



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 4 December 2008

Jeudi 4 décembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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Thursday 4 December 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
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The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMANCIPATION DAY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE JOUR
DE L'ÉMANCIPATION

Mr. Arnott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to proclaim Emancipation Day / Projet de loi 111, Loi proclamant le Jour de l'émancipation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 3, 2008, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Arnott has moved second reading of Bill 111, An Act to proclaim Emancipation Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 3, this bill is ordered for third reading.

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2008, on the motion for second reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et apportant des modifications corrélatives à deux lois modificatives.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Certainly I have to say that I have mixed feelings about this debate, in the sense that it's one of those where you're kind of glad and kind of sad at the same time. There are things in this bill that I think deal with driver safety from a perspective of recognizing we need to do all that we can first as drivers, in taking our responsibilities as drivers and as legislators, to make sure that our highways are safe. But what makes me sad is the politics that I think are happening within this bill, that it's targeted to young people.

First of all I start with the premise, as do, I think, all other members in this House, that young people are equal citizens under the law. If a child 16 years and under, or a young adult 16 years of age and over, basically breaks the laws—they have to follow the laws just like anybody else. They have a responsibility to be good citizens. So when we look at the Legislature and the House of Commons, where we develop laws, we should be saying to ourselves that we treat everybody equally when it comes to the law. Clearly, what I think is happening in this bill is that we have a standard for younger people that is different from the standard for older people. I want to go through that and talk about why I think some of the provisions of this bill need to be changed in recognition of that fact. Let's talk about those parts of the bill in the order that they appear.

The first part of the bill deals with the issue of the alcohol level that should be allowed in your blood to be within the legal limit to drive. Currently, in the province of Ontario, .08 is the number. Anybody who is found with a blood-alcohol level of over .08 will be prosecuted under the law. I think that makes sense. We came to that conclusion some years ago, and we are very aggressive in this province in having RIDE programs and instructing our police to make sure they enforce that law to the best of their ability. We also do a lot to educate the public to let them know they have a responsibility to make sure they are not driving over the blood-alcohol limit of .08.

If you take a look at the statistics across this province, we're doing a pretty good job. Ontario has managed to put itself in a fairly good position of being fairly serious and having good deterrents and good education campaigns to get people not to get behind the wheel when they're drinking. Unfortunately, at times, people do. But if you take a look at the stats today and compare them to what they were 20 years ago, Ontario has made great, great progress in making our highways safer by very much reducing the number of incidents where people are driving under the influence over .08.

But here is the rub: The government is proposing in this law that we go to .0 for people under the age of 21. This raises two parts to the debate. The first part is, should we be lowering the .08 limit? Should it be .05, as some would argue, or should it be zero? My argument is that that's a good debate. What the legal limit should be is a debate that I think everybody is prepared to get into in this Legislature and in this province, because there are arguments on both sides as to .0 or .05. I don't think there's a lot of opposition to reducing the alcohol limit

that is allowed in a person's blood before that person is convicted of a drunk driving offence.

But the issue here is that we're saying we're only going to apply the .0 to kids—well, to adults; they're not kids at that point—under the age of 21. They can serve their country at the age of 17; they can pick up arms and defend us in places like Afghanistan. Certainly, we're not calling these people kids, we're calling them adults, because we're giving them responsibilities that quite frankly most of us would not want to do at age 50 or 51.

I come from the premise that if you can have somebody join the military at age 17, as I did, and basically pick up training and be shipped out with your unit to someplace around the world to either be on a peace-keeping mission or do the operational activities that are happening in Afghanistan, clearly these young people are not children. They're young adults, and they should be treated like any other adult in this country. So I have great difficulty with the portion of the bill that says we're only going to apply it to younger people when it comes to the blood-alcohol level.

I think that young people, myself as a middle-aged person and older people—or people older than me, I should say—are prepared to get into a debate about, should we be lowering the blood-alcohol limit for all drivers? I don't think it would be much of a problem for us to go from .08 to at least .05. Certainly, Mothers Against Drunk Driving has been lobbying and coming to Queen's Park, meeting with opposition members and government members for months and years, to lower it from .08 to .05.

I think probably that is a debate we can all buy in to. There are really good reasons we should go to .05. Some people would argue, go to .0. Well, as has been pointed out, .0 could be problematic from the perspective that if you're taking a cough medicine—some of the liquid ones you can take—you're going to be blowing over .0 and you're not even taking alcohol, so you could technically be charged for driving under the influence because you have a cold and you're taking medication. Clearly, there are some practical reasons why you cannot get to .0.

Two points: One, if it's impractical to get to .0 for all citizens because of that issue, then why are we applying that standard to drivers under the age of 21? Do they not get colds too? Do they not at times have to take cough medicine that would allow them to blow over .0? Are we saying that somehow people under the age of 21 never get colds? Are we saying that they're immune to cough syrup? It's kind of a wonky situation we're putting ourselves in.

