarians lose their jobs. That's the McGuinty definition of "working together."

I come back again to the question: When the Liberals were in opposition—and I can quote the finance minister's colleague from Windsor—this is what they said: "In a Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty, we will lead an automotive investment SWAT team to get out there and look for new investment, not sit on our hands like this government has done."

Well, here we go. We've watched the loss of tens of thousands of auto sector jobs. We're witnessing the possibility of the loss of hundreds of thousands of auto sector jobs. My question is, where is the McGuinty SWAT team?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite said that he would donate his increase to charity and produce tax receipts. I challenge you to table the tax receipts, each and every one of you—each and every one of them, Mr. Speaker.

I'll tell you something: Sandra Papatello and Michael Bryant and Premier McGuinty have been out and generated \$7 billion in investment in the automotive sector. Thank goodness we have people like that, who have the support of Buzz Hargrove, have the support of Ken Lewenza and have the support of the industry.

We are in challenging times. Do you know what he suggested we should do? We should have a jobs commissioner. A jobs commissioner would go to Detroit and say, "Don't cut any jobs, please." Do you know what? Out of concern for working people, out of concern for Ontario communities, this government is standing up for Ontarians, and doing a better job than you, sir, could ever—

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

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Deputy Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Apparently, members of the McGuinty government don't like to be questioned about the fact that they gave themselves a 40% pay increase at the same time that hundreds of thousands of workers are losing their jobs.

My question to the Deputy Premier is this: As the McGuinty government pats themselves on the shoulder

and tries to tell everyone that they have a brilliant strategy to sustain jobs in Ontario, Magna announced 850 lost jobs yesterday. My question again: Hundreds of thousands of jobs are at stake in Ontario. Where is the McGuinty government's plan to do anything about it?

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: As I said to the member from the official opposition previously, this is brutal news; the announcement of these layoffs is brutal news—brutal for those families, for those people and for that community. It is unfortunate that supply and demand have gone down by about 30%. Consumers, people buying cars, bought 30% less cars in an amount of time that is just completely unprecedented. As a result of that, obviously supply has gone down. That is going to affect suppliers. Magna, fortunately a great global leader in the area of auto supplies and auto parts, is in very healthy financial shape, I am assured. It is in fact in the healthiest financial shape within its industry and is not facing liquidity challenges whatsoever.

We will do everything we can to work with those workers leading up to the June date—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again, the McGuinty government tries to offer up excuses. Here is the reality: Yes, Magna is a very large corporation. It has deep pockets, it has lots of connections in the financial community, but most of the auto parts manufacturers are very small companies. They don't have deep pockets. They don't have five or six banks backing them up. If Magna is cutting hundreds of jobs, what it means is that the small auto parts manufacturers are about to go over the cliff.

I come back to the question again. The McGuinty government was oh, so quick to raise MPPs' salaries by 40% in less than two years. A simple question: Where is the McGuinty government's plan to help all of those small auto parts manufacturers who are about to go over the cliff? Where's the McGuinty government's plan?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The McGuinty government has had a plan in place to support the auto industry, the automakers and the auto suppliers. We brought it in and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm trying to listen to the response from the minister to a question that was asked and I'm hearing cross-conversation. If you want to have these conversations, take them outside. Don't interrupt the flow of question period, please.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: These investments made by the McGuinty government created additional investments from the private sector and created literally thousands of jobs. These programs remain in place and these programs continue to be utilized by companies.

The credit crunch from both the consumer end—consumers who cannot get financing—and with respect to

those auto suppliers that need more cash flow in order to continue and are not getting it, because they're not getting that financing—that credit crunch, on top of the fact that sales went down 30%, is going to lead to and has led to a contraction of the market. Everything the McGuinty government is doing is seeking to—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Every time a member of the McGuinty government gets up, they try to rewrite history. They try to say that thousands of jobs have been created in the auto sector.

Yes, you gave \$200 million to General Motors, and General Motors proceeded to lay off thousands of GM workers. Yes, you gave over \$100 million to Ford, and Ford has been laying off workers. There has been layoff after layoff after layoff, and the conference board says there are going to be more layoffs. That's not the issue. The issue is this: Without access to financial credit for the manufacturers, the parts suppliers, the tool and die makers, the car dealers and the leasing companies, this vital sector, which is responsible for hundreds of thousands of jobs, especially in southern Ontario, is going to suffer massive losses.

My question again: You're so quick to give yourself a 40% pay increase. Where's your plan to help sustain the hundreds of thousands of jobs that are at risk?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member knows full well that when we brought forward these investments, New Democrats and the leader of the New Democrats did not support them; they voted against them.

In the case of one investment, the member stood up and said that we didn't put enough strings and conditions on the investment. Now he's standing up and he's saying we should write blank cheques to every single person who asks for one, but we're not going to do that. What we're going to do is work with the industry. What we're going to do is work with the workers. What we're going to do is work not only with the suppliers and the automakers but also with the distributors. We are going to make sure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, but they will be spent and invested in companies to allow them to grow. They will be spent and invested in companies all across this province to allow all those parts of the auto industry to grow. We will have a thriving and strong auto industry in Ontario in years and years to come and it will be no—

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

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The minister knows that for several years now the Progressive Conservative Party has been expressing concern about your government's spending practices, concerns that you've simply ignored.

With the economic crash in the past few weeks, you and your Premier have been acting like a deer in the

headlights, paralyzed with respect to how to respond to the situation until yesterday, when you finally indicated you will bring in a restraint program, but there's a catch to it. The Premier says it will only be symbolic.

Given the challenges your government is facing and that this province is facing, is that the best you can do: a symbolism? Another public relations exercise?

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In my budget of last spring, we announced and have now saved \$200 million in streamlined purchasing process, vendor rebates and new vendors of record. That member voted against it. We saved \$100 million in consolidation of IT services, reduced inbound toll-free and outbound long-distance telephone costs. That member and his party voted against it. We have achieved and saved \$50 million in reduced accommodation costs. That member and his party voted against it.

We have more to do. I'll have more to say about that, likely early next week, but this government has taken appropriate steps throughout these challenging times. And every time we've done that, they've voted against them.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: In April 2007, we sponsored an opposition day calling on you to curtail spending in recognition of the growing economic challenges. Virtually every other government in this country has acted over the past couple of years.

I'll give you a couple of examples of your government's response: the administration budget for the Ministry of Agriculture, up 22%; tourism, up 21% this year—this year. The administration budget for the Ministry of Government Services has increased 86% in the last two years; over 50% this year alone. What that ministry has spent on hotels is up 78% last year, and that's \$100,000-plus at the Royal York Hotel. Those administrative costs have gone through the roof.

Minister, how can you talk of symbolic restraint when there are parents and families in this province who'll have a very difficult time putting a good dinner in front of their family at Christmas? How can that be symbolic?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I was interested to hear the member now speaking against assistance to our pork farmers, our horticultural sector and others, which you, sir, called on us to do. Now you're criticizing us.

There are challenging times in the economy. We have managed the province's finances in a responsible and prudent fashion. There's no doubt that we can do better, and we will. That's why, for instance, we brought freedom of information to Ontario Power Generation. And what did we discover? That that member and his government had a luxury booth at the Air Canada Centre and a number of his colleagues had the opportunity to be hosted. There's a number of other things like that that we will be talking about over the next few days. But we're taking a prudent and balanced approach to the management of the expenses of the province of Ontario and leading Ontario through these very, very difficult times.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. This week, St. Mary's hospital in Waterloo region announced plans to eliminate good jobs and vital medical services in order to balance its books. Hospitals in Waterloo region have been chronically underfunded and yet the minister maintains that services should not be cut. How does he suggest that underfunded hospitals do that without allowing greater privatization to creep into our public health care system?

Hon. David Caplan: I think it's important to put a few facts on the table. Funding for St. Mary's has increased 30% in base funding over the course of the last five years. In addition, we've invested almost \$38 million in Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration alone toward the three-year local aging at home strategy, which drives services into the community close to where seniors and their family members need them.

In addition to that, we've invested \$560,000 for 499 general surgeries. That's in addition to the almost \$27 million in total funding that St. Mary's has received since 2004 to reduce wait times at the hospital. That's 17,000 more surgeries. So I reject the premise of the question which says that there is underfunding. In fact, there is considerable additional funding that this hospital has received.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister talked about St. Mary's, but St. Mary's is just one of many hospitals across Ontario being forced to make substantial cuts and difficult decisions that affect the communities they serve. We have witnessed similar decisions being made recently at hospitals in Hamilton and right here in Toronto. Rather than allowing our public health care system to be dismantled, brick by brick, nurse by nurse, why won't this minister recognize the importance of properly funding our hospitals here in Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, there is a plan that has been in place since 2003 where we embarked on an unprecedented investment to build a more sustainable health care system in the province of Ontario. Health care spending has increased by 37%—31% to hospital funding alone; the province's wait times are down in almost every category right across the board; over 100 hospital capital projects are underway; 630,000 more Ontarians have access to a family doctor who previously did not; and contrary to the member's suggestion, 8,900 more nurses have been hired in the province of Ontario. That follows over 3,000 who were cut under the NDP and a 6,000-nurse reduction under the Conservatives. We have had a 50% increase, over \$1 billion, to long-term-care funding, \$95 million to community health centres and the largest expansion of community health centres in this province's history.

This is the plan for better health care in the province—

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

VIOLENT CRIME

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Attorney General. Figures released by Statistics Canada tell us that the national crime rate is declining and that Ontario's crime rate was the lowest in Canada last year. I know that since 2003, this government has been tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. We have made unprecedented investments to combat guns and gangs. We are helping to build healthy neighbourhoods through investments in better housing, safe schools, after-school activities and programs for at-risk youth.

But when violent crimes are committed, I know that my constituents are concerned that these crimes happen in spite of the steps we have taken to prevent them. We are moved and saddened by the impact on victims, but we also want to know that everything that can be done is being done to prevent similar crimes from occurring in the future. Can the Attorney General tell this House what further steps we are now taking to fight—

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know we all share the sentiment of my colleague from Guelph–Wellington that we need a system that makes sure that the violent and the dangerous are not endangering us in our communities.

There have been a lot of initiatives taken over the past five years: investments in the guns and gangs task force, more police on the streets. The next step is to make the system work more effectively. We've launched a justice-on-target strategy to reduce the number of times cases go to court for adjournments. That sounds like a strategy just to reduce the number of adjournments, but it really will protect our communities, and it does it in this way: The less time our police officers spend in court waiting for adjournments, the more time they're on the street preventing crime and investigating the crime that does occur. It's about moving resources from the less serious to the most serious. That will keep our communities safer.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Our police and crown prosecutors work hard to keep Ontario families and communities safe, but we've all heard about the revolving door of justice and are concerned about repeat offenders getting back onto the streets.

I have spoken in this House before about the fact that the Criminal Code of Canada allows judges to consider pre-trial custody when determining the appropriate sentence. The principle of two-for-one credit, and in some cases three-for-one credit, has been widely recognized by the courts. I know that our government has asked the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to limit pre-trial custody. I also know that this government is working closely with our provincial justice partners. This week, we heard that the Attorney General and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services met with our policing partners to discuss additional ways of keeping violent offenders behind bars. Can the Attorney General tell us what came out of that meeting—

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member for Guelph–Wellington is right: She and many others have risen in this House to speak about what we need to do, what we can do, what we must do to protect our communities.

We've got a very good working relationship with our justice partners and our police partners. This week, my colleague Rick Bartolucci and I had a meeting with Chief Davidson, Chief Blair and Commissioner Fantino to discuss what more we can do with respect to the most violent and the most dangerous—and we're talking about, as Chief Blair would say, hundreds, not thousands.

We have now struck an exit point task force to address what are sometimes called the three points in the revolving door of justice: bail, sentencing and the parole post-sentencing stage. The goal is to make sure that the crowns and the police have all of the information and supports they need to direct to the most violent and the most dangerous so we get the result we must.

1110

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. President-elect Obama has specifically spoken about the repatriation of jobs back to the United States. Locally, we constantly hear about the potential loss of the head office or even posturing between the UAW and the CAW for job protection.

I know that two weeks ago tomorrow, the Premier was briefed by the auto sector, and the auto sector specifically asked that the percentage by which the auto sector is employed in Ontario and Canada will receive an equivalent percentage of support to ensure that the US perception is not that supporting the auto sector would take place in Canada by their funding support.

Minister, in the December 2 presentation for support, will the auto sector receive a parallel level of support by the province of Ontario to at least ensure that the jobs stay here, and we don't have repatriation of our jobs to the United States?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I understand and appreciate very much the important issue that the member is raising with respect to the concerns and risks around the future of the auto industry in light of whatever terms might be attached to US assistance, particularly, say, congressional assistance.

This is a matter that was taken up when Minister Clement and I were in Washington. We're confident at the present time that the leadership within both Democrats and Republicans are fully aware of the fact that we have a very integrated North American market, such that what hurts Canadian automakers hurts American suppliers and distributors and vice versa.

I appreciate the member's question. It's certainly at the front of our mind. We're going to continue to keep a very close eye on that and continue to do the due diligence necessary—

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, in the event that repatriation is moved forward with in the United States and we lose a significant number of jobs or positions in Ontario, is there some plan that you have to come forward in order to ensure that we do the very best we can to maintain those jobs here? We are learning on a regular basis about the loss of jobs, but the potential loss due to repatriation is huge in the auto sector, and anything you can apply or add to that sector would certainly be beneficial. Can you enlighten us on that, Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: It is important that the federal government, through the embassy and every other means, continue to track what kinds of terms and issues in fact are part of the broader package that may be before Congress. Working with Ontario, this has become an important issue and we want to make sure we have something in place in the event that there is a challenge. I can say that we are very confident right now that it is not, but we take it very seriously so we continue to monitor it. Obviously, as we approach that date and we receive more information from the automakers themselves, which we have sought, once we have the financials and once we have more details on the longer-term prognosis of jobs in Canada, we'll be in a better position to make a decision.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Minister of Energy. If the construction of new nuclear power plants is as affordable and as viable as the McGuinty government claims, why has Westinghouse, one of the three bidders to build new nuclear power reactors in Darlington, suddenly dropped out of the McGuinty government's bidding process?

Hon. George Smitherman: The story in today's *Globe and Mail*, to the very best of the information I have available, is erroneous on that. Westinghouse has, as recently as a few days ago, been in touch with and submitted paperwork to Infrastructure Ontario, which is leading this process.

We're working very vigorously to ensure that as we go forward, the ratepayers in the province of Ontario will have the advantage of a competitive process which will result in the construction of two new nuclear reactors at Darlington. It's a huge stimulus from the standpoint of construction and a huge source of reliable electricity going forward, part and parcel of the energy supply mix which has been part and parcel of Ontario's energy supply mix for going on 30 or 40 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister tried very hard not to answer the question. The fact of the matter is, Westinghouse may be willing to supply some equipment, but they're not interested in the bidding process that the McGuinty government has outlined. Why? The *Globe and Mail* is very specific: because of the company's con-

cerns about how much of the risk the company would be asked to assume for any cost overruns and delays. Westinghouse officials aren't stupid. They know that every nuclear power project in Ontario has gone over budget, in some cases billions and billions over budget. They know that most of the new nuclear power construction elsewhere in the world is going billions of dollars over budget.

My question is this: When will the McGuinty government finally realize that its nuclear mega scheme to pour tens of billions of dollars into a source of power that is neither safe, reliable, nor affordable—

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

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that the honourable member standing today in a province where 50% of the baseload supply is coming from a form of energy which the honourable member has just characterized as neither reliable nor safe—that is a rather extraordinary comment on that member's part. I know that the honourable member has written a book, which has often been referred to, on the matter of energy, but I must confess that a coherent policy from that party with respect to energy does seem to be lacking.

Here in Ontario, we believe that we should have renewal of our nuclear fleet. For 30 or 40 years, it has been a staple of the energy supply mix in the province of Ontario. We hope to make further progress on conservation and renewables alongside that, as we undertake the single biggest climate change initiative in North America, which is the elimination of coal from the Ontario energy supply mix.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Minister, on October 15 of this year, I hosted a Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry day here at Queen's Park. This was a great opportunity for community leaders of my riding to talk to ministers about the challenges they are facing, the initiatives they are taking to address those challenges, and ways in which our government can assist in these endeavours.

I want to commend all those from my riding who are members of A Quality of Life for All, a group with representatives from the social services sector, for the work they do both with their agencies, such as the Social Development Council, the Agapè Centre, the Red Cross, and the municipalities, through their joint efforts to address the social inequalities in my riding.

Minister, this government understands the importance of assisting these agencies in their important work. Could you elaborate on some of the supports the McGuinty government has in place to assist groups such as the ones I've just identified from my riding?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for all the work that he's doing in his community.