0910

But the bigger issue is, why are we allowing, quite frankly, two classes of citizens within the province of Ontario? I know there are people out there who have an appetite for saying, "Well, they're not grown-up enough yet. They don't have enough experience. They have to earn their stripes." You hear all kinds of people talking about those things, but I hearken back to the day when I was 17. On my 17th birthday, I joined the military. I

decided I wanted to serve my country. Was I not a proper citizen at that point? Was I not an adult making an informed decision? Was I not entitled to rights under the Constitution or the laws of Ontario or Canada like any other citizen? I would argue that I was a citizen. So I have great difficulty with applying this only to people under the age of 21.

We already have, within our graduated driver system, prohibitions that probably go as far as they need to when it comes to allowing drivers to gain experience before they get their full licence. The graduated driver system has served us well in this province, and there are already restrictions about driving after midnight and other provisions within it that maybe make some sense when it comes to allowing drivers to get experience. But I want to say clearly on the record, as a New Democrat and as an individual, that I have great difficulty with having a law that applies just to young people and doesn't apply to the rest of our society.

I want to put on the record, yes, lower the blood-alcohol limit in the bill—provisions of the bill are a good thing. Yes, we should enter into that debate; we should be talking to people about what that should be. Should it be .05%? Should it be .0%? As I said earlier, I would argue that .0% is a problem. But it should be for all Ontarians. All citizens of this province who want to have a driver's licence should have the ability to be seen equally under that law. To segregate young people under the age of 21 to a different standard I don't think is fair. I think it's a bit of playing politics with this bill.

The other section of the bill deals with zero tolerance when it comes to speed. The government is saying they want a provision in the bill that if a person under the age of 21 gets caught speeding, in any way, shape or form, they would lose their licence as a result of that infraction. Again, I understand why the government is bringing this forward. There have been incidents that are quite sad, where people—not just young people, I would argue—have used excessive speed and, as a result of that excessive speed, have caused accident deaths.

We certainly know the incident that sparked this legislation, in regard to the tragedy of the young people who were killed as a result of driving their father's car faster than they should have and, as a result, were involved in an automobile accident that took their lives along with that of the passenger who was in the car. That is tragic; we can't underplay that. But there are already laws in this province that give police officers the tools they need to deal with dangerous drivers. I think that's the point I'm trying to make here. There are laws, for example, against street racing and against unsafe driving, and a police officer who pulls somebody over because of excessive speed already has many tools within the police officer's toolbox, as they would call it, to be able to withdraw a person's licence if they think that person is not a responsible driver.

So first of all I ask, why are we putting this in? What police officers are telling me—I have talked to police officers from Kitchener to Toronto to Timmins to, I

believe, Kingston as well—is that they're not likely to ticket somebody who is under the age of 21 for speeding if they know that young person will lose their driver's licence—if the person is doing 30 kilometres over, probably; if they're doing something dangerous, more than likely. But the point is, they already have the tools to do that. So I wonder how practical this is.

Certainly, there needs to be some sort of deterrent to make sure a very strong message is sent to all drivers—and maybe particularly to younger drivers—that says speeding will not be tolerated on our highways. You can do that in a number of ways. I remember being part of a government that dealt with photo radar. At that time, we instituted photo radar on the 400-series highways as a deterrent against people speeding, and it actually worked. People didn't like it politically. I understand that; it was one of the reasons we were defeated as a government in 1995.

I think it's more complex than that, but that was an issue for commuters. A lot of commuters didn't like the idea of having to drive within the speed limit. But I'll tell you, if you look at the stats on 400-series highways at the time photo radar was on, we had far fewer accidents, and traffic flowed much more easily because people were not constantly jamming on their brakes because of somebody cutting in front of them on the Highway 400 series somewhere or all of a sudden driving up behind somebody and having to press the brakes.

My point is, if we're trying to get at the issue of speed, I think there are far better ways for us to reduce speed overall on our freeways. Saying again that we're going to have a law that says, "If you're a young driver, here's the standard about speeding, and if you're an older driver, we have a different standard"—I'm not sure that gets at the overall issue of speeding.

I think it's discriminatory to a certain extent. I will argue, and I will give the government some acknowledgement on this, that maybe there need to be, inside the graduated driver's licence system that we have now, steps that people need to go through when it comes to experience and different things when it comes to being able to get a full licence. I don't have a problem with that, but what I'm saying is, if we're trying to get to the issue of how to prevent speeding on our highways, because we know that speed kills, then I think we need to approach it from a more global perspective.

Do we say to police officers that have to be more stringent or—I'm trying to find the word—tough when it comes to making sure we don't allow people to speed? How many of us have driven down the highways, and the police officer said, "Well, this is just a warning; keep on driving." Do we say to our police officers that we should have less tolerance when it comes to speeding?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It never happened to Paul.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, it never happened to any of us, of course, but do we say that? Do we look at the issue of photo radar? Do we say that maybe we have to have a debate about reinstating it? Again, it's politically not

popular, but it deals with the issue of speed, so I would say that.