Yes, indeed, on October 15 I met very dedicated members of his community, and I was very glad to listen to their concerns and good suggestions.

Our government doesn't just listen; we act. Since taking office, we have increased social assistance rates by 9%, after years of cuts by previous governments.

In regard to domestic violence, I was proud to have the opportunity this past year to announce that our government was investing \$18.8 million, which will increase the base budget of women's agencies by 5%. This was one of the 2007 campaign commitments. Also, we have provided \$136 million annually to programs that help reduce domestic violence—

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: I am proud to continue working with those groups and to help foster positive working relationships between local agencies. I believe that these collaborative efforts result in more comprehensive supports for those who are underserved in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Recently, the Social Planning Council of Cornwall and Area, led by Mehroon Kassam, held a poverty reduction forum that addressed poverty issues of importance to the soon-to-be-released poverty reduction strategy. Obviously, there is concern across the province about issues of poverty, especially given the economic climate we now face.

Minister, can you tell us that in preparing this strategy, you have met with and taken into consideration the concerns of groups like the Social Planning Council of my riding and that their concerns will be reflected in your plan?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'd like to refer that question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: First of all, I would like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the Social Planning Council of Cornwall, under the very strong leadership of Dr. Kassam, for the work they are doing to champion poverty reduction in the Cornwall area.

One of the most encouraging and, in fact, inspiring learnings we took from meetings with groups across the province like the social planning council is just how powerful individual communities are in the fight against poverty. Throughout the province, Ontarians are developing innovative and local solutions that address the unique needs of their communities. The causes of poverty are different across the province and so the solutions must be as well. We've worked hard at the provincial level to open the conversation, to invite people in to be part of the solution, and that is translating across—

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

1120

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Health. Minister, Premier McGuinty has been very

clear that despite the current economic downturn in Ontario, there will not be any cuts in health care services, but on the ground there's a very different reality.

Last week, Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare announced that it's projecting a deficit this year of \$2.3 million. That will bring their total debt up to \$7.7 million. Mike Provan, chair of the board, commented in the Huntsville Forester last week: "We can't go on like this. It's costing us ... \$300,000 a year just on the interest, on the line of credit, and every million dollars we go over, that's money that should be going to patient care that (ends up) going towards the banks."

The headline in the Almaguin News is, "Cuts Looming After Hospital Deficit Jumps."

Minister, the people in my riding would like to know, What is your plan to deal with this? How can you continue saying health cuts will not happen?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm glad that the member raises the question. In fact, it has been identified going back almost a decade. I know that one of his colleagues, a former Minister of Health from Waterloo, warned hospitals at that time. She said, "We need to consider that the economy may not always be as strong as it is today, that it may not be possible to provide, in the future, the size and kind of investments that we have seen this year." In fact, at the time, as the member would well be aware, there were significant cuts to hospitals and significant cuts to health care.

This government has embarked upon another path and has a different kind of a plan. We've been providing enhanced and increased resources, a 37% increase to hospitals. I don't have the specific figures, but I will obtain them for the member and provide them specifically about the Muskoka and district hospital. But I can tell you that they have received additional funding this year as they have in previous years to their base budgeting, and we will work with them—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, Minister, we're already seeing the first signs of cuts to service with the end of the after-hours clinic in Burk's Falls and the upcoming loss of community lab services. There's a genuine concern now that the Burk's Falls health centre will be next on the chopping block.

People in my riding are calling every day with problems in health care. Patients with serious fractures are unable to get transfers to regional hospitals. Residents are calling about delays in joint replacement or arthroscopic procedures. Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare says their biggest problem is that more than a third of their beds are occupied by patients who really need a long-term-care bed, but your government is not doing anything about that.

Minister, people are tired of hearing your excuses. They want to know: What is your plan to deal with these hospital deficits, or are you just going to dump your problems over to the LHINs?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, local health integration networks are working very well. We are already seeing

examples of local innovation. I would point to a very exciting project in northeast Ontario at Timmins and District Hospital, where we had the LHIN working with the hospital. They've been able to have a unique and innovative strategy, driven by the community, called "wraparound," which has reduced their ALC pressure some 40%. We look toward other innovative solutions in the context of partners who are located there. We have confidence—I have confidence—in our hospitals to take care of critically ill patients, and we'll continue to work with our partners in health care to develop better strategies that reduce emergency room wait times. Increasing access to urgent care is a priority for our government. Our government is committed to tackling emergency department wait times, and that's why the ALC pressures that the member mentioned earlier are a key component. We have already taken action. We have increased—

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

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. This week, the minister boasted that Hamilton has increased its temporary care assistance caseload over the past couple of months. The minister should know that there's more to this picture.

The city of Hamilton, May 6, 2008, information report to the emergency and community services committee showed that the average 2007 temporary care assistance caseload was 250. The statistics provided to me from the minister show a caseload of only 176.

The 2004 Ontario Early Years community profile report from the city of Hamilton shows a distinct 311 TCA cases, whereas the minister's statistics show a meagre 199. Can the minister clarify these constant discrepancies for me?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Let me correct what the member just said. The member is mixing cases and children, because some grandparents have more than one child that they keep. He's mixing both.

The number of cases decreased, and then increased in Hamilton and in the whole province. So the temporary care assistance is here to stay, and we are very proud to respond to the needs of children and to support those who are helping to take care of those children in need.

As I said, we have increased the budget by more than \$3 million. We have more children in care every year. It's about—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: That's a really interesting statement from the minister. By the way, Minister, I've got two letters—you said four people weren't cut off. Two of the four we've contacted have letters from your ministry saying they're cut off, and I'll be happy to share them with you.

There are obvious problems with this program, not only the statistics but the varying interpretations of the

minister's new eligibility criteria. If you read it, Minister, no one will qualify in January. Why is this minister so resistant to getting the fiasco fixed? We want to fix it, Minister. You don't want to help us fix it.

As I've asked in the Legislature and in writing, to the minister again: Will this minister appoint an independent expert fact-finder to audit the temporary care assistance program and report back to this Legislature so we can get to the bottom of it, to the truth?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'll repeat the number. Let's talk about facts. In Hamilton in July 2008 there were 181 cases; in October there are 185. Province-wide, it has increased by 100 cases in four months.

Let me quote what the administrator of the program for Peterborough, Mrs. Mitchelson, has said: "There has been no change in the city's interpretation of the program, and I have not directed my staff to change their practice for awarding temporary care."

The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek wants to—it's a scare tactic. He wants to scare the grandparents and those who are taking care of children. What he is saying is not true.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question is for the Minister of Education. This past Friday, I was pleased to attend the press conference organized by the York Region District School Board, along with the Premier and yourself. I know this conference was attended by educators across the province and had representatives from a number of international jurisdictions from as far away as Australia, Finland, England, Ireland and Scotland, among others. These guests had come all this way to have a look into Ontario's education system and were favourably impressed by what they saw in the schools of York region, especially our strong focus on literacy and numeracy. Mr. Speaker, would the minister please outline some of the literacy and numeracy initiatives of this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for Richmond Hill for his question. It was very exciting to meet with these people from around the world. We had arranged a breakfast to get some feedback from these people, who have been watching what's going on in Ontario, the kinds of resources we've been putting in place to support the students who are here visiting with us today. These are the kids who are benefiting.

In York region alone, we've funded 550 new teachers, over 1,000 more education assistants and 991 more support staff. The primary class sizes in York region are 92% at 20 students or fewer, and that compares with 23% before the cap. But specifically, the literacy and numeracy secretariat has put in place \$25 million across the province for focused interventions. There are 20 schools in York region that are benefiting from those literacy- and numeracy-focused interventions.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Minister, I'm certainly mindful that students not only in York region, but across Ontario, are reaching new heights when it comes to those vital skills of literacy and numeracy. In fact, I'm not surprised the success of our education system attracts interest from around the globe. Ontario students rank among the best in the world in reading and science. On visits to schools in my riding, I have often been struck by the confidence and optimism of students. I know those same qualities were on display for conference delegates to see.

Literacy and numeracy are important, but they don't produce well-rounded students alone. My constituents would like the minister to tell us what other initiatives the ministry has undertaken in this regard.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for the question. In fact, the York Region District School Board is one of the leaders in character development. Character development is one of the important parts of the equation in terms of helping a student to develop into a well-rounded citizen. So we've put \$2 million for character development in our schools.

We've also invested \$45 million this year in program enhancement, which is education, programs for arts, physical education, outdoor education, the kinds of things that are supporting conditions for kids to develop into terrific citizens. We've consulted with hundreds of students to get their feedback. We know that there are kids involved in character education forums around the province.

As I heard from one Quest participant, Denis Stewart, who works in Northern Ireland and Scotland, we are building not the best education system in the world, but the best education system for the world. That's what we're doing in Ontario.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Attorney General. Minister, last weekend we both attended a rally here at Queen's Park that was organized by a number of faith communities to support the Varughese and John families. Saramma Varughese and Susan John, as you know, were murdered in their own home allegedly by their next-door neighbour, who was out on bail at the time on several charges of violent sexual assaults.

At the rally, you indicated that you were prepared to do whatever was necessary to protect the public interest and to keep this from happening again. The family has called for a public inquiry. Yesterday, you announced your exit point task force to deal with certain violent offenders as they come before the court. Are you suggesting this task force as an alternative to the full public inquiry that the families are requesting?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're all not only saddened, but angered by tragedies that occur. It moves us all to ask, "What more can we do?" We have to and we must take whatever steps are necessary to keep our communities safe.

So we had a very good meeting the other day with the chiefs, Chief Davidson, Chief Blair, Commissioner Fan-

tino, and my colleague Minister Bartolucci. We have struck, at the Ministry of the Attorney General, an exit point task force, and we're looking at those three parts of what some call the revolving door of justice where sometimes the most dangerous might slip out: bail, sentencing, and the parole. We're going to bring to bear the expertise from around the province, police and crown expertise, to add to what we already apply to make sure that the dangerous stay where they must, not in our communities.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would say to the minister that the task force falls far short of the full inquiry that the family members have called for. There are several problems posed with this. First of all, it's only going to be dealing with a very small number of individuals who come before the courts. Secondly, it's only to coordinate the information that comes between the police and the crown attorneys when the matter first comes before the courts. It doesn't deal with what happens when bail is ultimately granted and how that's going to be monitored.

The fact that the coordination between the crown attorneys and police isn't happening right now in itself speaks to the fact that there's a larger systemic issue that needs to be examined. I would say to you again, Minister, will you be calling a full public inquiry into this matter to look at the whole system of bail in the province of Ontario, as these families have been calling for?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The people of Ontario expect us to continually get on with the job and continually improve. There is a lot of coordination, a lot of very hard work, that's going on by the crowns and the police on every one of these serious cases. They are all determined to prosecute these to the full extent of the law. The question is, what more can we do?

The exit point task force is the first step, and we will continue to build on it. It was recognized by Mr. Tory in his interview the other day, when he said, "You can never object to this kind of thing. It sounds good, and it is good." The fact of the matter is, on that matter Mr. Tory had it right. This is a good initiative. It's going to help us increase our ability to make sure that the most dangerous are where they belong and not in our communities.

Hon. David Caplan: On a point of order, Speaker: Earlier, in answer to the question from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, I undertook to provide information. The Muskoka Algonquin hospitals received a base funding increase: \$6.972 million—a 17.7% increase in the last five years.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Bryant: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent, and I seek unanimous consent, to move a motion regarding the schedule for the House this morning.

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that government order number 14 be called this morning immediately after deferred votes.

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

Motion agreed to.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 92 on allocation of time on government order number 14.

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

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

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

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dickson, Joe	Moridi, Reza
Albanese, Laura	Dombrowsky, Leona	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra
Best, Margaret	Fonseca, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Gravelle, Michael	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Gélinas, France	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Hudak, Tim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Jones, Sylvia	Miller, Paul	Witmer, Elizabeth
Klees, Frank	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Kormos, Peter	Murdoch, Bill	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 20.

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

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 26, 2008, I am now required to put the question.

On November 24, Ms. Smith moved that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated May 1, 2008, for the purpose of conducting its 2009 pre-budget consultation, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs shall have authority to meet and adjourn from place to place in Ontario during the week of December 15, 2008.

On November 24, Mr. Hudak moved that the government motion be amended by striking out “during the

week of December 15, 2008” and replacing it with the following: “during the months of January and/or February 2009 when the Legislature is not sitting”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

—“rather than rushing the pre-budget hearings under the cover of Christmas, and in the following 19 vulnerable communities, among the hardest hit by Ontario’s economic downturn: Brampton, Brantford, Cambridge, Chatham, Cornwall, Guelph, Hamilton, Ingersoll, Kitchener-Waterloo, Lindsay, London, Oakville, Oshawa, Owen Sound, Smiths Falls, St. Catharines, St. Thomas, Welland and Windsor.”

We will deal first with the amendment by Mr. Hudak. Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry?

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; this is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We’ll deal first with the motion by Mr. Hudak. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Jones, Sylvia	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.	

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

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine
Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Moridi, Reza
Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Best, Margaret	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Fonseca, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Gravelle, Michael	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 16; the nays are 48.

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

We will now deal with the main motion by Ms. Smith. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Same vote? I heard a no.

The division bells rang from 1154 to 1159.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We will now deal with the main motion by Ms. Smith.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dickson, Joe	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra
Best, Margaret	Fonseca, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Hoy, Pat	Sergio, Mario
Bryant, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Takhar, Harinder S.
Carroll, Aileen	Levac, Dave	Watson, Jim
Chan, Michael	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Craitor, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	
Delaney, Bob	Moridi, Reza	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 49; the nays are 13.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Dave Levac: In the precinct today, representing Ukrainians across the province and the country, we have Mr. Orest Steciw, projects coordinator, League of Ukrainian Canadians; Mr. Eugene Yakovitch, chair, Famine-Genocide Commemorative Committee of Ukraine Canadian Congress, Toronto branch; Mrs. Irka Mychak; Mrs. Marika Szkambara; Mr. Oleh Romanyshyn, president, League of Ukrainian Canadians; Mrs. Chrystyna Bidiak, president, Canadian Women's Congress.

As well, we have with us today a very special visitor in the precinct, Her Excellency Mrs. Kateryna Yushchenko, first lady of Ukraine; Dr. Ihor Ostash, Ambassador of the Ukraine to Canada; Mr. Ihor Lossovskyi, Consul General of the Ukraine in Toronto.

We welcome them and hope their visit is joyous.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome a group of students from Martin Street Junior Public School in their grade 5 class and a special welcome to one of the students, Jake Hunter.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Frank Klees: The auto industry is in a crisis. Thousands of jobs are at risk and businesses in all sectors of the industry, from manufacturing plants to dealerships, are in jeopardy.

Today, 850 employees and their families are coping with the frightening reality that two Magna plants are shutting down in Newmarket and Aurora. The employees are now faced with the daunting challenge of finding a new job and accessing retraining programs.

I'm calling on the Premier today to commit his government to take immediate action on two fronts:

First, to ensure that the resources of the provincial government are made available to our communities to assist with practical issues, such as retraining and job placement for those affected. And because English is not the first language for many of these employees, now is the time to put in place language-training programs to prepare individuals for their transition to new jobs.

And, second, that the government act immediately to implement a job preservation plan that will facilitate the operational survival of the auto industry in this province.

This is not just about saving a corporate entity; it is about preserving jobs, families and communities.

TERRORIST ATTACKS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Yesterday, the world watched in horror as terrorists attacked innocent civilians in Mumbai, India. Reports confirm that 100 people have been killed, 300 injured, and Canadians are among the many hostages still being held.

On behalf of the constituents of Mississauga-Brampton South, I condemn this terrorist attack and urge all Canadians to stand united with the people of India against this act of cowardice. Our thoughts are with the victims of this tragedy, and we pray that those who are being held hostage return home to their families and friends safely and as soon as possible.

Those who attempt to destroy a peaceful way of life with fear and venture to solve political, social and economic problems through violence—the civilized world must not allow them to succeed.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: In my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, the automotive sector is one of the largest employers. The negative economic impact of auto job losses hurts our local businesses, local suppliers

and local manufacturers. The challenges faced by our auto sector also hurt our local dealerships and service centres.

I have received many phone calls, e-mails and letters from concerned constituents about how the provincial government plans to respond to these challenges. They are concerned, as I am, about the workers and the spinoff effect, which is highlighted by the fact that one in seven Ontario jobs is directly or indirectly related to the auto industry.

I and the PC caucus know the tremendous value and quality of auto workers in Ontario. We are also concerned about tax dollars being used to simply bail out the industry.

The fact is, for a number of reasons, which include the current economic state, people are not buying as many vehicles.

This is also what we know: Auto companies and auto makers' unions hold in their hands more answers than government will ever have about how to build a brighter future for their industry. It's a responsibility they must accept, and the unions, along with the companies, need to come forward and demonstrate to Ontarians that they can be part of the solution.