The other big issue is that of training. We need to make sure that we properly train current drivers. There should be a fairly good public education campaign for all drivers, as we've done with drunken driving, to get people to understand that speeding leads to accidents and it's not a very good idea, and we need to take responsibility. I think there are different ways to get at that.

So we get to the next part of the bill, which is the issue of having one passenger in the car. This is the one that has garnered more attention than a whole bunch of bills that have gone through this place, other than the granny issue that my good friend Mr. Miller has raised in this Legislature over and over again. But the issue of saying to young people that if you're a younger driver you will only be allowed one passenger in the car, well, that has enraged young people beyond the pale. There are Facebook sites and Flickr sites and others that have started up where we've seen, by leaps and bounds, people engaging in debate on the Internet about why this is not a good idea and what their thoughts are about how this should change.

There has also been quite a debate within this Legislature, with members of all sides looking at this issue and saying, "Well, is this really a good idea?" And clearly there is a debate within police enforcement and others that are also asking the same kind of questions, both pro and con. Some people believe it's a good idea and some people don't believe it's a good idea. We need to enter into this when the bill goes into committee hearings, really listening to what people have to say so we make the proper decision.

Let's look at it first from the perspective of the young people. This, to me, is way beyond the pale. Let's look at the situation. You live in Hamilton and you're 18 years old. You're going off to the hockey game because you've got a game in St. Catharines. You and your buddies are off to go play hockey. All right. So now, as normally would be the case, you grab mom or dad's minivan, you load the equipment in the back of the minivan, and three or four of you go down to the hockey game. That's kind of the way it happens. We're saying to somebody who's 18 years old, who can serve the military, who can serve their country; they can drive a Hummer down the streets of Kandahar—

Mr. Paul Miller: Baghdad.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not Baghdad—thank God we're not there—but of Kandahar.

They can be trusted with the lives of their co-soldiers, and they can be entrusted to follow the mission of Canada in Afghanistan, but we're not going to let them put more than one person in the car? They can put a whole bunch of soldiers with guns in the Hummer, they can drive the APC, they can fly the helicopter, they can do all those things, but we're saying, "If you're going to a hockey game in Ontario, you can't put more than one person in the car or the minivan." Give me a break. It is so, so, silly.

0920

Mr. Michael A. Brown: You're incorrect.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He says we're making it up. We're not making this up; it's in the legislation. I listened very intently to the government when they had their say, and I would just ask them to listen me. I'm saying this is silly.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: But you're wrong.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, get up and debate. Tell me you're right. When it's your turn, you can do that.

My point is, this is silly. If we're saying to young people, "We think that for some reason you're distracted in your car or your minivan when there's more than one passenger," then I think we have a training problem. Let's get back and deal with the issue of how we train drivers. To argue that somehow or other a young Paul Miller, who was 18 years old back in the past, and going off to a hockey game down in St. Catharines, and he's got his three buddies in the back of the minivan with their hockey equipment, is going to be more distracted than a 50-year-old going to an Argos game with his buddies from Timmins—give me a break. I'm probably more distracted than he is. It's a longer drive, and my buddies take their football pretty darned seriously.

I just say come on, give me a break. Are we saying seriously that at the end of the day we're going to apply a double standard to young people on the basis that somehow or other they're going to be very much more distracted by having more people in a car? The issue is that drivers have to take the responsibility and that passengers also have a responsibility. That's really, to me, the key of the issue.

The other example is—I'm a private pilot, as everybody knows.

Mr. Paul Miller: And a good one.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And pretty a good one. I manage to keep the airplane straight and level—

Mr. Paul Miller: Have you crashed ever?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I haven't. You know, crash landing is a different state. Any landing is a form of crashing. It is a question of bouncing it once or twice and away you go.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You haven't crashed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But, no. I'm just having fun with my friend Mr. Miller.

But my point is, a young person in Ontario today, at age 15, can go out and do all their flight training. You can actually go out if you are 15 years old, you can do your ground school, you can write your exam, you can do all your flight training at age 15 and you can do your solo at age 15. But when you get to 16 years old, you get to the point of being able to do your flight test. On your 16th birthday, you can go out and get your flight test in order to have your licence to fly a private aircraft.

Then, once you have that licence, I could put, depending on the plane—I've got a four-seater, so I could put three passengers in my plane if I were 16 years old. If your dad's got a Caravan, you can probably put eight in the back—it's a plane, it's called a Cessna Caravan, and you can put eight people into that aircraft.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Did you have a Caravan? My God, that's a great aircraft. I wish I had that. Boy, you have more money than me.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, you didn't have?

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: He rented it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You rented a Caravan. OK, there you go.

But my point is that the 16-year-old pilot can get into the airplane and is able to fly more people in that airplane than he or she will be allowed to drive in a car.