They also need to come forward knowing that Ontario taxpayers have been very generous with them in the past. The McGuinty Liberals have spent a nearly \$1 billion on auto companies, only to see 30,000 well-paying auto manufacturing jobs leaving Ontario.

Furthermore, before any real commitment from Ontario taxpayers, we need a plan from Dalton McGuinty, a plan that includes guarantees and assurances that auto jobs are here for the long term, not just the next crisis.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

Mr. Kuldip Kular: As the year 2008 draws to a close, I would like to acknowledge the services of two exemplary young men as pages to the Legislature.

Through the page program, Mr. Jasdeep Dulku and Mr. Shaukat Khan have taken their first steps to becoming engaged as active citizens in government—their government.

Our society is most vibrant when Ontarians participate in their neighbourhoods, communities and even government. These are the challenges placed upon each of us in a democratic society.

Most adults must manage important and often competing demands for time and energy, such as family and employment. There is little enough time in their day to become involved, except as informed spectators, in the details of government.

Our youth are also challenged with constant distraction. They must attend school, study, socialize with family and friends, pursue hobbies, and plan and work toward their futures. One day, from countless opportunities, they will forge lives for themselves. The future belongs to our youth.

I applaud Jasdeep and Shaukat, therefore, for recognizing and seizing upon a unique opportunity to learn

more about their society and government as they grow and mature into active citizens of Ontario. I offer my personal thanks for their service to this great province, and my best wishes for academic success.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to thank the McGuinty government for unfairly targeting teens. You finally found a way to get young people involved in politics.

I have received some wonderful e-mails and letters from young people in response to Bill 126, and I want to share a couple with you. Here's one:

"Mr. Miller, I am a young driver in Muskoka. I agree with the no alcohol consumption, as it should be for everyone—no matter what their age is. What I don't fully agree with is the limited passenger law for drivers under the age of 19.

"People that live in rural areas depend on each other for rides in order to go into town or go to work. Carpooling saves gas, money and helps the environment by not polluting the air. In the area I live in, there are no transit services, and friends often rely on each other to take them where they need to go.

"We as young teenagers have to own up to what we do and make responsible choices. There will always be those few that make the wrong choices and they should definitely get penalized for it, but that doesn't mean we all should."

From another young driver in my riding:

"Mr. Miller, I strongly disagree with Ontario's new driving laws. Sure, the one-passenger limit for the first year of having your G2 licence is fine for teens living in the city. They can take the bus, subway, and taxis are much cheaper in the city. For teens here in Muskoka, the carpool is almost our only way to get anywhere. Teens are saving fuel by transporting more than two people at once. When we have to make several trips to get people somewhere, we are wasting fuel and creating unnecessary pollution."

I hope the government will listen to these young people and recognize the realities of living in rural and northern Ontario.

1310

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sudbury Regional Hospital is in crisis, as are far too many other hospitals in our province. Bed shortages, surgical cancellations and emergency room delays are the result of a broken home-care system. So too are the alternate-level-of-care patients languishing in our hospitals.

We need bold action for Ontarians to regain confidence in our hospitals, but we can't fix the weakest link in the health care system unless we get rid of competitive bidding and cease our reliance on private for-profit American subsidiaries to provide home care services. Competitive bidding not only destabilizes the home care sector but it also turns the entire health care system on its

head, as Sudbury residents are witnessing right now. I have said it many times: The problem with ALC patients is not a hospital problem. Hospitals are the last safety net to catch those who fall through the cracks. Seniors are not to blame for hospital bed crunches. To the contrary, seniors who find themselves in hospitals as ALC patients are often the innocent victims of our seriously flawed home care system.

If we want a solution, we have to ask ourselves, will we allow our seniors to suffer, our emergency rooms to be overcrowded and surgeries to be cancelled just to hold on to a competitive bidding process that allows large private for-profit companies to make a buck? That's not the Ontario anyone wants. We all deserve better than that.

HAROLD USHER

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in the House today to honour Mr. Harold Usher, who is one of London's hardest-working citizens. As a city councillor, he works tirelessly to bring equity and fairness to civic government and, within his community, to improve the lives of others. His contributions to race and newcomer relations in London are numerous. To list a few, he was president of the London Diversity and Race Relations Advisory Committee and also worked with the London Black History Coordinating Committee.

His work in London-Fanshawe resonated throughout our country. In 1992, he received Canada's commemorative 125th medal from the Governor General for service to his community, his country and Canadians.

He served as a director of Toastmasters International and achieved their highest honour on three occasions as well as their international presidential citation for his dedication.

It is important that we abide by one of Mr. Harold Usher's ethics: It's the responsibility of citizens to make a positive contribution to their community so that they can leave it better than they entered it.

I want to congratulate "Mr. Sensational," as he very often is called, on his dedication and his work. Again, I wish him all the luck.

UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Dave Levac: This year—on Saturday, November 22—was the 75th year of the commemoration of the Holodomor, in which as many as 10 million people perished as victims of the man-made famine in the Ukraine from 1932 to 1933 by Joseph Stalin.

The governments of Ukraine and the United States, UNESCO and the United Nations, and over 40 other jurisdictions around the world, including the Senate of Canada and the government of Canada, have officially declared Holodomor a genocide. That is to say, it was a planned murder by Joseph Stalin's regime of the time, of persons of authority and intellect as well as farmers who supplied grain in this breadbasket of Europe. In addition,

existing grain supplies were exported to world markets, and harsh military restrictions prohibited the people from travelling to areas where food was plentiful. The consequential effect condemned many people to die. It also had a secondary purpose of restricting the reporting of the famine. The outside world didn't know. In fact, the famine remains unknown to many today.

For this reason, I would like to thank the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the League of Ukrainian Canadians and the League of Ukrainian Canadian Women in particular for their unswerving, continued efforts to educate Ontarians about this horrific crime of the century. To repeat these mistakes of the past would be a great tragedy indeed.

We implore all members to join us this afternoon at 3 o'clock down in the dining room to continue this discussion. I know my colleagues support this endeavour.

OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY

Mr. Jim Brownell: The Olympics is one of the best-known events in the world and features the best athletes of each country competing against each other in the spirit of first-class sportsmanship. A key symbol of the Olympics that unites communities around the world with its journey is the Olympic torch.

Last Friday, it was announced that history was being made, as the Olympic torch relay for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics would be the longest in history to be contained within the host country. The relay will be 100 days in length, will travel to over 1,000 communities across 45,000 kilometres, covering the breadth of this great country, and will connect all Canadians in the spirit of the games.

On day 46 of this relay, December 14, 2009, the torch will pass through the city of Cornwall, in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, and Akwesasne.

Cornwall is an extremely appropriate place for the Olympic torch relay to be celebrated, with a mix of English and French Canadians, the Mohawk First Nations community of Akwesasne as a neighbour, and a vibrant community of new Canadians. Cornwall is a microcosm of our country. Cornwall and all of my riding is truly a representation of all that is best in our country.

I look forward to this momentous occasion, this Olympic torch relay, in the history of Cornwall. I encourage everyone to come and experience the charm of Cornwall, during day 46 of the Olympic torch relay and every day of the year.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Rinaldi from the Standing Committee on Estimates reports the following resolutions:

“Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009”—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Dispense.
Report deemed adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

Hon. Michael Chan: I rise today to tell members of this House and Ontarians about a significant step the Ontario government is taking to help municipalities attract investment and talent.

As we all know, the telecommunications revolution has made the world smaller and more interconnected. We are using the power of technology to reach around the world to continue a great Canadian success story: immigration.

On Monday, we launched the latest in a series of municipal portals designed to help regions across the province promote themselves around the world as great places to live, work and do business. My colleague and parliamentary assistant, Linda Jeffrey, has shown strong support in a launch for the Peel site. This site has been recognized as a best-practices model by other provinces.

I want to thank the development team for a job well done. Also, my thanks to the city of Mississauga, the city of Brampton and the town of Caledon, whose officers all worked closely with the regional municipality of Peel on the development of the portal.

We want to attract the best from every corner of the world. Their skills and talents are critical to Ontario's growth and prosperity. These municipal sites will allow us to do this. They are a one-stop source for information on how to work and settle in Ontario communities. They provide information about employment, housing, education, health care, transportation, language training and business opportunities to potential newcomers and investors and to those recently arrived. Whatever the question, the sites provide answers that enable newcomers to make an informed decision when considering Ontario as a new home or place of business.

The government of Ontario is supporting sites in 17 municipalities across the province. Ten sites are now operational, in Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury, Windsor, London-Middlesex (phase 1), Brantford, Niagara region, Peel region, the county of Lambton, and York region. We are hopeful that the remaining sites in Sault Ste. Marie, Waterloo region, the city of Chatham-Kent, London-Middlesex (phase 2), North Bay, Timmins, Smiths Falls,

and Hamilton will be ready next fall. They will all be linked to the provincial government's site for newcomer information: that is, ontarioimmigration.ca. The idea is to provide seamless access to information across all levels of government—municipal, provincial and federal.

Municipal portals support the government's five-point plan to build a strong economy by attracting investment and talent to Ontario. Today, more than ever, human resources are one of the most valuable assets. The skills, talent and experience that newcomers bring to Ontario augment our province's talent pool and give us an edge when competing in global markets. We need newcomers to keep our economy strong.

Immigrants helped to build the Ontario we are all proud to live in today, and they will continue to build the Ontario of tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

1320

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I would like to protest the fact that the official opposition and the third party were given no notice of this ministerial statement, as is—I understand from talking to the table it's not a rule, but it certainly is what is normally done around this place, that for ministerial statements there's a bit of lead time given so that we can have our critic here so we can make a response to the ministerial statement and so a little bit of thought can be given to a response.

I want to record that we, the official opposition, protest the fact that no notice was given of this ministerial statement, so as a result, our critic is not here and not able to respond—although he just came in behind me. Maybe he would like to respond, but he hasn't even seen the statement. It's just common courtesy for the government to make the opposition parties aware of what they might be doing a statement on.

This government seems to want to do things quickly and without much scrutiny. We just need to witness the way Bill 119, the WSIB bill, was just introduced. There was a lot of opposition starting to that bill as small construction companies became aware of the fact that they were going to be required to have mandatory WSIB coverage. They introduced the bill, and as quickly as they humanly could do, they passed it through this Legislature in some short two weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stick to the statement, please.

Mr. Norm Miller: I am, because this statement is talking about attracting investment and talent. If they're going to pass bills like Bill 119, they're going to be destroying business in this province and scaring it away from the province. The same is true with Bill 126, the young drivers bill. There's now a groundswell of opposition from young people as they become aware of that bill. I wonder if they're going to pass a time allocation motion on that one to try to rush it through.

On the motion we just voted on this morning to do with the pre-budget hearings, the minister said in his

statement that the municipalities support the five-point plan of the government. Well, how are you going to know, if you're not willing to go around the province and listen to the people of this province, whether they support what you're doing or not? This government has just decided that pre-budget hearings, which would normally be over a course of weeks in January and February and travel around the province and give lots of opportunities for those people who want to make a comment about what's happening in the province—that's the normal course. What is happening this year? We're going to have pre-budget hearings the week before Christmas, when I think the majority of people are not going to be trying to make comments and adding some thoughts about what should be happening in the province of Ontario.

Not only that, but if ever there was a year when we should be listening to the people and businesses affected, it's this year, when the economy is certainly on shaky ground, yet this government is going to hold pre-budget consultations the week before Christmas—a matter of days. So they don't seem very interested in listening to the people of this province. Perhaps it's because of their record. They know their record. They've had huge increases in government spending, some \$28 billion a year in increases in government spending.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): At least try and bring it back to—

Mr. Norm Miller: As I say, this statement's about attracting investment and talent to the province. When you have huge increases in the number of civil servants in the province, four times the number of jobs that have been created in the private sector, you're scaring away investment to the province.

The government has had big increases as well in their administration costs. They obviously are afraid of scrutiny, and that's why they're doing the pre-budget hearings so quickly. That's why they passed Bill 119 so quickly. As I say, it's just unfortunate that our critic—perhaps he wants to respond to this now.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: As I was pointing out, he hasn't even had a chance to read the statement. We just think this is very unfair, the way the government has popped this on us. I hope it's not something that's going to continue in the future.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: You may have become aware by now that the opposition parties were not advised, as is the protocol, the custom in this chamber, about the ministerial statement by Minister Chan. I acknowledge that the copies of the statement were sent to the opposition benches, and I don't criticize the government for failing to do that. But I say this, and this is my point of order: There has been displayed today, by virtue of the violation of that custom, of that tradition, of that practice, a thorough disdain for the opposition members and for this chamber.

We have nobody else to appeal to, sir, other than you when the government treats opposition caucuses in this

manner. The failure for there to have been even passing mention of this ministerial statement is a gross contempt, I put to you, of this Parliament. I'm asking you, sir, to indicate clearly the Speaker's disapproval of this practice, and I'm asking you to censure the government for its failure to abide by that practice. I'm reserving my right to bring a motion to find the government House leader in contempt.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Welland for his point of order. I will read to the members standing order 35(c), which deals with this issue: "Two copies of each ministerial statement shall be delivered to the leaders of recognized opposition parties, or their representatives, at or before the time the statement is made in the House." It has been the custom to deliver those statements, and that's what I have to go by in any ruling. I think the pertinent words are "at or before the time of the statement." There has been a custom within this House to try to deliver these statements as early as possible, from the government to the two opposition parties, to allow the two opposition parties to research and respond to particular statements.

What the honourable member chooses to do beyond my ruling right now—I would just say to the government members that it has been a long-standing practice, and as someone who has served on both sides of this House and who has either responded to or presented ministerial statements, I would encourage the government members to ensure that those statements are made available at the earliest possible convenience.

Mr. Peter Kormos: May I further ask the Chair to note that the demonstration of disdain is aggravated by the minister's failure to even stay here to listen to the responses?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We understand within this House that we do not make references to the presence or absence of a member, but thank you.

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker: I just want to echo the sentiments expressed by the member from Welland and thank the Speaker very much for the point made. I am the critic on two files, and over the course of the past year since I've been in that position, I have received ministerial statements typically 30 to 40 minutes before the fact. Given the fact that I've just taken a glance at what the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration had to say and that his statement pertained to attracting investment and talent, I can assure the Speaker that I would have had quite a bit to say and would appreciate in the future if the government would deliver these on time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

1330

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just to echo what you've already heard in this chamber, Mr. Speaker, it may not be in the standing orders, but it has certainly been part of the protocol and custom of this House to give the opposition parties at least some advance knowledge that a statement is coming that will be directed at their area of expertise and critic area. I also have to stand and say that our critic

for citizenship and immigration isn't here. I hope this isn't going to continue as a practice. I thank you for speaking to it.

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: As far as the statement goes, there's nothing very wrong with it. I mean, a website—who can it harm? The actual reality is that right now in Ontario we're dealing with a crisis, and it's a crisis among the immigrant communities as well. If this is all this government has to say to those immigrant communities, it's pretty sad indeed.

Just yesterday, we had a couple of immigrants here for a press conference, talking about equal pay for equal work. We're talking about a problem that certainly plagues the immigrant communities. We had CUPE 3903 here; we had SEIU Justice for Janitors. Most of the janitors working in Toronto come from immigrant communities, many of whom are asked to take out their own private incorporation as independent contractors just to get the jobs. By the time they pay their expenses, they earn less than minimum wage.

Why doesn't this government start talking about a living wage? They've had the report. If they want to help immigrants, they should be speaking about a living wage. If they want to help immigrants, they should be talking about affordable housing. We're at a standstill in this province, where affordable housing comes in. We have 125,000 families, many of them headed by a woman—many of them headed by an immigrant woman—who are looking for affordable housing. It's an eight- to 12-year wait. Something must be done about housing if this government is serious about helping immigrants.

If this government is serious about helping immigrants, particularly internationally trained professionals, it needs to act faster on the issue of accreditation. I have a gentleman in my riding, an Iranian surgeon, who works as a baker six months of the year for less than minimum wage. Then he goes back to Iran, where he gets paid as a surgeon for six months so that he can support his family here. They told him, at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, that it would take him 10 years to get accredited. He's in his 40s; he doesn't have 10 years. He'd rather go back to Iran and practise his craft. That's an absolute travesty. It's a travesty when so many—in fact, half a million Ontarians—want for a family doctor.

There's much this government can do when it comes to immigrants, but it doesn't do it. Instead, we get another website for a computer that many immigrants can't afford to have. We have many in my community who are working two and three jobs just to pay the rent, just to feed their families. That's the reality.

Apart from equal pay for equal work, a living minimum wage, affordable housing and a speedier accreditation process for internationally trained professionals, there are other aspects of this government's response that are particularly egregious as well. You heard from the

member from Welland—no time to respond. I hope this doesn't become symptomatic of this government.