Now, the argument that I heard from across the aisle was, "Oh, well, it's not like a whole bunch of highways." Listen, piloting an airplane is much more complex and much more difficult than driving a car. There are all kinds of things that you have—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It is not.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's saying it's not. Well, give me a break. You have to understand the situation that are you in. You need to understand traffic patterns. You've got to know the air rules, navigation, meteorology, and you have to know airmanship. There's a lot more to flying an aircraft—I think everybody will agree with me on that—than driving a car.

The issue here is that we train pilots to be safe pilots. We train pilots in this country to make sure that they understand what good piloting skills are all about. We make sure that they understand the situational awareness that they're in. We make sure that they understand air traffic laws so that they know what the separation of air space should be in different circumstances—class D, class G, or whatever it might be. We do that for a reason, because we need to make sure that our airways are safe.

Now, here's the rub. How many airplane accidents do you have in Canada? I would say we have some. But when you look at the stats, is it young pilots at age 16 who are having all the crashes? No. It's a mix of all kinds of different people. There are older pilots, younger pilots, who are getting into accidents for different reasons: sometimes bad piloting skills, sometimes bad choices, flying into bad weather etc. The stats do not bear out with private pilots that younger pilots have a disproportionate number of accidents to older pilots. So my point is this: If we're saying there is a disproportionate number of accidents with younger drivers, and the stats would indicate that there is, then maybe the issue is training. Why are we not, then, having a discussion in this Legislature about making sure that we have a better driver training system in the province of Ontario that allows us to really try to get at the issues of how we're able to train drivers at a young age to be the responsible drivers that they are and, once they get their licence through a graduated driver's licence system, that they basically ramp up to an ability to drive a car safely on our highways? I'm saying maybe we've got a training issue here. Maybe the emphasis should be put on a couple of things.

One, we should be making sure that in high schools—because that is where people turn the age of 16—there is driver training for anybody who wants to go out and get their licence; that we as a province engage, through the Ministry of Education, the funding for that so that it becomes an opportunity for all. You know as well as I do there are many young people out there, at age 16, who don't have the means to pay for driver training and don't have a car to drive in. But we know eventually they will have a car and they will become drivers, so why don't we have a driver training program that basically allows all young citizens at age 16 who choose so to go out and do the training to become a driver? Then, once they do get their licence and they do buy a car, they've got to go through the graduated driver's licence system. It seems to me that's the emphasis we should be putting on in the debate, and saying that the issue is that of training and making sure that we do a better job.

On the other side, let's say a person decides for whatever reason at 16 that they don't want a licence and at age 25—and I've seen a lot of this, where people at age 25 or 30 decide, "Okay, it's time for me to get a driver's licence"—they have to follow the same standard. Just because you're 25 years old or you're 16 years old and you've never driven before, that doesn't mean to say that you're smarter at getting your driver's licence. I would argue that at 16 you're probably much more nimble than an older person, much more able to process things more quickly. There's probably an argument that it's easier for a 16-year-old than, let's say, a 40-year-old to go out and get a driver's licence or to acquire skills, the testing, etc. because you're younger, you're more of a sponge when it comes to learning and your reflexes are better etc. My point, however, is, shouldn't the standard be applied to all, so that the person at age 35 or 40 who says for the first time, "I want a drivers licence," has to undergo the same type of training as any new driver, and basically that it's mandatory: "Here's what you need to do?"

We do that to an extent in Ontario. In fairness to the government, I'm not saying that that doesn't happen whatsoever. But clearly the stats spell out that there is, from what the stats are showing, a disproportionate number of accidents with younger drivers. Therefore, let's come at it from the opposite direction. Let's look at it from the training perspective.

Now, the other issue is that of driver responsibility. I think this is one area where we really need to change the attitude of citizens completely. That is, the first thing that we have to say is that driving is not a right; it's a responsibility. I've spoken to this issue before in the House in the past. It seems to me that there are far too many people in our society, young people included, who say, "It's my right to get my driver's licence. That's what happens. When I get to 16, it's my right to get it. That's something that society owes me." Well, I'm sorry. It's something that society doesn't owe you; it's a privilege that we give you. With that new privilege of being able to drive a car comes a responsibility to make sure that you're safe for yourself and your passengers and the

motoring public that you're engaged with as you're driving down our streets and highways in this province.

Maybe one of the things we need to do, both through driver training and also just through public education overall, is to make sure that people understand that when they get behind the wheel of a car, that car can become a lethal weapon and you need to make sure that you drive that car safely. For example, we have legislation in this House now that will look at banning cellphones and other devices in cars. I think that's a great idea. We're saying to people, "Listen, you can't be abusing your privilege of driving a car and trying to talk to somebody on the phone at the same time and being distracted from what you're supposed to be doing, which is driving the car." So, certainly there are ways of being able to strengthen the individual responsibility that we all have to take when it comes to driving an automobile. I say to the government, we really need to take a look at the issue of how we're able to engage citizens in recognizing that they have a responsibility when it comes to driving a car, and that they need to take that responsibility seriously. So I say to the government, okay, we know why are you doing this. There might be an argument as to, "We need to find a way to make sure that we don't have a disproportionate number of accidents with younger people versus older people," but clearly, I think if we really get into it and look at the stats more deeply, there's probably an equal amount of accidents with much older people. We know that when people—it's the natural aging process that our reflexes are not as good as they used to be and our eyesight might not be as good as it used to be. I would argue that we have a problem at both ends of the scale: older drivers and younger drivers. So it seems to me that we need to look at this from a larger perspective, not just from the perspective of younger people, of making sure that all drivers have the skills that they need to drive a car and that they are exercising their responsibilities correctly in driving. So I think the problem I have with this bill is we're only looking at young people, it's like we're picking on young people.

0930

It has been interesting. The government has been raising in this debate that one of their stats that proves this is the information that the insurance companies collect on drivers. Clearly, young people are paying much higher automobile insurance than older people. They say the way of being able to fix that is to have this legislation, because if we make the stats safer, at the end of the day it'll drop the insurance rate for younger people. I say, hogwash. The issue to deal with that is public auto insurance. If you want to get into providing a better and fairer insurance system to the—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thought we had that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, we don't have that.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: A more expensive system.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, here go the Conservatives—I mean the Liberals—across the way, all right? No, they're Tories too—that's what I'm saying—on this one. Oh yes, the cat's out of the bag.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There go the Conservatives again: the Liberal benches. There I hear the Conservative voices amongst the Liberals. I hear them. I just said—I'm going to do it again—"public auto insurance." He didn't rise to the bait this time.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I just thought we had it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know my good friend Mr. Bradley is a lefty like me and he likes the idea of public auto. I do know that. He's a social democrat at heart. I do know that. Although wearing Liberal clothing, I know Mr. Bradley is a social democrat. I give him some credit.

So here's the issue. The Conservative members on the Liberal side of the House are really worried about getting into a discussion about why it is that we're charging young people an exorbitant amount of money for insurance.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There goes another Conservative voice across the House. They're all Tories on this side this morning. The Liberal caucus is now putting on their blue jackets again and they're getting into the Conservative mantra.

Mr. Paul Miller: Blue shirt.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Blue shirt, the whole bit. I've got a white one, thanks. Sometimes I wear blue shirts. Well, I do have a bit of a blue tie.

Let me make the point. I heard the parliamentary assistant and others say that we need to basically lower auto insurance for young people, and one of the ways of doing that is by way of this legislation, because it'll make the stats improve, young people will become safer, there will be fewer accidents, and the private insurance system is going to be able to deal with providing cheaper insurance to young people. I'm saying no, the way you do that is through a driver-owned system. We have this system in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and BC, and we have a mixed system, both public—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There go the Conservatives again. They're saying they pay more insurance than us. Man, oh, man, go take a look at the websites. I can't get over it: Liars figure and figures lie all the time.

Interjection: Oh.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It is parliamentary, what I said.

My point is this: If we're serious about providing all drivers with a cheaper form of insurance, the issue is to pool the risk of accidents into a larger pool. That's what driver-owned auto insurance does. You still have brokers; your brokers locally would still have to sell you insurance. The difference is that they would be selling a product that is a pooled product through a public plan, the idea being that when you pool everybody into one larger pool and you make it mandatory that everybody is insured—and one of the big problems we have now is many people can't afford insurance, so they're driving without insurance on our highways, and we know that's a huge issue, because when we get into an accident with somebody like that, it becomes very expensive as far as

what the settlements are going to be. First of all these people are not pooled and paying insurance; they're not paying their part, and it's very risky for those people who actually get in an accident with somebody who's not insured. So the issue is, you make all drivers insured by virtue of their driver's licence and then you basically have after that a publicly pooled system that says, "Because everybody's in the pool, we now have a system of insurance that we're able to provide at a not-for-profit rate of insurance and coverage to all drivers in this province so that they're properly covered." You sell that through your private brokers.

I don't argue for a second that you get rid of the individual brokers. I think the brokers are doing a great job. I've always argued—in fact, my father-in-law was an insurance broker. That's what my father-in-law did until—

Hon. James J. Bradley: The cat's out of the bag now.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, no, my father-in-law owned his own private insurance company and sold automobile insurance. So I don't have a problem—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, he wasn't a pilot either. My dad was—

Mr. Paul Miller: Did you get a discount?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, actually, I did.

Hon. James J. Bradley: How much?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I can't remember. It was 25 years ago. Back then, we didn't pay much for insurance.

My point is that if we're really serious about providing auto insurance in this province at a lesser rate, we should take a look at entering into such a system. Again, I would argue that we do that in consultation with our brokers, because in the end, the brokers do a good job of providing a service to their clientele and they can continue doing so under a public plan, such as they've done in Manitoba and other places.