I talked this morning about all those laid off—over 250,000 in Ontario now—who are turning on their televisions and watching their representatives in this House. You wouldn't expect they would want to hear about a website; you would expect they would want to hear about action: action on the job front, action on the poverty front and action on the immigration front, because we know that the face of poverty is a face of colour. Instead, what this government does is just make the deck chairs on the Titanic a little bit more comfortable. Now they're providing websites for the people sitting in the deck chairs on the Titanic. But this province of Ontario is the Titanic. When will the government act for immigrants? When will they act for women? When will they act on the poverty file? When will they act on the crisis that is facing our communities—all our communities?

This is non-partisan; this is about action. We need to put our heads together and take action in each of our ridings on the job front, on the poverty front and particularly on the immigration and citizenship front.

PETITIONS

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have petitions to do with WSIB, Bill 119, which unfortunately the government passed this morning, but I shall read it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“To revoke Bill 119 or to require the Standing Committee on Social Policy to travel across the province of Ontario in order to provide an opportunity for consultation with affected businesses.”

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition and I give it to page Sarah D.

CAMBRIDGE COURTHOUSE

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government plans to close the Cambridge courthouse; and

"Whereas the closing of the Cambridge courthouse could hurt the Galt core, which goes against government objectives to encourage development in the core area; and

"Whereas Cambridge law firms may end up moving to Kitchener as a result; and

"Whereas Cambridge is the second-largest municipality in the regional municipality of Waterloo (and similar in size to many other Ontario cities such as Barrie, Brantford, Guelph, Kingston, Peterborough, St. Catharines, Sarnia, Sudbury etc.), which continues to grow at a rapid rate; and

"Whereas a larger facility with all regional courthouses under one roof could result in higher operating costs;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government ensure the Cambridge courthouse remain open whether or not a new courthouse is constructed in Kitchener."

As I agree with the contents of this petition, I affix my name thereto and give it to Zac.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Dave Levac: This is on the Tom Longboat Day Act and it's a petition written to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's an identification of a great Canadian, a great individual, a great First Nations person who happened to have been born in my riding on the territory of the Six Nations of the Grand River.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tom Longboat is one of Canada's greatest long-distance runners;

"Whereas Tom Longboat served his country in World War I with distinction and was wounded twice;

"Whereas Tom Longboat is a great role model for all Canadians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Tom Longboat Day Act into law so that we can honour this remarkable athlete and courageous Canadian who is a great role model for all Canadians."

I sign my name to this petition with pleasure and pass it to Tess, our page.

LOGGING ROUTE

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

"Whereas alternate routes are possible via Odorizzi Road and Block 09-056;

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

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

I support this petition.

1340

EMERGENCY DISPATCH SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with 911 services in Parry Sound–Muskoka. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario is introducing a policy of forcing the sole proprietors, partners, executive officers in a corporation and independent operators in construction to pay workers’ compensation premiums on their own earnings in addition to the premiums they already pay on behalf of their employees; and

“Whereas such a policy will inflict an additional \$11,000 average cost on law-abiding business owners in the above-ground economy while doing nothing to root out the law-evading cheaters in the underground economy; and

“Whereas such a policy will not improve access to workplace health and safety education and training since law-abiding businesses already have access to all of these resources and law-evading businesses will continue to hide; and

“Whereas such a policy is not needed to level the playing field, since the rules already require that firms large and small must cover employees, while company leaders are exempt in both cases; and

“Whereas there has been no serious review of alternatives such as tracking who has coverage by name to limit abuse and other insurance options; and

“Whereas such a policy could be extended beyond construction to other sectors; and

“Whereas Ontario’s slowing economy is hurting citizens and businesses, also resulting in Ontario becoming a first-time ‘have-not’ province;

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

“To vote against or repeal any legislation that requires independent operators, executive officers in a corporation, sole proprietors and partners in construction or in any other sector to pay WSIB premiums on their own earnings.”

This is signed by many people from all over the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and brought to me by the CFIB at my riding. I’ll hand it to page Zac.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT (CIGARILLOS), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE (CIGARILLOS)

Mme Gélinas moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act with respect to cigarillos / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée en ce qui a trait aux cigarillos.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for her presentation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is an honour for me to rise today before this House to present Bill 124, a bill that will amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to include a ban on cigarillos. It is also a bill that could make history, because today, for the first time, both sides of the House have joined together to support a private member’s bill. I want to thank my colleague Mr. Dave Levac, the member from Brant, who has co-sponsored this bill with me. We are proud to work together and along with some excellent stakeholders to protect the lives of young Ontarians.

The bill is supported by the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, which includes the following partners: the Canadian Cancer Society—and I’m happy to see that Mr. Andrew Noble is here with us in the gallery—the Ontario Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Ontario Medical Association and the Non-Smokers’ Rights Association.

Bill 124, when passed, will ban the sale of flavoured and individually sold cigarillos, which are clearly marked, to young Ontarians. Cigarillos are an issue many adults may be largely unaware of. Many of us have never seen cigarillos, so I would like to ask for unanimous consent to pass around some cigarillos to the members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is there unanimous consent? I hear noes.

The honourable member has the floor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Could you try it again?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, there was a little bit of confusion. Could you ask for unanimous consent again so that I can show what it looks like?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we have unanimous consent for the honourable member to demonstrate whatever she's going to demonstrate? I hear a no.

Honourable member, you have the floor. Please carry on with the debate.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'm sorry, we didn't have unanimous consent for a demonstration, so could you please just carry on with your debate?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We've asked twice. Perhaps someone else would like to try later, but I'd say to Madame Gélinas, please just carry on with your debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Cigarillos, as you can see—quickly, before they were taken away—come in all sorts of very bright colors. They don't look like anything scary. They smell like candy. They certainly do not smell like a tobacco product, and they are very appealing to young people. So while many people in this House may have seen a cigarillo, although briefly, for the first time today, let me tell you that youth know what cigarillos look like.

When it comes to cigarillos, we are not the target audience. The target audience is young Ontarians. Researchers refer to cigarillos as "starter cigarettes," because that is exactly what they are: They are a cigarette to get our kids to pick up smoking.

According to a University of Waterloo 2007 survey, 35% of grades 10 to 12 students have tried cigarillos. Those are kids who are 15 to 17 years old. A third of them have tried, have smoked cigarillos. Most of the people in this House had never seen them. The kids have seen them. The kids have used them. This has been evidenced as the sales of cigarillos have been skyrocketing in recent years. To put a number to that, in 2001 there were 50,000 units sold. Fast forward five years later, in 2006, we're now talking 80 million cigarillos sold. That's a lot of cigarillos.

According to an analysis done by Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, young people are as likely to experiment with cigarillos as they are to experiment with cigarettes. They are three times as likely to try cigarillos as adults, and that includes young adults. So we know that these sharp increases in cigarillo sales are primarily due to young smokers' consumption of them.

Cigarillos are as addictive as cigarettes, because they contain the same amount, and often a larger amount, of nicotine. Like cigarettes, they increase the risk of cancer. Most people know that cigarette smoking and cigarillo smoking gives you lung cancer, but it also gives you cancer of the mouth, the throat, the larynx and the esophagus. None of those are fun diseases.

1350

The bill addresses the two main avenues by which cigarillos appeal to young people: packaging—the small size makes it a price they can afford—and flavouring. I will address both of those in my remarks.

I'll start with flavouring. It may be a surprise to most members of this House that cigarillos are sold in a variety of flavours. In the little corner store in Lively, where I live, there are 21 flavours of cigarillos. They include such things as candy, fruit, alcohol; flavours such as strawberry, chocolate, mint, peach, coconut, vanilla, rum, pina colada, and one of my favourites, appletini.

Mr. Mike Colle: How about cappuccino?

M^{me} France Gélinas: They have cappuccino also.

Cigarillos are packaged to look like candies, and they smell like candies.

Most parents who would see a cigarillo in their kid's school bag wouldn't flinch, wouldn't think twice. They look like they belong with kids' belongings. They look like a crayon, a lipstick or a lip gloss. They certainly do not look like a dangerous tobacco product.

The flavouring of those tobacco products makes their smell and taste appealing and makes them easier for first-time smokers to consume. That was the first marketing ploy.

The second one has to do with packaging. Cigarillos are wrapped in a very thin tobacco leaf, and it is for this reason that they are exempt from all of the regulations that apply to cigarettes. So, even though cigarillos contain a filter and kids call them mini-cigarettes, they have squeezed through a loophole in the legislation that intends to exempt cigars. They have used this loophole to introduce those cigarillos to our kids. That means that cigarillos can be sold individually. When they are sold individually, they don't come with any warning whatsoever, just the brightly coloured packaging that I was able to show for a few minutes.

The consequence of this individual sale should not be underestimated. In essence, it makes a life-threatening tobacco product an affordable purchase for every young person with limited financial means. What do I mean by this? A cigarillo can be bought for around a dollar. Lots of kids who are not smokers would never think of spending \$8 on a pack of cigarettes; they don't smoke. But they're willing to give out a dollar and get one of those fancy little cigarillos. They look cool, they smell good, they have no health warnings on them. How can they be bad? But they are.

We know that high taxes on cigarettes have been a major deterrent for cigarette consumption, especially for young people. But cigarillos pose an equal threat to the health of Ontarians, and a cost deterrent is essential.

With this bill, we will ensure that cigarillos are sold in packages of 20 or more. Just by increasing the mandatory package size, we are making them unaffordable to most youth and certainly not as attractive to first-time smokers. They will be sold for about the same price as a pack of cigarettes, and \$8 is quite a bit of money to spend if you're a non-smoker.

This move will also ensure that health warnings are mandatory for all cigarillo sales, as stipulated by the federal Tobacco Act. So the next time a parent happens to browse through their kid's backpack and sees a pack of cigarillos, they will know exactly what this product is. They will know that it is not candy, it is not crayons, it is not a lip gloss; it is a dangerous tobacco product.

The executive director of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, Cynthia Callard, said, "There's something dangerous on the market, and there's nobody watching how it is being used." Well, we are watching how it's being used. This is why Bill 124 is being introduced: to quickly address this growing health threat. We are taking the recommendations of health advocates throughout Canada to protect the health of young Ontarians, and we have the full support of the prominent organizations—organizations that promote the health of young Ontarians each and every day.

There has been support for some aspects of this bill by Imperial Tobacco of Canada. They are a tobacco manufacturer and they say they "share the same concerns of the bill sponsors that flavoured cigarillos may be attractive to underage smokers and as a result should be regulated in the same way as cigarettes"—this comes from Imperial Tobacco. Imperial Tobacco Canada supports a ban on flavoured cigarillos that appeal to youth and they support the mandatory packaging size of 20 or more.

I'm proud to have introduced this bill with my colleague from Brant and I hope that I can have the support of this House.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt first of all for her kind generosity when we were working on this problem in parallel. We got together in the respiratory caucus; all members of all parties in this particular caucus represent concern for smokers, and young smokers in particular, alike. I want to thank the member for her sharing of it. It was an offer made to the other party for the members of the respiratory caucus, who at this particular time did not want to join in on the discussion.

I will remind everybody that this is private members' time. These are ideas which all members are able to put on the table. Absolutely any government that has ever been elected in this province doesn't have a monopoly on ideas, so this evolution of what private members can do has continued, and the next evolution is to allow private members to co-sponsor, which I'm very proud to take part in.

We will hear, we could hear, we might hear somebody who's opposed to this bill. Let's talk to those people.

Here's what they may say. I want you do two things for me, and they are: Listen very carefully to what it is that they're objecting to. My suspicion is that they too will voice concern about a growing trend of using single cigarillos for sale with no health warnings at all. I think they'll understand that. I think they'll also agree that the manufacturers found a way to go around the bill that was protecting us from smoking. I think they'll understand that, and I think they'll understand that the growth of this product has gone since 2001 from 50,000 single units sold to 80 million sold in 2006—a marketer's dream. That guy, whoever came up with how to get more of those out the door, probably earned a bonus.

Let me talk about what's going on. Why the loophole? Because cigarettes use paper; cigarillos use tobacco. Because they use tobacco to wrap the cigarillo, they don't have to put on a health warning. They can sell it as a single entity. So what's the bill asking? It's very simple: Package them in 20s; sell them in 20s. Then we ask them, let's get the health warning on there so that kids can have that opportunity. The third thing we're asking in a simple way is, let's get rid of all the fancy flavours like chocolate, vanilla, strawberry—

Mr. Mike Colle: Cappuccino.

Mr. Dave Levac: Cappuccino—what's the other one, the drink?

Interjection: Pina colada.

Mr. Dave Levac: Pina colada. And guess what? It doesn't smell like a cigarette. What is the trick behind that? Well, here's the second trick. The second trick is this: For the parents who may be interested in not asking their kids to smoke, here's what happens: They can't smell the cigarillo, and it looks like—which somebody in this place wouldn't allow us to show you. You can't show the one packaging for it? Well, let me put it up and let you use your mind. This one is lip balm for young people, if you know what lip balm is, that beautiful little lip balm in packages. Guess what the cigarillo looks like in the packaging? Exactly like lip balm. So if it doesn't smell like a cigarette, it looks like lip balm, and mom happens to see it on the counter, what do you think it might be? A little bit of a marketing trick to play with mom and dad so that they actually don't open up the lipstick or they don't open up the cigarillo? Absolutely. The guy's going to get a bonus, a big bonus. Imagine if he gets two cents for every one of those 80 million that were sold. Bada bing bada boom, he hit the jackpot. Who did he hit the jackpot on? The lungs.

1400

I got a memo from somebody that said, "What about those alcoholic-flavoured things? They make alcohol taste good." I did a little research and we find that between four and eight deaths took place with alcohol poisoning. Between 13,000 and 16,000 people die every year from cigarettes. This is the next logical step in smoke-free Ontario. I think we should support the bill, simple as that. Let's listen to the opposition say we're being a nanny state, we're doing all kinds—you listen carefully to them and we'll figure out who's in whose

pocket. I'm in the pocket of making sure our kids are safe. I support the bill; I think it's a great bill.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am happy to join in the debate today on An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act with respect to cigarillos, and I recognize the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Brant, who have brought this forward. As we've been shouting back and forth here, I'm going to share my time with my colleague from Thornhill and I'm sure you're all waiting for his comments.

There is no question that the protection and the safety of our vulnerable members of society, our children, are paramount—we all agree with that. As the critic for the Ministry of Health Promotion and being a health professional for over 20 years, I certainly can see the side effects of smoking—no question. There are aspects of Bill 124 that I certainly agree with, the principles of the legislation. I do agree with the fact that products should be clearly marked in the matter of the effects that can happen from smoking, so anything with packages should be for 20 and over, have that proper labelling. I know that during the recent federal election, the federal government announced a cracking down on cigarillos and tobacco products marketed to children. The flavouring and the packaging products, like the flavours mentioned, no question they should be banned. They are definitely targeting children as a market. To prohibit those flavours that would appeal to children, I can agree with that for sure.

We have to, of course, make sure we don't curtail the freedoms that adults have in respect to the flavouring, but there are certain loopholes in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act that have been brought up before in the Legislature. Cigarillos is one, and I know my colleague from Burlington brought up medicinal marijuana and the fact that that can be smoked in the presence of children. We tried to get that loophole closed. I'm happy that the Minister of Health Promotion is here because we've discussed many times in the Legislature what we say is the incredible underground market for cigarettes out there. Close to 50% of the cigarettes bought in Ontario are bought in the underground. That's going to be officially announced in a few days, that the lost revenue to the government is about \$500 million on that. We can't put our heads in the sand: Most of the people that are smoking illegal cigarettes are teens. The government is over there and is supportive of the bill, yet they do have tools in the toolbox that they can use and should be using. It is great the private member's bill is introduced this way, but the government could make some regulation changes in regard to cigarillos without this having to come to private members' bills.

The Canadian Convenience Stores Association has released some interesting statistics. They visited 80 high schools throughout Ontario, where they collected the cigarette butts—that's why it's called the butt study. They were all in the 40% of contraband. So the kids are getting their hands on this stuff. We've brought up many

times the illegal smoke shops in the vicinity of schools. We're giving money to stop smoking, and there's packaging with labels—not cigarillos at the moment, but we hope to—about the dangers of smoking, yet the government is ignoring this contraband market that's going on that's almost 50%. We cannot be responsible legislators and ignore that.

Mr. Bryans, from the convenience store association, says the solution is clear: We should be making it illegal for youth to possess tobacco. They can't buy it until they're 19, but it's not illegal for them to possess it. Whether they're getting it legally or someone is getting it for them, they're possessing it. We ban possession with alcohol, but we don't ban it with tobacco. If we're going to address this issue, let's address the whole situation. We can't ignore how much of the underground market goes on. Predominantly it's kids. They're not getting identified; they're going to the trunk of the car and getting the cigarette package out.

There are things that can be done with the bill that's before us today, in respect to the number of cigarillos in a package and the labelling. But really, more enforcement can be done by this government on the loopholes I just mentioned. I guess we'll see what they do with this bill and how they're going to enforce it or, I hope, put it to committee, if it gets that far, so we can make some changes.

I know my colleague from Thornhill is going to add to the comments on this bill, and we look forward to that.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to speak to this bill in support of my colleague from Nickel Belt and the member from Brant, in terms of what they have done together.

I have to say that I'm a lucky guy. I never liked smoking cigarettes. I find them most unpleasant. When I did try it, from time to time, I derived absolutely no pleasure from it. So I'm lucky. A whole lot of people who smoke are not so lucky. We all know that smoking is addictive—we all know that—and we all know that smoking kills. There's no magic to it; there's no mystery to it. If you smoke, you are more than likely going to die at some point. You may be a lucky George Burns type, who was able to smoke until he was 90—I think he was 90.

Mr. Dave Levac: A hundred and one.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: God bless, even longer. That's a rarity. That human being could be classified as almost divine, to be smoking for so long and not die at an earlier age. He's an exceptional guy, but there aren't too many George Burnses; there aren't.

So I say to you that whatever we can do to make sure we encourage young people not to smoke is a good thing in my book.

I have to admit that I do smoke cigars from time to time. I have to admit that.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You want me to tell you the truth. Again, no pleasure from cigarettes, but I did pick up the habit of smoking a cigar from time to time—you

too? But the thing is, I've got control. Most of you smokers don't, and that's the problem. Most of you smokers, whoever you are, don't have any control. If you're addicted, you're going to do it all the time. That's the difference between me and some of you who do smoke on a regular basis.

Rare is the man, like my father, who came to this country in 1956, who was a heavy smoker and a heavy drinker too—not too heavy, but heavy enough. He had to travel to the north at a time when jobs were scarce. the Diefenbaker years—and boy, do the Italian Canadians remember Diefenbaker. He had to travel from Toronto to the north to work. He travelled with a whole lot of guys. He was in this place where he was told that he couldn't smoke. They caught him smoking and they told him, "If we catch you again, we're going to send you back to Toronto." He stopped smoking cold that day.

1410

That's an amazing power. That power is an economic imperative. For an immigrant who came to this country and had to work, if he's told that he's going to be sent back to Toronto and cannot work, and work was difficult to find, it was easy to stop smoking—versus the addicted of today, where they say, "Oh, my God, it's so hard. I just can't," and you wear patches and go to so much psychotherapy to stop smoking; it's unbelievable, this middle-class phenomenon—and working-class phenomenon to boot. You can't stop these people from smoking. All it took my father was to be told he couldn't work and that was it. It ended.

There aren't too many human beings who can do that. The majority of you addicted people are in trouble and you all know it. At some point you're going to kick the bucket and you're going to kick the bucket early. So do I want to encourage young men and women not to smoke, all these kids in grade 3 and 4 up there? Yes, of course we want to stop them from smoking; of course we do.

The corporations understand how you lure the young child, the young kid, the young girl or boy to smoke. It's a beautiful thing: You flavour this little cigarillo. Again, there's no magic. They hire psychologists, yet, to find the ways to hook these young people to smoke. You flavour them with all these flavours that young kids like: strawberry, as was mentioned, to make it look like candy or fruit; chocolate; mint; peach; coconut; vanilla—it doesn't matter. You flavour it. Why? Because kids love flavours. A whole lot of adults, too, are still addicted by those things. But young kids, they just can't stop themselves. Young kids can drink stuff that is so sweet, seven times the degree that you or I can as adults. If you flavour it, they go to it like flies to you-know-what, and corporations know. That's why they hire the big boys, the ones they pay big bucks: to find ways to package it and, in this case, flavour it so that you hook that young kid to smoke these cigarillos. Eighty million cigarillos sold—that's a whole lot of cigarillos, and that number's going to grow.

Do I want to support my two colleagues here with this bill? Of course I do. Do I want to make sure this bill gets into committee? Of course I do, and quick, too.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We don't even have to waste time. We could get the minister to stand up and introduce a bill and do it today; you're quite right. But let's not do that. Let's not. Let's go through the process.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Let it grow by itself. We'll send it to committee. We'll have long hearings, two, three or four weeks as we used to do when we were in government—if you want. You could, but you don't have to. Maybe a couple of days might do it. The Tories used to do a couple of days at a time; they thought it was good enough. You could do the same—couple of days, we're done.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Sometimes they didn't do any.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sometimes they didn't do any hearings. God bless them, that's how expedient and efficacious they were. Why have hearings, for God's sake, when if you have the right idea, you just do it, no consultation required?

So do I want to put restrictions on these cigarillos as best as I can? Yes, I do. If you sell it in a package and it forces that young person to spend—if it's 20, it's \$20, I'm assuming, right?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It could be cheaper? Okay. It's still expensive. The point is to prevent the young person from buying, to make it harder, if not impossible, for that young person to buy. I can't understand where they find this money to buy these things, but they do, I guess. If you flavour it, the green buck will do. So if you package it, make it harder and prevent that young kid from buying, that's fine by me. You put on the label saying, "This is harmful to you"—that's not good enough. It's okay, the label is fine, but I want to prevent the young person from starting to smoke in the first place rather than having to deal with a label that may or may not trigger a health risk for that child. If you prevent him or her from smoking, they're likely not to pick up the habit and they're likely not ever to be addicted. That's what we want to do. We want to save lives; I think it's paramount—the secondary effect of saving our health minister from having to spend billions of dollars in having to treat these people in hospitals, where they have to stay for a long, long time to be cured and/or helped and/or saved, because you can't save them, generally speaking; they die. We hold them for a long time, painfully, with a great deal of cost, but the greatest cost is the human life. That's what we should be thinking about: how we save those lives. For me it's a no-brainer; it's an easy thing to do. Let's get on with it, send it to committee, have a couple of days' hearings, make a bill out of this and save lives.

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

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I rise today to speak on this very important bill. I share concerns with both the MPP for Nickel Belt and my colleague the MPP for Brant on

Bill 124. The McGuinty is crystal clear: Ontario's youth are a fundamental priority to this government. I am a mother of three children. I raised them to be healthy, active, non-smoking adults now. I have a firm sense of my responsibilities as a parent. Similarly, I feel just as strongly about my responsibility to Ontario's children as the Minister of Health Promotion. Accordingly, I addressed this specific issue by letter in July 2008 to then-federal Minister of Health Clement to regulate package sizes for cigarillos under the federal tobacco access regulations. In that same letter, I outlined my concern with the flavouring contained in cigarillos which increases the appeal of these products to youth.

I requested that the government amend the Tobacco Act to prohibit flavouring or aromas that are attractive to youth. Additionally, I requested that a review of the health warnings be expedited, given the recent evidence regarding the ineffectiveness of such warnings. I was pleased to hear the Prime Minister promise to implement tough new measures to address flavouring and package sizes for cigarillos and other tobacco products that may be targeted at young people. I also spoke with my counterparts about the issue during the last federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Quebec City this past September, including the current federal Minister of Health. I will continue to advocate the importance of this issue with my new federal counterpart to ensure that she is aware of our collective concerns and is doing all that is in her power to address them.

We have come a long way in the past four years. We established a province-wide law for smoke-free environments when the Smoke-Free Ontario Act became law on May 31, 2006. We surpassed our goal of reducing tobacco consumption by 20% by 2007. We have made it mandatory for anyone who appears to be under 25 years of age to present ID before purchasing tobacco. In 2008, we also banned the display of tobacco products, including cigarillos and chew tobacco, at convenience stores. Next January, legislation passed by this Legislature comes into effect which will protect children from second-hand smoke in motor vehicles.

I feel privileged to be part of a government that has done more than any previous Ontario government to address the harm caused by tobacco use. We share the concerns of this bill, and we believe this bill is a positive step in the right direction to saving lives. The more we discuss, the more we debate, the more we will raise awareness of the dangers of tobacco use and the more we will prevent more young people dying from the results of tobacco use.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Before I rip into this private member's bill, I want to first say that the members for Nickel Belt and Brant, who are co-sponsoring the bill, are, I am sure, as concerned as any of the rest of us for the health, safety and well-being of our youth. I recognize that.

It is an admirable sentiment, but I do not believe that their objective will be achieved by banning flavours and dictating the size of cigarillo packages. Legislation that governs the sale of tobacco—which is, by the way, still a legal product in Ontario in case any of you were wondering—and restricts its sale to those 19 and under is already in place in Ontario and enforced in this province.

Some statistics suggest that flavoured cigarillos, meanwhile, make up less than 0.5% of all tobacco sold in Canada. With that in mind, I don't see any significant or even insignificant preventive strides being made in stopping smoking amongst youth.

What information do these members possess that proves that flavours in cigarillos encourage youth to smoke? Are five-year-olds going to smoke because these things look like candy, and if so, where are the five-year-olds going to get them?

This bill is yet another chapter in the "McGuinty Liberals know best" saga brought to us by the "When in doubt, ban" philosophy, except this one has been manufactured for us jointly between the NDP and a Liberal member.

Where is the scientific evidence, the analysis or the research that are supposed to be the basis for the decisions that we in this House make? Do you know that nearly 50% of all Ontario tobacco sales are of contraband cigarettes, so you can't control them anyway; that 26% of cigarettes smoked by underage high school youth are contraband cigarettes? So there's no control. Will your bill protect youth from smoking those?

We all know that there are many things in this world that threaten the health, safety and well-being of our youth, but vanilla is not one of them. Repeat criminals in the streets are; economic instability, shaking us to our core, is; loss of jobs within families that cause worries at the kitchen table, that's a problem; strikes at universities that prevent kids from getting the education they've paid for—these are things that we can address.

The illegal tobacco sold indiscriminately to old and young in smoke shacks, circumventing laws on childhood smoking and depriving us of a billion dollars in lost revenue—we could address that. Instead, we're talking about cigarillos that are supposedly unavailable to the same kids you want to protect.

I can see how all those things pose a problem, but I can't for the life of me understand how raspberry cigarillos got on that list. Flavoured cigarillos sitting on a shelf behind the clerk who is charged with the responsibility of checking his or her customer's ID before any tobacco can be sold are not a danger to teenagers. The meth lab exploding next door to their house, ecstasy in their school or at a friend's party, those are dangerous.

This bill makes me wonder what the member from Nickel Belt was thinking. She contributes so well to this Legislature every day, and I had very high hopes that she was immune to the infatuation with bans that plagues all of you on the other side.

Instead of wasting this Legislature's time with this type of nanny-state legislation, I would encourage the

member to pressure the government to target those things that actually do threaten young people.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Private member's bill indeed. Why didn't the minister put it forward?

Her own party is speaking against the ridiculous notions put forward under Bill 126 on driving. This begs the question, do they just brainstorm on how they can further intrude into the everyday lives of Ontarians? You have to ask what's coming next? I know. Strawberry Smirnoff. Of course, the fact that Smirnoff is sold at government-owned LCBO stores may be enough of a protection.

My executive assistant gave me instructions here: "Keep the Liberals away from apple martinis." It's tongue-in-cheek, I know, but this is the kind of ground we're treading on.

So far, Liberals have been too busy trying to be the boss, parent and guardian to every man, woman and child in Ontario to do the job they were elected to do. Instead of a prosperous province, they aim to create a nanny state where the government will direct you on how you can save yourself from yourself.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Great government. At a time when the economy is in a shambles, when Ontarians are looking to their MPPs for solutions, Liberals and NDPers are taking up this Legislature's valuable time debating what? Flavoured cigarillos? Another ban? Kill me now, Mr. Speaker. At this point, after five years of the McGuinty Liberal government, according to that caucus, the free citizens of the province should not be able to do what? Get a tan, own a pit bull, buy a vanilla cigarillo, hang their clothes on a clothesline, get rid of weeds on their lawns, eat good-tasting French fries, and in case I decide to buy an illegal handgun, I am certain that this government's ban on carrying it in my car will be the deciding deterrent.

I have prepared my own list of bans which I believe are just as essential and necessary as those already proposed by the members on the other side of the House. So let's ban the following: bread crumbs in bed, staying up during the work week because we know that's for our own good, wearing white after Labour Day, makeup before the age of 16, black nail polish for males and electric Jell-O. Let's ban overdone steaks and let's put an end to crappy wine.

At the end what we want and what the people of Ontario want is for the members in this House to stop pretending that they know best, stop wasting our time with meaningless bills and start paying attention to the real issues of Ontario.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for permitting me to speak on such an important issue. Before I start, I first want to congratulate the members for Brant and Nickel Belt for bringing such an important issue to this House. It's a great indication about the function of this place.

When we have an idea, we can share and introduce it together in order to put a lot of emphasis on many different issues.

I was listening to the debate going on in this place. I personally have lots of experience from when I was in the retail business, selling cigarettes, tobacco and cigars. I never saw those cigarillos until lately, because I think they're new to the market. They've not been on the market for a long time.

I think it's important to educate our young people about the danger of smoking. I think we've done so in this House on many different occasions, by banning cigarettes in public places and many different initiatives. I agree with the member. We should label the cigarettes and package them in a bigger number to eliminate the number of those who smoke in the province of Ontario.

But most importantly, I was listening to the member from Thornhill speaking about contraband tobacco. I think it went up from 24% to 49% now being sold in the market everywhere across the province of Ontario. Those are dangerous. When people come with a bag full of cigarettes, they can charge only \$10 for 1,000 cigarettes, versus \$70 or \$80. This is the danger.

Sadly, if those people get caught in the parking lot, guess what? The enforcement officer cannot stop them. It is not his or her jurisdiction to stop and investigate this issue, because this belongs to the police. By the time you invite the police to come, the people will disappear. If they get caught, the only punishment is that they lose whatever they have in tobacco.

So we have different problems across the province of Ontario. The one I think is most important to mention on a regular basis is education, how we educate our kids and the public about the danger of smoking. It's important to say that if you drink, the possibility of dying is very slim, but if you smoke, the possibility is huge and big, as the member from Brant mentioned. Also, the member from Nickel Belt mentioned it many different times. As she is an expert in the health field, she knows better than some of us in this place, I would say—we do have a lot of health experts here.

I think it's important to pass this bill. It's at least a great indication of our concern as elected officials.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member from Nickel Belt, you have the remaining time for the NDP, plus your two-minute response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: If it's okay with you, I will let the co-sponsor of the bill do the last two minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Certainly.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Thornhill, and certainly the co-sponsors of the bill—the member from Brant and the Minister of Health Promotion—for participating in this debate.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: Me too.

M^{me} France Gélinas: And least but not last is my good friend from Trinity–Spadina. I was saving you for dessert. You ruined it.

I wanted to mention to this House the reason why this bill, although it is very simple, is very important. It is important because when you ask adult smokers—people who are addicted, people who are trying to quit smoking, people who have picked up the habit and are dependent on nicotine—when they started smoking, 80% of them started smoking before their 18th birthday. They did it when they were young. We look at this product, and it is targeted to kids by its packaging; it's targeted to kids by its pricing; it's targeted to kids by its flavouring. The reason for that is because if you want to develop smokers who will buy cigarettes for the rest of their lives, you have to hook them early. If you get them in their teens, get them with products like cigarillos, you have them for a lifetime, because ending an addiction to nicotine is so difficult to do. This is why this bill is important.

I'm a bit of a dreamer, and I can see a day when there won't be 44 people a day dying because they smoke. Every year, 16,000 Ontarians die because they are smokers. This is \$3.75 billion directly treating the health consequences of the smokers in Ontario. Most of them die prematurely.

This bill is very simple: Get rid of flavouring; get rid of individual packages—package them in groups of 20 or more and put the labels on. This bill has one aim: to prevent kids from picking up smoking, to protect kids' health so that we can have a healthier Ontario. We want to prevent kids from picking up the habit. We want to prevent kids from becoming smokers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Brant has two minutes.

Mr. Dave Levac: I would acknowledge the members who participated in the debate today: my colleagues from London–Fanshawe, the Minister of Health Promotion, Trinity–Spadina, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and Thornhill and the Minister of Health Promotion.

I want to also thank the researchers and staff from both of our offices who worked co-operatively in pulling together the concept and made us even more aware of some of the things that were going on, that even I didn't know, with regard to the depths that people have gone in order to catch our young people.

In my earlier statement, did I not tell you that someone would stand up and start professing as to why we cannot do this? I also told you—and I've said this since 1999—that this is private members' time; this is the time to take the shackles off of party politics. But nay, we have members who still don't get it. This is the good place, this is the positive place, where great ideas can get discussed, can get put forward and can even get improved in committee.