When the Manitoba system was set up, the public was in favour, but the brokers were opposed. It's interesting now, years after the Manitoba insurance plan was put in place, if you talk to the brokers there in the province of Manitoba, they're saying it's the best thing that ever happened. It's far less administrative for them to be able to sell. They don't have to go through the hoops that they've got to go through now with all the various insurance companies that we have today. They're making a reasonable return on the policies that they're selling because they're allowed to charge, as they do in the private system, a percentage markup to broker and to sell the insurance. The private brokers have actually quite liked it in Manitoba.

My point is that if the government is serious about getting into providing auto insurance for all people and especially young drivers, I think we should get into a discussion of driver auto. I think that's one of the ways that you're able to do that.

Back to the issue of the younger drivers: I just think the government is missing the point here in saying to young people that they're going to have to be limited to having one person in the car. There are all kinds of examples that have been used. I was listening to Mr.

Runciman, the other day in the House, raise the point that you can have a 19-year-old flying an Airbus somewhere over the Atlantic with 300 passengers in the back, as the co-pilot or as the captain, depending on the airline and how many pilots they've just hired, but when that pilot lands the airplane back in Toronto, at Pearson, and gets inside their car, they can't bring the crew with them. There are all kinds of examples of how this doesn't make any sense.

Again, the argument that young people who go to serve our country in Afghanistan can get into a Hummer and they can carry troops, they can drive anti-personnel carriers, they can fly helicopters, they can drive and fly all kinds of vehicles with multiple passengers on board in much, much more harrowing situations than driving down the QEW or the 401—yet we're saying to young drivers in this province that they can't do that.

This bill is going to get an opportunity to go to committee. Obviously, we're going to have an opportunity at committee to have a discussion about this. I want to explore, just before I finish, the following: (1) the government needs to listen to what people are telling us at committee; (2) there need to be fairly extensive public hearings on this issue.

I would argue that this bill is not one that should just have hearings here in Toronto. This bill needs to travel to different parts of the province of Ontario. Why? Because young people can't afford to come to Toronto to speak on this bill if they're living in Hamilton or Kenora or Kingston or Cornwall or wherever it might be. I'm not arguing that we should go to every municipality in Ontario, but I think we need to have a fair regional representation with where this committee goes so that people are able to come to us and make presentations. I think what we find will be instructive, because, yes, there are two sides to this story.

There are some good parts of this legislation that deal with dropping the blood-alcohol level. I think all of us can get into that debate, and I think most of us are on side with that particular provision. I think it's a question of extending it beyond just age 21. I think we can have a discussion about how we can have more deterrents within the legislation in order to deal with the speeding issues.

Do you want to split my lead?

Mr. Paul Miller: I get 20 minutes, right?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. Do you want to split it? Okay, cool. I'm asking for unanimous consent to split the rest of my lead. If you get up there, I'll be finished in two seconds.

Hon. James J. Bradley: He's getting used to the front row now.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's right. He's moving up.

In public hearings, we also have to get into the issue of making sure that we listen not just to young people—and others about this provision of limiting people's ability to have passengers within their car.

With that, I look forward to the committee hearings.

0940

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to talk about Bill 126. It's an important step on the road to safe transportation in our province. New Democrats support a significant portion of this bill but have raised a number of concerns in the House, particularly when it comes to the passenger restrictions for young drivers with a G2 licence.

First, I do want to clear some things up on Bill 126 for those watching at home.

At the same time as the government introduced the legislation, they introduced the regulations they intend to pass under the legislation. It has created a lot of confusion out there about what's actually in the bill. The passengers provisions, along with the extension of the minimum G1 and G2 learning periods and incremental licence suspensions for novice drivers, are all regulatory changes. All other changes, like tougher blood-alcohol limits, administrative driver's licence suspensions, laws that make it easier for police to impound vehicles, and increased fines for Highway Traffic Act infractions, are part of the actual bill. Many of these are specific measures that Mothers Against Drunk Driving have been fighting for for years.

For the most part, the New Democrats support the provisions in the actual bill. The alcohol limits, for example, were a long time coming and bring us up to speed with other provinces. In fact, we believe that the provinces and the federal government should examine zero blood-alcohol rules for all drivers, not just those under 21 years old. In many respects, this 21-year-old cut-off is artificial because alcohol impairs all of us.

It's the regulations we have some problems with. The proposed regulation would prevent drivers under age 19 and holding G2 licences for less than a year from carrying more than one passenger; the proposal will exempt family members. Currently, these drivers cannot drive between 12 a.m. and 5 a.m.; the regulation would extend the restriction for 24 hours. New Democrats believe that the regulation is too restrictive and penalizes parents and young people unnecessarily. The regulation prevents carpooling with friends to, as the member from Timmins pointed out, hockey, dances or music lessons. It places additional strains on busy working families trying to coordinate transportation. This is especially true in rural and northern communities, where public transit is hard to find, if available at all. But more to the point, the government has not demonstrated concretely that the regulation will prevent the death and injury of young drivers.