Yes, indeed, this bill needs some improvement. There are some things that both the member and I have agreed we want to deal with that will make it a sharper, more precise bill about cigarillos.

I personally am going to let, and I'm sure my colleague will agree with this, the third party groups who have been e-mailing us since the press conference this

morning, thanking us profusely for keeping kids' health in their prime focus—I'm going to let the cancer society, I'm going to let the lung association, I'm going to let the—look, you know who they are. They're going to come out gangbusters, and I'm going to let them read Hansard and watch the tapes and I'll let them talk to the member from Thornhill—because I will say this: It's suspiciously like the lobby from the cigar pack that said the same things as he's saying. Isn't that interesting?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This ballot item will be dealt with in 100 minutes.

Before we move to the next order of the day, pursuant to standing order 38(a), the following matter will be debated on Tuesday, December 2, 2008, at 6 p.m., notice having been given by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka of his dissatisfaction with the response to an oral question asked today to the Minister of Health and Long-term Care.

LAKE SUPERIOR DAY

JOUR DU LAC SUPÉRIEUR

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the third Sunday in July be established as Lake Superior Day, to acknowledge and celebrate the lake's importance in enhancing the quality of our lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, Mr. Brown, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I am delighted to have the opportunity to bring this issue before my friends here in the Legislature. I want to first of all thank Howard Whent, who is now the mayor of the town of Wawa and who brought this issue to my attention, oh, some years ago—before he was the mayor.

He's been an active member of a group, the Lake Superior Binational Forum, which consists of 24 volunteers—from municipalities, academia, First Nations, and tribal groups in the United States—who understand the importance of Lake Superior as a treasure. Howard has worked very hard to see that this group receives the recognition it needs.

Now, this group and this resolution, importantly, I think, have the support and the proclamation of the state of Michigan, the Governor of Wisconsin, and the Governor of Minnesota. Ontario, being the Canadian jurisdiction to the north on the lake, has not done this. So I thought it was important that we bring this to the attention of members and that we work together with our friends on the American side of the border to make sure that we as Ontarians and Canadians recognize the importance of this lake.

I represent Algoma–Manitoulin as you would know, and Algoma–Manitoulin—I haven't exactly canvassed all jurisdictions in the world—probably has more shoreline on fresh water than any constituency anywhere. I represent the entire North Shore of Lake Huron, Manitoulin Island, Killarney on the east side of Georgian Bay,

and about half of the Canadian coastline of Lake Superior. So it is an enormous amount of land that borders on the Great Lakes.

Lake Superior, just so that members know, is the largest body of fresh water in the world by surface area. It's approximately 563 kilometres long, it is 257 kilometres in width, its average depth is 147 metres, and its maximum depth is 406 metres. That's about four football fields deep. The volume of water in Lake Superior is 12,100 cubic kilometres. About 10% of all the fresh water in the world is held in Lake Superior.

About halfway across is the city of Sault Ste. Marie, which is represented by my friend Mr. Oraziotti from Sault Ste. Marie, but as we go north and west, we're back into my constituency. We start in Prince at Gros Cap and go up the coast through Goulais and Haviland shores and Harmony Beach. We come to the beautiful bay of Batchawana, which many of you would know. We continue on. As we go up, we come to the Montreal River. I don't know if any of you have made this drive, but it is truly spectacular. The highway at Montreal River shows one of the steepest inclines in Ontario. If you're a truck driver, it's not a place that you are most fond of. But the scenery is absolutely magnificent.

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We then come to what I would consider to be one of the crown jewels of provincial parks, Lake Superior Provincial Park, which is approximately—it follows the highway for about 100 kilometres, or the highway runs through it for about 100 kilometres. That's the Trans-Canada Highway, Highway 17, as you would know. It boasts some scenery that is absolutely next to none in the world. We have people from all over Europe who will come through the constituency, and they will point out that even the mountainous areas in Europe and the fine scenery I'm sure they all boast about are just not quite as superior as this scenery in this part of Lake Superior.

Going through the park, we come—the Minister of Natural Resources is here and I'm sure she's absolutely most proud of our parks system and Lake Superior park in particular—to the Agawa area. Agawa has an information site, one of the interpretive sites built by the province of Ontario. I want to tell the minister, what you need to do is talk to the folks in your ministry. There needs to be a bigger sign for this interpretive centre. There's a relatively small sign, but it points to a centre that is absolutely magnificent.

It shows, for example, when you go in there—and all members should encourage not only themselves but their constituents to go there—the Great Lakes in a way that I don't think I have ever seen. It has demonstrations that show, for example, that Lake Superior has more water in it than all the other Great Lakes combined. If you took all the other Great Lakes, took all their water, added Lake Erie three times, then you would have the same amount of water that's in Lake Superior. So I would encourage the minister to do something about her signage so that people who are travelling up the coast would recognize that.

We then come to the community of Wawa, which is about 10 or 12 kilometres north of the park, which as most people would know is the community with the great goose out front at the information centre. It's a magnificent community that boasts all the amenities; it boasts numerous hotels, fine restaurants. Lake Wawa is right there. It boasts many things, but it also boasts a large freshwater dock. One of the things that Lake Superior does not have is a lot of commercial docking places along the coast which, of course, are necessary for both our economy and for our safety on the Great Lakes. If you need to put in somewhere, if you have a relatively large vessel, at Michipicoten Harbour you can do that. It's the site of the former Algoma ore dock. There's not another dock—Sault Ste. Marie in the south would be one, but to the west, you'd have to go all the way to Marathon before you would find one.

Following the highway, you come to White River. White River is a community not quite on Lake Superior but is, as all of you would know, the hometown of Winnie the Pooh.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: My friend the member for Essex knew that.

It's the hometown of Winnie. An army officer stopped and purchased a bear at the CP station in White River and took that bear to England during the First World War as the regiment's mascot. He then went on to Europe with the regiment left the bear at the London Zoo while the regiment was fighting in France. That's where A.A. Milne saw the bear, and his son Robin came to know the bear as Winnie the Pooh, hence the famous stories. There's a very nice replica of Winnie there.

Anyway, as you continue, you go into the constituency of my friend the Minister of Northern Development, at the Hemlo goldfields. You then follow that through places like Marathon, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Rosport and Nipigon—again, absolutely magnificent scenery. You come to Thunder Bay, with the Sleeping Giant. You can then go down to the American border and follow the lake around.

I myself have had the privilege of driving the circle tour of the lake. It is astounding on both the Canadian and American sides. Both have magnificent parks. We, in Canada, have the first marine conservation area ever proclaimed under federal legislation. It was proclaimed in 2006 and includes most of the western part of Lake Superior. It is home to more than 70 species of fish. Gulls, herons, eagles and pelicans feed in those waters, while some also use inland islands for habitat. There are as many as 50 shipwrecks in the area. Jacques Cousteau characterized this as an absolutely beautiful place to do your work, if you are in those kinds of pursuits.

We have done much to preserve this area. We are working with our American state legislators and the American government to make sure the lake is kept pristine and safe—it's necessary for the betterment of all, not just Ontarians or even people in North America.

This is a huge treasure that we value for its commerce. In the early days, Étienne Brûlé came in 1618, as mem-

bers would recall, and marvelled at this inland sea that you could not see either shore from when you're in the middle. Mariners have known this for many years. They have known of the fog and the danger of this lake, which is one of the coldest in the world. We in our area want to continue to promote the commercial value of the lake and also the pristine—it is a pristine and valuable resource. Most of you would not know, but most of the land there—almost all of it, as a matter of fact—is in public hands today. Thank you.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to talk about Lake Superior—part of the Great Lakes—and also to highlight the natural beauty of this resource. I guess that having a specified day is one way to acknowledge and celebrate this particular lake's importance. But I do think back. I spent some time as parliamentary assistant for natural resources under Mike Harris. At that time we were involved in what I consider a much grander initiative than we're seeing here. I'm referring to the Great Lakes Heritage Coast. Much of that focused on the Lake Superior shoreline. The Speaker may recall that it was part of Ontario's Living Legacy.

When I came on board, Ontario's Living Legacy was the highest priority for the Ministry of Natural Resources. People from all corners of this great province came together for those round table discussions, those consultations resulting in a plan to establish 378 new parks and protected areas that totalled six million acres, the largest single expansion of parks anywhere. At the time, I know it was said that Mike Harris created more provincial parks and protected areas than all the other Premiers put together, if you go back to Confederation—and, again, we know that this Legislative Assembly predates Confederation by another 100 years or so.

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A key part of the original Living Legacy plan included nine signature sites—there are now 10 signature sites; in his last week of reign, Mike Harris identified the St. Williams crown lands in my area as signature site number 10—with exceptional natural features that warranted that kind of special attention, that promotion that we just heard in the presentation this afternoon. One of the 10 focused on Lake Superior down through the North Channel, eventually encompassing much of the Manitoulin shoreline right down to the Severn River in Georgian Bay.

We're very proud of our Great Lakes heritage. There is little doubt that the Great Lakes Heritage Coast is an awfully special stretch of shoreline, a spectacular sweep of shoreline. The original designation was 2,900 kilometres, starting at Pigeon River up on the Minnesota border, sweeping right down to the Severn River at Georgian Bay. There were changes during the process: Manitoulin was included, as well as St. Joseph Island and the Cockburn Island shore, bringing it up to a stretch of well over 4,000 kilometres. Again, it would come in from the shoreline for a total area of 1.46 million hectares. I

won't do the math, but if you multiply that by 2.2, you'll get the number of acres.

So we're discussing today something that's part and parcel of what I consider the previous vision to not only protect, but to promote a very unique and impressive area. We think of that Lake Superior shoreline and the lake itself, and oftentimes we take a land-based perspective. We also have to take a water-based perspective. It's a wilderness lake, an area of very sparse development and spectacular landscapes and abundant wildlife populations, with very little in the way of tourism infrastructure.

Having travelled that shoreline for many, many miles, especially when working on that particular project, and through many, many communities, I would stop in to corner stores and restaurants and gas stations, and they all knew about the Great Lakes Heritage Coast; they all knew about the potential for tourism and the myriad of possibilities to promote not only tourism, but tourism associated with related aboriginal culture, the scenery, trails, fishing, hunting, and boating.

Superior was the centerpiece of that heritage coast signature site, a centerpiece of Ontario's Living Legacy, that land-use strategy which encompassed 45% of the land area of the province of Ontario and much of the Precambrian Shield.

Through that consultation process, people laid out for us at the time a number of long-term goals.

(1) Protect the scenic beauty and the natural ecosystems.

(2) Promote the potential for recreation and tourism, and build on the other economic benefits from existing parks, for example, and protected areas.

(3) Ensure that development is compatible with the overall plan.

(4) Foster co-operation, education and public information, working with municipalities and aboriginal communities.

This was done and was being done by the Ministry of Natural Resources, as I recall. There was a director and at least four staff dedicated full time to this project. Again, the goal was to build on the resource-based economy of northern Ontario and continue to diversify not only tourism but the area economy, so the economic benefits to getting, really, a partnership or a co-operation with all the other initiatives and get all the government ministries—I think of MTO, for example—to be part of this process.

Further work was obviously identified at the time to further implement the concept. I regret that, in the last five years, I've seen very little evidence of a continuation of the project. It was a project that commenced back in the year 2000. It was launched by John Snobelen on January 27, 2000. Ted Chudleigh was parliamentary assistant at the time. They coined the phrase—with respect to the Superior shore and the rest of the coast heading south and heading southeast, they used the theme, "Imagine the possibilities." Again, it was meant to encourage people to come forward with their ideas to promote the coast and, at the same time, protect the coast.

The goal was to translate a lot of those very exciting ideas into some meaningful benefits. Further consultation occurred. I was involved. Ted Chudleigh, member for Halton, was involved in meetings; I think he was involved in something like 22 community meetings. Another 100 submissions came in and, again, the operative approach was not to ram anything through, far from it; not to go forward with any preconceived ideas. It was to continue to have an ongoing process as the feedback continued to come in.

Many other projects were initiated at the same time. Much of my focus went north as well, to work with people at Lake Nipigon, the Nipigon Basin, again yet another one of those 10 signature sites. I also had an opportunity to do some work at Kawartha Highlands with the Karwartha Highlands Signature Site.

The end result? We know the plans and what came forward as far as interpretive centres: plans for Killbear, Killarney, the provincial parks, the Voyageur Heritage Centre earmarked and set up at the French River Provincial Park. My assistant Rob was just up there this summer. So, part and parcel of Ontario's Living Legacy, the Great Lakes Heritage Coast was successful as far as it went. It has been held back a bit in the last several years and I continue to look to this government to pick up the torch.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to be extremely brief and say the following: The truths of this resolution, as revealed by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, are so self-evident that I have very little to add except to say I support it.

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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I was hardly prepared to get up so quickly because my friend from Trinity-Spadina usually waxes on eloquently, as we say. But I'm really proud and pleased today to stand with my good friend and colleague, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, and talk about his resolution that the third Sunday in July be established as Lake Superior Day.

Now, you might ask, so what? What's so special about Lake Superior that you would want a day each year to be recognized as Lake Superior Day? Well, I think my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin has given us very good reason to answer that indeed it should be.

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He also, when he was speaking, mentioned Mayor Howard Whent of the municipality of Wawa. I want to read from a proclamation signed by Mayor Whent and the municipality of Wawa that goes to explain further what Lake Superior means to those residents who live there, who live on the lake, who live by the lake, about why it could mean so much to us as Ontarians, even those of us in the very southwest. This proclamation said, "Water is life and the quality of water determines the quality of life.... Lake Superior supports tourism, industrial, recreational, commercial, tribal and cultural activities for its residents and visitors;

"And whereas the responsibility for protecting and restoring the quality of Lake Superior's waters, land, and wildlife lies with all residents, municipalities, businesses, tribes, visitors and others who enjoy its natural beauty and resources and benefit from the lake"—and they went on to declare a day in June this past year as Lake Superior Day.

Interjection.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Excuse me. It was July; they proclaimed it in June.

Therein lies some more reason why I think that we should all recognize Lake Superior for its grandeur, and a good reason to declare a day in its name.

Also, you might say, "Well, here's this guy from the southwest"—I'm proud to live on one of the other Great Lakes, that being Lake Erie. In fact, the great riding of Essex is surrounded by water. We have Lake Erie on the south, the Detroit River, a heritage river, on the east, and Lake St. Clair. Although not one of the Great Lakes, Lake St. Clair in itself is a great muskie ground, so it's to be recognized as well. I live on one of the Great Lakes, and I can understand then why my colleague, on behalf of his constituents and those in the north, would want this recognition.

I think it bears repeating, but the member for Algoma-Manitoulin mentioned some statistics that give you some idea of the vastness of this lake. The lake covers 51,000 square kilometres. It's the size of South Carolina. The lake is so big that it could hold all the water from the other Great Lakes, as has been mentioned, plus three more lakes the size of Lake Erie. Now that doesn't belittle Lake Erie at all; it just means that Lake Superior will hold a vast amount of water. That water eventually makes its way down to Lake Erie. We in the southwest can recognize it for that.

Lake Superior's deepest point is 2,143 metres. That's hard to imagine. You think more of an ocean that would be that deep. Again, to make a comparison to Lake Erie, we have a lake that runs, at its deepest point, maybe 20 metres. You get some idea—60 feet as opposed to 1,300-and-some-feet deep—how deep Lake Superior is. In fact, we have a ferry that runs across Lake Erie called the Jiimaan, and we kind of kid that there's no danger of being lost if the Jiimaan sinks because her freeboard and the top deck are higher than the lake is deep, so you could just simply stand on the top deck and wait to be rescued.

I just want to conclude by encouraging all of us to encourage our residents and constituents in the southern part of Ontario that if you have never visited the northern part of this province, and in particular the shores of Lake Superior, then you have an experience coming that is second to none. It's a vast, beautiful area. The lake is cold and deep and its resources are great. I think that for those, among other reasons, we should all support my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin in recognizing the third Sunday in July as Lake Superior Day.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I believe I have a minute and a half left of our time to speak briefly to this resolution to make the third Sunday in July to be established as Lake Superior Day. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin suggested that you take a drive up Lake Superior, and I would say that's good advice. In fact, he's given me some ideas for summer holiday plans now.

The first time I drove up the coast from Sault Ste. Marie north up Highway 17 I was doing a loop around, getting northern input. It was April, which isn't exactly the most beautiful time of year, but I found myself stopping every couple of miles to take pictures, looking over Batchawana Bay along the coastline of Lake Superior. It is truly one of the wonders of the world and absolutely spectacular.

One of the other times I got the opportunity: I went to the 100th anniversary of the signing of the James Bay Treaty 9. I took the opportunity to fly up to Pickle Lake via Thunder Bay in the north in my little sea plane, except that it was 36 degrees, and Lake Superior was a lot cooler, so I actually didn't see the lake on that trip because there was a big fog bank. It is certainly one of the wonders of our province, as was pointed out by the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, and the work that was done on Ontario's Living Legacy by the member from Halton. There has been a lot of work done. The member made reference to some of the visitors' centres that have been created under that program.

I certainly look forward to supporting this resolution today.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de parler sur la motion au sujet du lac Supérieur. Les résidents de mon comté sont chanceux d'être à une distance en voiture très raisonnable du lac Supérieur. Vraiment, ce lac est un joyau. Pour ceux qui ne l'ont jamais vu, je vous encourage à vous y rendre. C'est magnifique. Peu importe où on se rend dans le nord de l'Ontario, si vous pouvez voir le lac Supérieur, vous allez être impressionné.

Il y a des parties du lac qui sont très froides. Quand on arrive dans le bout de Thunder Bay, c'est assez difficile de faire de la baignade, mais plus au sud on peut certainement se baigner, faire de la voile—on peut en profiter de bien des façons. La pêche dans le lac Supérieur est une aventure en elle-même. J'ai moi-même eu la chance d'aller pêcher. La pêche au saumon, près de mon comté dans le lac Supérieur, est excellente. C'est une pêche qui est très excitante, et habituellement on remplit un bateau et on remplit notre quota assez vite.

Le lac Supérieur fait partie du nord de l'Ontario. Tout le monde qui le côtoie et qui connaît le lac en est fier, moi incluse. Je félicite certainement le membre pour avoir apporté cette proposition en l'honneur du lac Supérieur. C'est quelque chose que le parti néo-démocratique appuie, et nous allons certainement voter en faveur de cette motion.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on the motion of my good friend and colleague the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, who has certainly served this House with a great deal of distinction and integrity from 1987. It's interesting: When you think about Lake Superior, there's the famous song that was immortalized by Gordon Lightfoot. The song was about the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald. It was the famous iron ore carrier on Lake Superior that experienced one of those horrendous storms. It was an ore carrier, fully loaded, and it became one of Mr. Lightfoot's signature songs. It often gets requested. He doesn't have as active a tour as he used to have many years ago, but it is a song that always gets requested from Mr. Lightfoot.

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It's interesting, of course, that the member represents part of a riding that was held by a former Prime Minister, Mr. Pearson, who represented Algoma East from about 1949 to 1968. One of the reasons Mr. Pearson thought that Canada needed a new flag was the opportunity he had to be in the area around Lake Superior, where he could indeed appreciate the vastness of the lake, the resources of the lake and just the sheer beauty of that lake—one of the reasons he thought so instinctively that Canada needed a new flag to represent some of the great assets we have throughout this great land, but for Mr. Pearson, being a native of the province, particularly Ontario. For me, coming from the riding of Peterborough, we're surrounded by the Great Lakes. The Peterborough lift lock has national historical recognition. I share with the member for Algoma–Manitoulin the vision that we need to celebrate the great natural resources this province has to offer.

My first experience with Lake Superior was the opportunity to be on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs—I think I was riding on the same plane as the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. When you start the approach to land at the airport in Thunder Bay, you get to appreciate the sheer size and magnitude of Lake Superior. It's almost like an ocean, when you're peering out of the small porthole of an airplane. You really appreciate what it has to offer. At other times, it was the centre for the grain terminals in Thunder Bay. It has a rich history as part of the major transportation corridor not only here in Ontario but throughout Canada.

I think the member certainly deserves recognition for moving forward a resolution that we sit back on the third Sunday in July and really appreciate what Lake Superior has to offer. With those remarks, I know that all sides of the House this afternoon will be supporting this resolution for my good friend the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

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

Seeing none, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin has the remaining time, in addition to his two-minute wrap-up.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I truly appreciate the comments of the members from Haldimand–Norfolk,

Trinity–Spadina, Essex, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Nickel Belt and Peterborough.

Lake Superior is truly a worldwide resource. It's a resource that we need to treasure, protect, promote and use for the benefit not just of Canadians or Americans, but of all the citizens of the world. It is truly that kind of place.

I was interested in the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's comments about Alona Bay, some of Old Woman Bay and some of the other wonderful places along the route on the part of the shoreline that lies in Algoma–Manitoulin. It is truly awesome.

It is a treasure that needs to be promoted. In this time when we know that tourism is a difficult industry to be in, when it is important for us to recognize what attributes this province has, I would put Lake Superior right at the top of provincial attractions of worldwide significance. We need to encourage the municipal leaders, the leaders of the First Nations and the leaders of the American states that border the lake to promote the circle tour, promote the clean, safe waters of the lake, and promote the commercial advantages it presents to us all.

Lake Superior started with a recognition of its great importance by the earliest people there, the First Nations people—truly an inland sea, truly a place that was treasured by those First Nations folks. There are pictographs. There are examples of First Nations settlements that predate recorded history. It is an amazing place. It is a place that we who know it well want to share with the rest of the world.

I am encouraged by what I consider to be the tone of this place this afternoon, as all members appear to be wanting to support our communities and our leaders in our area to promote Lake Superior Day, the third Sunday in July, and I look forward to working with those leaders in those communities to promote this even further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Of course, we'll vote on this ballot item in about 50 minutes' time. Orders of the day.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
AMENDMENT ACT, 2008
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES ÉVALUATIONS
ENVIRONNEMENTALES

Mr. Balkissoon moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to amend the Environmental Assessment Act / Projet de loi 123, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les évaluations environnementales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Balkissoon, pursuant to standing order 98, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I introduced Bill 123 because it's intended to clarify the application criteria under the Environmental Assessment Act as it relates to municipalities. This bill will amend the Environmental Assessment Act by adding the following:

“Restriction on municipal proponents

“5.0.1(1) If a regional municipality, lower-tier municipality, municipality, county or township is a proponent of an undertaking, it is entitled to apply to the minister for approval to proceed with the undertaking only if the proposed terms of reference governing the preparation of the environmental assessment, and the environmental assessment itself, relate to lands situated wholly within its boundaries.” And I will repeat, “relate to lands situated wholly within its boundaries,” because this is an important part of this new subsection.

There is an exception that I'm moving in subsection 5.0.1(2):

“Exception

“(2) If a regional municipality, lower-tier municipality, municipality, county or township is a proponent of an undertaking, it is entitled, despite subsection (1), to apply to the minister jointly with one or more such municipal proponents if the proposed terms of reference governing the preparation of the environmental assessment, and the environmental assessment itself, relate to lands situated only within the boundaries of those municipal proponents.”

Just to clarify that, where something crosses boundaries, we would need all municipalities to co-operate.

Subsection 5.0.1.(3) is:

“No review by minister

“(3) The minister shall not review an application made under subsection (1) or (2) unless the condition set out in the relevant subsection is satisfied.”

This bill, if approved, will change the way municipalities submit applications under the Environmental Assessment Act in the future. An application by a municipal council for an individual environmental assessment will be for an undertaking only within its own boundaries and jurisdiction. An application for an undertaking by one or two municipal jurisdictions would require a joint or a co-proponent application for that undertaking under the Environmental Assessment Act.

This change would be a major improvement and it would require early discussions and agreement between municipalities for all cross-jurisdictional undertakings prior to the filing of an application for an environmental assessment approval.

In the future, this early discussion and agreement would avoid confrontation between municipalities and, in some cases, save huge expenditures of municipal tax dollars. It would also significantly improve the citizens' engagement process and avoid major confrontations because there would be co-operation and preliminary support by the municipal councils involved long before the public is engaged.

Bill 123's intent is to amend the act and provide more defined criteria for municipal applications.

I would like to highlight key parts of two subsections of the current Environmental Assessment Act:

“Approval for undertaking

“5.(1) Every proponent who wishes to proceed with an undertaking shall apply to the minister for approval to do so....”

“‘Proponent’ means a person who,

“(a) carries out or proposes to carry out an undertaking, or

“(b) is the owner or person having charge, management or control of an undertaking.”

It further goes on to state that “person” includes a municipality.

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Section 9(1):

“Decision by minister.

“9(1) The minister may decide an application and, with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council or of such ministers of the crown as the Lieutenant Governor in Council may designate, the minister may,

“(a) give approval to proceed with the undertaking;

“(b) give approval to proceed with the undertaking subject to such conditions as the minister considers necessary to carry out the purpose of this act and in particular requiring or specifying ...

“(iv) such changes in the undertaking as the minister considers necessary,

“(v) that the proponent enter into one or more agreements related to the undertaking with any person with respect to such matters as the minister considers necessary.”

The minister can also refuse to give approval to proceed with the undertaking.

The basis of the minister’s decision in the act says that:

“(2) The minister shall consider the following matters when deciding an application:

“1. The purpose of the act....

“3. The environmental assessment....

“7. Such other matters as the Minister considers relevant to the application.”

It is also general opinion that the minister may reject an undertaking if he or she believes the undertaking does not have the potential or appropriate resources to be started and completed in a reasonable time frame.

Based on clause 5(1) in the current Environmental Assessment Act, one would conclude that a proponent must have significant authority—that is, ownership, charge, management, or control of the undertaking resources—to complete the proposed undertaking as per clause 5(1)(b) before the Ministry of the Environment would consider acceptance of an application and the accompanying terms of reference under the current Environmental Assessment Act.

Unfortunately, I have to introduce Bill 123 because this is not what happened with an environmental assessment application filed in 2002 for an arterial roadway known formerly as the Markham bypass and now renamed as Don Cousens Parkway in the region of York, town of Markham, a proposal which sought to have a direct link to Highway 401 travelling through the city of Toronto. This application did not have the city of Toronto as a co-proponent or a joint applicant.

I would like to provide some details on this York region application, which is the compelling factor for me introducing this bill.

The York region application clearly had not met the requirements of section 5(1) of the current Environmental Assessment Act. As per 5(1)(b), it says the applicant must be “the owner or person having charge, management or control of an undertaking.” Clearly, the region of York was not the owner of lands, and would not control or manage the undertaking of the construction of the section of the arterial road, within the boundaries of Toronto.

In 2002, when the application was submitted, region of York legal staff should have known their proposal did not comply with the true spirit of the Environmental Assessment Act. In 2002, the Ministry of the Environment overlooked or failed to identify that this application did not meet the criteria specified in section 5(1) of the environmental act.

As per clause 9(1) of the act, the application should have been rejected, or the terms of reference of the individual environmental assessment modified by the minister to require an agreement to proceed from the city of Toronto before the undertaking of the environmental assessment work itself.

The region of York was allowed to proceed with an expensive process to complete this environmental assessment work, that is still ongoing today, six years after the application was filed. All of this work was done at a tremendous cost to the property taxpayer, in the millions, and to this date, to the benefit of none other than paid consultants.

The city of Toronto monitored and provided comments repeatedly during the environmental assessment process, consuming its property tax dollars, furthering its own position on behalf of the citizens of Toronto against the actions of the region of York.

Toronto citizens themselves consume a lot of their personal energy and personal cost, participating in every step of the environmental process. Property tax dollars in the millions could have been saved if due process was followed, proper review was done and the environmental act was clear.

Since 2005, as the provincial representative of a large residential community that would have been negatively impacted by this undertaking, a large amount of my time and my office budget has been spent unnecessarily addressing misinformation and propaganda being sent out by interested parties on both sides of this proposal about the provincial government’s process, its involvement and the minister’s impending actions.

This situation can certainly repeat itself anywhere in the province where growth and development is occurring and cross-jurisdiction infrastructure projects become a necessity. The York region application is still alive and is now proceeding to spend additional funds to assess the city of Toronto’s concerns and its recommended options. This is six years after the filing of an application. This is not good for the province, it’s not good for the municipality, and it’s not good for the citizens who had to bear with this process.

I believe that this bill will not only clarify legislation, but it will clarify the process for municipalities and also

help to conserve scarce municipal tax dollars, and it would provide for a less controversial citizen participation.

I would not like to see the repeat of this situation, nor would I like to see taxpayers' money wasted in the future. I hope every member of this assembly will support this amendment to the Environmental Assessment Act.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 123—an easy number to remember; I guess that's the luck of the draw—the Environmental Assessment Amendment Act. As we've heard, this proposed legislation is a bit of an attempt by a member from Scarborough to clear up some of the rules around environmental assessment approvals for those projects, as mentioned, that cross jurisdictional boundaries, and cross into other municipalities. We've also heard this afternoon that the current Environmental Assessment Act does seem to have somewhat of a hole in it and that it fails to provide clear rules as to what the proper process is for a municipality to follow, if a project is to move forward through an EA process, but it does cross into a neighbouring municipality's jurisdiction.

On the surface, it looks like a good thing: It looks like it would cut some of this wrangling and some of the red tape, it would cut some of the wasted money that was mentioned and help prevent or alleviate some of these inter-jurisdictional arguments that we hear about.

I've got a field in front of my house. If I were to work cash crop, if I were to put cattle in there or to run horses, I would have to build a fence, an electric fence. I probably wouldn't have to check with my neighbour. But if I were to start putting in wooden posts and pounding in steel posts, I would talk to my neighbour. That would be a line fence. I would be subject to the Line Fences Act. Over many, many years, through community consultation—both my uncles were fence viewers—the process was set up so that neighbours, adjoining neighbours, have a say and reach agreement.

So, you know, we can imagine the myriad of potential problems that can arise when you have a project based in one area, that crosses into another, like a road, for example, and the difficulty in moving it forward by the proponent or the proponent municipality.

I understand through Bill 123, the member here from Scarborough was hoping to avoid situations like the one that occurred with respect to the Markham bypass. Those from that area would better be aware or understand: I guess that's something like close to a 30-year tale where-by York region spent a lot of money, a lot of time, a lot of effort in attempting to cross an EA hurdle in their bypass, only to be stuck in some kind of limbo due to lack of support from Toronto.

1530

That said, I must admit that when I first saw the title of the bill, the Environmental Assessment Amendment Act, I saw it as an attempt by this government and a government member to begin to address some of the con-

cerns very recently raised by Gord Miller, our Environmental Commissioner, in his recently released report this fall. In that report, Environmental Commissioner Miller refers to the broken assessment process: "The province has increasingly stepped away from some key EA decision-making responsibilities, and the Ministry of the Environment ... is not adequately meeting its vital procedural oversight role. As a result, the EA process retains little credibility with those members of the public who have had to tangle with its complexities." The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario indicates that he's "contacted regularly by individuals and groups" that are "frustrated," and they're frustrated by similar "EA misadventures" as we hear about today. "It would not be too forceful to say that Ontario's EA process is broken. This ought to concern not only academics and environmentalists, but also the business community, the development-oriented ministries and everyday Ontarians hoping to see their province move forward on a sustainable path. We have lost the old vision for EA; a new vision is urgently needed." Whether this is part and parcel of a new vision for the Environmental Assessment Act, legislation that goes back 32 years, the vision "that more informed, more transparent planning processes can lead to the betterment of the people of Ontario, and the protection, conservation and wise management of the environment. How far have we come towards realizing that vision? The EAA has, over time, suffered so many truncations and add-ons that it no longer bears much resemblance to its original, idealistic self. Many idealistic pieces of legislation become encrusted and their intent diluted with compromising amendments."

I'm not suggesting this amendment would compromise the process. "But," as Gord Miller goes on to say, "if we want to avert poor decisions, we should recall the original purpose of the EAA—'the betterment of the people of the whole or any part of Ontario'—and we should share a desire to get the EA process right."

So while I agree with some of the intentions of Bill 123, I do worry that by discussing this afternoon the possibility of merely adding an amendment to what has been identified as an overall broken process, it's a little bit like putting a Band-Aid on the knee of a person with a concussion or blowing up a balloon full of holes or, to use the oft-quoted expression, rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. It may solve one aspect of what ails the collective problem, the collective issue, but it doesn't address the problem as a whole. In the end, it doesn't matter how many Band-Aids you put on or how many chairs you move; if you don't change the course, you're left with, if I put these analogies all together, a pounding headache holding an empty balloon on a sinking ship.

So this is a step forward. Whether this is going to right the ship and refloat the ship—I don't know whether Gord Miller would feel that it's enough. As he put it, as I mentioned, the EA system is "broken." It no longer does what it was designed to do and perhaps no small number of amendments will address the wholesale change that he is calling for to right this listless process or, if I go back

to the Titanic, this listing process, perhaps about to submerge after 22 years.

Just to quote some more from the Environmental Commissioner's report: "Ontario's environmental assessment process is supposed to serve as a safety net to protect the public and the environment from harm by requiring agencies to consider the environmental implications of proposed projects before they're allowed to proceed." Again, we have a situation where the EA process is intended to ensure that new projects are environmentally sound. Sometimes we get sidestepped or sidebarred or bushwhacked, and we get into these jurisdictional arguments that may not be arguments based on environmental reasons; it may be for other reasons. As Mr. Miller points out, there are flaws in the EA process. I think we all recognize that in debating this particular private member's bill today. Because of these flaws, some projects are not carefully screened, not as carefully screened as the public would expect, and the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario believes that Ontarians should be worried that the environment and public health are being jeopardized by this broken process.