We know and acknowledge that young drivers disproportionately represent those killed and injured in drunk driving incidents. What we aren't convinced of, however, is whether extending the passenger restriction already in place between 5:01 a.m. and 11:59 p.m. will save lives. Here are some questions for the government and the Minister of Transportation that would allow legislators to address this fundamental question: When a young driver was travelling with other passengers and they were killed or injured on the road, how often did that happen between 5 a.m. and 11 p.m.? I would expect that the vast majority of these incidents occur at night,

which would mean restrictions are not necessary at those hours.

What percentage of incidents between 5 a.m. and 11 p.m. where a vehicle driven by a young driver with more than one passenger crashes, causing injury or death, involved alcohol, speeding or other violations under the Highway Traffic Act? In other words, given that the legislation requires a blood-alcohol content of zero and tightens up penalties on Highway Traffic Act violations, would the daytime restriction be adding anything? Would these drivers who are breaking the law care about breaking another law?

BC introduced a similar restriction in 2003. Is there any evidence to suggest that the rule, by itself, would make our roads safer?

The burden of proof here lies with the minister and the province. If he says the provision will save lives, he has to present evidence to this Legislature that proves that. Let me quote the Toronto Star on this very issue: "These new rules will have repercussions, even for teens who generally drive responsibly. The onus is on the government to demonstrate that they are both reasonable and necessary." November 19, 2008.

We agree and note that these debates and committee presentations will provide ample opportunity for the government to present their case. Statistics alone should not be the impetus for public policy decisions. For that reason, New Democrats will be voting against the bill in second reading. We want this bill to get to committee, so the public can weigh in formally. The committee should travel to communities across this province to get input. After all, the experience in downtown Toronto will be different than that in Windsor, Welland, Sudbury or Thunder Bay.

There's been a lot of public discussion about the number of people, young and old, who have signed on to Facebook to register their position on Bill 126. Given the low voter turnout in elections, it's good to see citizens—especially young people, who disproportionately don't vote—involved on this scale. That is healthy. The last time we checked, the Facebook site had 141,187 members and almost 14,000 messages posted on the virtual wall. No committee has ever experienced that many individual responses.

Allen Kempton, from Anderson Collegiate and Vocational Institute in Durham, writes: "Parts of this bill do make sense, and I see where they are coming from about it, but others just don't. Like, what is such a problem with having a grade 12 student give his friends a ride from school and school-related functions?" Dale Gold, from York University: "The part of the law I really don't agree with is the passengers thing. What if I'm out with friends, I have had no alcohol at all, but my friends have been drinking? They want to drive home, and I would want to say, 'I can give you all a ride.' But I can't because apparently that would be unsafe. Should I just let them get behind the wheel? I don't think so."

What would happen if I was up north with a friend and we were at a function, not drinking, and coming home I

have a medical problem—I may have a seizure. Is my friend not allowed to be in the car with me, or is he going to take over the wheel and drive? Are there going to be exemptions for emergencies? I don't know if we've even discussed that. What if I was out in a rural area and we hit a snowstorm? I am not allowed to have another person in the car for backup? It's no different than being on a plane and the pilot has a heart attack. Thank God we have a co-pilot or someone in the passenger section who can fly the plane, or we would be in big trouble.

Shayna Briere, from Kitchener: "I understand the speeding and the no-alcohol level thing. But why can't we have more than one friend?"

An editorial in the Toronto Star on November 24 said, "The Liberals did not campaign on these changes in the last election. Rather, they were lobbied to take these steps post-election, by a grieving father, among others. Given that, they should not be rushed through the Legislature."

We hope these voices are heard in committee. Let's not rush through it. New Democrats encourage parents and young people to come to the committee and make a presentation. This is a great opportunity to engage young people in our province in politics. We shouldn't waste this opportunity.

The proposed regulations under Bill 126 extend the length of the G1 and G2 periods. The length of a G1 will go from one year to one and a half years; for drivers registered in an approved driver education course, the length of the G1 will go from eight months to one year. The length of the G2 will go from one year to a year and a half. This is a measure New Democrats support.

We believe that more driver education and public awareness are key to lowering accident, impaired driving and dangerous driving rates in the long run, but we have some serious concerns about the quality of driver education programs in our province. While we support longer G1 and G2 periods so that novice drivers can absorb the education they are receiving, we're not convinced that driver education programs are adequate. We'd like to see more government involvement in driver education.

In last year's Auditor General's report, James McCarter found that 55% of first-time drivers enrolled in a program crashed their cars about 62% more often. In other words, there was a significantly higher collision rate for motorists who signed up for driver education programs compared to those who did not. That's a weird statistic. More worrying is the fact that this number was up 24% since 2000. So things aren't getting better on the roads; they're getting worse. Driver education will play a big role in lowering those numbers.