So on the surface, the intent of the bill at face value is well-meaning, but it does lead to a number of questions. To start with, do we really need legislation to codify that age-old tradition of asking your neighbour before you put up that line fence? I may answer that because there is legislation, the Line Fences Act. It was codified in law even though it is seen as common sense, and I'm sure there were a number of gun battles and cattle let loose over the years as a result of one rancher or one farmer not talking to his neighbour.

If we don't do it or if we do it, what are some of the consequences if we got to the application stage? As well, how does this bill affect future developments? I think of talk of the transit link between Union Station and the airport—was that called Blue22? I'm not involved in some of these projects—and the Big Pipe project, which covers a number of municipal jurisdictions. Last night I was in Peter Shurman's neighbourhood, and there was a spirited discussion advocating the extension of the TTC further north. How many municipal jurisdictions do we cross to achieve that goal?

So I applaud the goals of the amendment. I like the idea of saving ratepayers' dollars. I don't know to what extent this would lead into the program of this interventionist government, the Big Brother role that we see in this government. To what extent we need more amendments and more laws to better protect people or municipalities from themselves, I don't know.

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

1540

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will be supporting the bill introduced by the member from Scarborough–Rouge River. His bill speaks to a need to change the Environmental Assessment Act, and it speaks to larger problems that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario spoke of. I want to draw on his wisdom, his hard work, his

attachment to the issue and the intelligence that he applies to environmental concerns. He says on page 28 of his report the following:

"Environmental Assessment: A Vision Lost

"Environmental assessment (EA) is one of those grey, blurry areas of modern bureaucratic practice: often misunderstood, sometimes misused, but mostly ignored by the average citizen. Yet environmental assessment has a crucial role to play in our lives; it should be society's pre-eminent tool to carry out far-sighted planning for public infrastructure in the name of the public good. Unfortunately, Ontario has been long burdened with an EA system where the hard questions are not being asked, and the most important decisions aren't being made—or at least are not being made in a transparent, integrated way. The province has increasingly stepped away from some key EA decision-making responsibilities, and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) is not adequately meeting its vital procedural oversight role. As a result, the EA process retains little credibility with those members of the public who have had to tangle with its complexities."

He speaks harshly about how we are respecting the principles of the Environmental Assessment Act, and he speaks a bit critically of your government, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River. I think we need to pay attention to these things, because he speaks in part to your bill.

He also says, on page 32, "Although the EAA was conceived to address province-wide plans and programs, as well as site-specific projects, only one province-wide plan has ever been taken to the EA hearing stage." That was in 1992-93, when we were in government.

Most other decisions on projects are done by piecemeal, which I know the member from Scarborough–Rouge River understands very clearly, because that's what his bill speaks to and that's what most environmental assessments around most projects are about.

To give an example, the York Durham sewer system, known as the Big Pipe, was split up into 14 projects. Each one was approved separately, despite the fact that the project had massive regional impacts on water aquifers, for example, and was very unlikely to have been approved as a whole. Splitting a project prevents the proper assessment of regional environmental impacts; splitting a project prevents proper public input; and splitting a project leads to long and drawn-out battles between jurisdictions and their citizens, as environmental assessments move ahead without agreements of all local and/or regional governments involved. That is why Mr. Balkissoon is bringing forward this bill, in large part: to avoid long, costly and publicly divisive battles, such as the one that has taken place in his riding over the Markham bypass.

York region and the town of Markham have long wanted to build an express road to join Highway 407 and Highway 401. The problem is that Toronto has long opposed this road due to legitimate concerns about environmental impacts to the sensitive Rouge River Valley

and social impacts on residential areas in Scarborough. The dispute has gone on for years, incurring significant costs in terms of lawyer and consultant fees. That is what this member has spoken to, and that is why he brought forward this bill. But it speaks to the larger problems of the Environmental Assessment Act and whether these problems will be solved.

Again, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario speaks to these problems and says the following on page 38:

“There are simply too many critical and persistent points of failure. The latest overhauls do not resolve a number of fundamental and intertwined flaws:

“—Important, overarching decisions on policies and programs are not being made under the EAA;

“—‘No’ is rarely an option, because projects are almost never rejected under the [environmental assessment] process;

“—Decisions are being made in a piecemeal fashion;

“—Proponents are being allowed to apply for and obtain other approvals prior to [the environmental assessment] approval;

“—The need for projects and undertakings are often shielded from scrutiny.”

Remember, this is the Environmental Commissioner speaking:

“—Important back-end technical details are also shielded from scrutiny;

“—The quality of [environmental assessment] studies is ‘uneven’;

“—The statutory principle of ‘betterment’ is being neglected;

“—There is poor integration between [environmental assessment] and the land-use planning process;

“—Consultation processes have been discredited; and

“—The monitoring, compliance and enforcement of [environmental assessment] terms and conditions has been weak.”

He speaks to these problems in a way that suggests to us that unless we take this seriously, it doesn't matter what we say or do, the problems will continue.

A panel was established in 2005 by this government. While the government or the ministry has accepted some, it did not accept many of the recommendations by this panel that the Environmental Commissioner makes mention of. They are the following: “The ministry's plans do not appear to include a renewed use of hearings, a provincial EA advisory body, a green project facilitator, a fee structure, new procedures to deal with bump-up requests or project elevation requests, or a mechanism that allows for public comments through the registry on EA-related permits and approvals. There also appears to be little enthusiasm to strengthening the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting, or to developing compliance programs and procedures.”

I wanted to mention these things because we hire these people to give us the best advice. These are our watchdogs, and if we do not implement much of what they say—it's a wonder that we hire these people to do these

jobs if we then do not follow the recommendations they make. Why do we hire them? Why do we hire them to create such long studies and recommendations, and in the end, only take but a few of the recommendations and dismiss the rest?

So I wanted to tell you that the Environmental Assessment Act needs to be reviewed, and reviewed strongly, on the basis of what the Environmental Commissioner has said. It speaks to some of the elements that the member from Scarborough—Rouge River has brought before us today, and it is for that reason that I support his bill.

But I hope some of the members have the courage to review the recommendations made by the Environmental Commissioner and take them seriously so that we can improve the planet as we go.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to speak on Bill 123 from my good friend from Scarborough—Rouge River. The member took a lot of time to explain, in his introductory remarks, what the bill is supposed to do in a very technical way in which most legislation is written.

As I look across the aisle at my good friend the Minister of Natural Resources, she would say that sometimes we should use Canadian Tire language. I fully understand what the member is trying to do. It makes a lot of sense, and maybe in my remarks in the few minutes I have here, I'm going to try to use some of that Canadian Tire language.

1550

As you know, I spent about 12 years in the municipal sector and my last stint as mayor of the municipality of Brighton. I guess I'm trying to relate this to the bigger picture that the member talks about. Normally, it's not uncommon for a small rural municipality that, on a Sunday afternoon, one of your neighbours or somebody who needed something done would come and visit you for a coffee. In many cases, they would come and see me and talk about a rezoning or a bylaw change that they needed for whatever reason, and in many cases it was for a good reason. The first question I would ask—you know it probably makes sense. You know that part of the process is to have public meetings and have input from your neighbours. I'd go, “What do your neighbours have to say? Because it's common sense that if we have this public meeting and the majority of your neighbours oppose it, chances are council will try to do the right thing, but they also have to listen to all the people who elected them.” In many cases they'd say, “Oh, well, I thought I would just come to you and you good folks would give me a blessing or deal with the issue.” A lot of them didn't understand the possibilities. And it was so nice, when we on council had to deal with a bylaw or rezoning application or to make those decisions, when we had no letters opposing what was in front of us or a delegation of 50 people in the audience that put themselves on the docket to speak.

What my good friend is trying to do here, in the bigger scale, is to tell municipalities across jurisdictions, “Let's

get all of these things out of the way and off to the side, so when we make an application, there might have to be some adjustments,” that they might agree upon themselves, but it would make the process a lot smoother. What that does, when I hear the member use an example that’s been on the books since 2002—I would like to guess, because I didn’t happen to hear the number from the member, what this is costing. What’s it costing the municipality? Well, municipalities are the ratepayers. It’s not the mayors or councils or those folks; it’s us that are footing the bill.

This almost makes too much sense. I know he spoke about the technicality of it but I think sometimes we need to really look at how this impacts on everyday lives. This would expedite the process. It would definitely be a lot less expensive, which, in today’s economic situation, would be very, very helpful. So I’m delighted you brought this forward, something that maybe was missed somewhere. Hopefully we can move this forward.

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

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I’m more than pleased to rise in support of my colleague’s Bill 123. As was identified, sometimes we put in language such technical words that interpretation is left up to the individual, and so any time you can find a way and a process to clarify that which makes it cleaner in terms of understanding, I’m all for it, and especially when it comes to the Environmental Assessment Act, because it is a very complicated act. It is very challenging for people to understand. However, in this case, because it was the ministry itself, I’m obviously disturbed to think they had gone ahead, allowing a proponent to move onto someone else’s land to actually do an assessment. But having said that, that was done and this is to ensure that this doesn’t happen again.

We’re going to be doing some very significant work with intermodal transportation. No municipality stands on its own anymore. People travel from one to another; they work in one, they live in another. They actually don’t know, nor do they care, that there are borders. It’s typically politicians who care that there are borders. People want seamless transportation. They want seamless work going on among all of those different municipalities that are involved. To think, in this day and age, that we’re not picking up the phone to talk to that neighbouring municipality or jurisdiction about the challenges that are facing our community and what we’d like to do to address them simply doesn’t make any sense. At the end of the day there’s one taxpayer for all of Ontario. The money comes from the people of Ontario and we have a responsibility to do due diligence when it comes to spending that money and to ensure that it’s spent in the most appropriate way. So I’m very supportive of any opportunity to put clarity to a piece of legislation or regulation around that legislation that requires it.

I’m also pleased because it will really force the municipalities to talk to their neighbours, as was discussed. I

can remember going to different jurisdictions, and they’d have a wonderful map on the wall of their particular region or municipality, and there was nothing above it, nothing below it and nothing on either side. Well, that certainly isn’t the way the world is. We now know that we need to work together more co-operatively, that we need to find a balance in how we approach our challenges around transportation or of any number of other—I was just thinking of bridges or culverts, where they cross municipal boundaries. It just makes sense to work together. If there is an opportunity to define clarity, and I think my colleague has brought this forward, then I’m more than pleased to be able to support it.

I guess the other thing I’d like to identify is the number of years this has taken: six years. I hate to think of the amount of money that has been expended by a proponent who has neither the authority on the land nor the capacity to build on that land. I find that unconscionable, quite frankly, not only as a member from the city of Toronto, but just as a member of this House.

I would not presume to go to my colleague’s house and do an assessment to put a walkway through his yard from my house to his house. How can that happen? It can’t happen. I’m a little astounded that it is occurring and still going on. Having said that, what Bill 123 does is actually define a process to clarify this regulation and ensure that this cannot happen again, and encourage the kind of co-operation that should and must occur among municipalities and regions. I thank the member for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Before I start, I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for bringing such an important issue to this House. I know he served in a municipal government for the last, I don’t know, 17 years, and has a lot of expertise in this field. He knows the issue very well.

When he gave me a note to understand the subject, it was very difficult to read, very technical. There were a lot of technicalities. I couldn’t understand it. I went back to him and said, “My friend, can you explain what you want to achieve with this bill?” He explained it to me, and what he explained made a lot of sense—it’s very simple. As my seatmate mentioned, it’s Canadian Tire language; it was very simple.

Many municipalities and communities across the province of Ontario try to get an environmental assessment of a piece of land—maybe it’s a garbage dump or whatever—that has been abandoned for many years. They assume they can take possession of that land, convert it overnight and use it, and then they bring the community and consultants together and start working on it and spend tons of money. In the end, they submit an application to the Ministry of the Environment. They know they have no jurisdiction or no authority to do what they’ve been doing for many years, and it costs them tons of money. I think it’s very important to save taxpayers’

money, especially when you bring communities together and get their hopes up. In the end, they wait year after year.

As he mentioned, the city of Toronto has been working on a piece of land for the last six years. They spent a ton of money on it and haven't achieved anything yet. So it's important to bring clarity to the bill—he outlined very, very eloquently his position on the clarity issues—in order to clarify to the municipalities, whether they are small municipalities or large municipalities, what they can do and what their responsibility is, and their ability to bring change to their municipalities with a piece of land or environmental assessment.

Also, it was interesting to listen to the member from Trinity–Spadina talking about the commission. The report was commissioned by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. He brought these issues forward and pointed out the importance of clarifying many different issues in this regard.

Also, it's important—I was listening to the Minister of Natural Resources talking about the rules and legislation that we bring into this House on a regular basis that are written in a fashion that is sometimes very difficult to read and understand. Most of those rules and regulations or articles under legislation are open to many different interpretations. What happens with this issue is that many municipalities think they can do a lot of things and they bring, as I mentioned, the community together and promise them a solution to their problem. They get them together, bring their hopes up and then, after many years, many times and spending tons of money, they fail to do it. So it's very important to design and define the ability and also define the responsibility of the Minister of the Environment. In this way, we don't waste the time of the Minister of Environment and we also don't waste the time of the people or the municipalities. We also don't waste the money. Then we know exactly what we're doing; we know our jurisdiction and our capacity.

I want to congratulate the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for bringing up such an important issue. I want to thank him for his thinking and also bringing his expertise to us. I hope all the members of the House will support him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Scarborough–Rouge River, Mr. Balkissoon, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I want to thank the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, the member from Trinity–Spadina, my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West, the member from Etobicoke Centre, the former Minister of the Environment, and my friend from London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How many friends do you have?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Lots. In over 20 years you make a lot of them.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk made a good point. He said, “Should we make laws for those things

that we assume should take place?” He drew a reference to the Line Fences Act and said that we had to do it because people were doing the things we assumed would work. This is a case in point with the York region situation, where it didn't happen. I think the ministry assumed that certain things would take place and that's why they allowed application to proceed. It did not take place and we wasted taxpayers' money, and my bill is intended to clarify some of those situations.

I want to say thank you to the members for all their comments in support of the bill, because the bill does encourage co-operation between municipalities in the future. The most important thing is that it will save hard-earned taxpayers' money. If I can achieve that, it's all about that.

Last but not least, it will avoid confrontation with the citizens in our communities. That is very important to me, because I believe I was sent here to do some of that work, and that's what I'm trying to do here. I want to say thank you to the Minister of the Environment, because I raised this bill with him a couple of months ago and he is very supportive. I'm hoping he will incorporate it into the review of the Environmental Assessment Act or that he will let this go through and be put into law someday. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That concludes our ballot items for today. But the time under our standing orders, from the beginning of when we started private members' public business to the end—so there's some certainty about when the vote will occur—that is required to elapse is two and a half hours, and that doesn't occur until 4:15, so this House stands suspended until 4:15. That's the standing orders.

The House suspended proceedings from 1603 to 1615.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for private members' public business has now expired. Please take your seats.

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO
AMENDMENT ACT (CIGARILLOS), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI FAVORISANT
UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE
(CIGARILLOS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Madame Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 124, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act with respect to cigarillos. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a “no.”

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after we deal with the next two ballot items.

LAKE SUPERIOR DAY
JOUR DU LAC SUPÉRIEUR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Brown has moved private member's resolution number 60. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.
Motion agreed to.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
AMENDMENT ACT, 2008
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES ÉVALUATIONS
ENVIRONNEMENTALES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 60.

Mr. Balkissoon has moved second reading of Bill 123, An Act to amend the Environmental Assessment Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd like the bill to be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government? Agreed. So ordered.

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

The division bells rang from 1617 to 1622.

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO
AMENDMENT ACT (CIGARILLOS), 2008
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI FAVORISANT
UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE
(CIGARILLOS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Madame Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 124, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act with respect to cigarillos. I would ask all those in favour of the motion to rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Pendergast, Leeanna
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Best, Margaret	Kormos, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Moridi, Reza	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm
Klees, Frank	Shurman, Peter

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 32; the nays are 4.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Madame Gélinas?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to refer the bill to the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the general government committee? Agreed? So ordered.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I beg to inform the House that, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

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.

Bill 97, An Act to increase access to qualified health professionals for all Ontarians by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à accroître l'accès des Ontariennes et des Ontariens aux professionnels de la santé qualifiés en modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

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.

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.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday, December 1, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1627.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Ageloni, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Kevin Daniel Flynn
France Gélinas, Randy Hillier
Lisa MacLeod, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
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Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
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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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
Peter Shurman
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Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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