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The Ministry of Transportation did not have an explanation for this statistic. The Auditor General said the province didn't investigate the finding or take a critical look at its accredited driving schools. Here is what the Auditor General had to say at the time:

"They had done very little work at all to see why this is happening. Our question to ministry is, this is pretty

significant. Surely you should have investigated this and determined why this is happening so you could take an appropriate action.”

The Auditor General then suggested there is evidence to suggest some driving schools are selling graduation certificates without requiring the training. Pretty scary thought: getting a certificate without really completing the course, or without even taking the course. That should be looked at for sure.

Two possible explanations are: systemically bad driver education courses, or some type of—I hate to say it—fraud; requesting more certificates than graduates. There’s evidence of these types of fraudulent practices going on. Even after complaints were launched against some driving schools for allegedly sold driver education certificates, the Auditor General said the province didn’t even threaten to revoke government accreditation.

Either explanation, bad courses or fraudulent players, points to a real problem with our driver education courses—not to mention the finding that driving instructors are also more likely than average Ontarians to accumulate demerit points. Interesting. People who are training our young drivers are losing points. According to the Auditor General, about 360 instructors, 6.5%, collected demerit points for speeding, not wearing their seat belts and disobeying traffic lights. Wow. So the trainers are probably worse than the people they’re training in some cases. We hope the Auditor General follows up on this issue in next week’s report.

Last April, the ministry brought forward a new curriculum for driver’s ed. We call on the Ministry of Transportation to comprehensively examine whether the curriculum is working and whether they have tackled the fraud in the system.

Ontario should consider revamping its driver education program. We should look to other provinces for the lead. Manitoba teaches their driver’s education in high school classrooms. Students and their families are charged \$50, with the public insurance system picking up the tab for the remainder of the cost, approximately \$300. That includes 34 hours of in-class instruction and 16 hours—eight hours of actual driving—of in-car experience. That’s reasonable, affordable and fair.

In Manitoba, all drivers receive the same quality instruction, and given the fact that it’s a public system, there’s no possibility of fraud. And they’re doing innovative things to involve parents in the education process. For example, parents have to fill out a log to demonstrate that the young driver has been on the road with a supervisor for a minimum of 24 hours.

On the other hand, in Ontario, young drivers and families pay upwards of \$1,000 to \$1,400 depending on the package. The \$1,000 package gets students 25 hours in class and 10 hours on the road, but it doesn’t include night or snow driving. That costs more. There are countless fly-by-night operations that charge much less but don’t provide good driver education.

In Ontario, more money gets Ontario drivers less instruction. It’s time we re-evaluated our more-for-less

model of driver’s ed. Maybe we should follow Manitoba’s lead and put a publicly subsidized driver’s ed program into our classrooms. You’re learning all the things about life; you’re learning all about history. Why not learn about how to drive a car in high school as well? It’s a good place to start.

New Democrats also want to know what the impact of tougher legislation and regulation will be on a young and novice driver’s insurance rates. On top of paying through the roof for driver’s ed, drivers are paying unaffordable rates for insurance. With an average insurance bill of \$2,300, we pay 80% more than BC residents. While no average is available for young drivers, we know that it’s upwards to \$4,000 compared to \$1,500 for a young driver in Manitoba. That means that unless parents come up with cash for unaffordable rates, young drivers aren’t going to get the insurance they need. I’ve heard rumours that there might be up to 30% of people on our roads without car insurance—a pretty scary thought. I sure wouldn’t want them to hit me because I might have trouble collecting.

What impact will the legislation and regulations have on insurance rates? We don’t know for certain, but we are concerned that relatively minor Highway Traffic Act violations will hurt young drivers trying to get already-unaffordable insurance. It is possible that a novice driver receives a 30-day suspension for driving 10 kilometres above the speed limit, and would that drive up his insurance costs for these drivers? New Democrats want to make sure that relatively minor violations don’t lead to unreasonable increases in insurance rates. We ask the Liberal government to respond to this issue and we call on those in the insurance industry to come forward in committee to guarantee that minor infractions won’t lead to unreasonable increases in insurance costs.

There are obviously some concerns we have with this bill. I believe at the committee level the minister and his staff will take the input from our young drivers and our older drivers in this province because, I believe, they have some valuable information and I hope that they include representatives from the insurance industry because our kids pay horrendous amounts for insurance in this province, and it’s not always the young drivers who get into accidents. There are a lot of older drivers who maybe should go back for retraining and maybe they should—how would I say it?—take a refresher course as soon as possible, because, I must say, I’ve run into some real dilemmas on the highway and it’s not always the young drivers. Some of those kids are actually very responsible and very good drivers.

I can speak from a personal experience. I have three daughters, 27, 25 and 24, and I don’t believe—I could be wrong, unless they’ve hidden it from me—they’ve had a ticket. I believe they’re all responsible drivers. None of them drink when they drive. They’re very responsible. They’ll have a designated driver if they decide to go out to a pub or whatever the young people do, which I used to do. A lot of our kids understand the implication of driving and drinking and what it leads to, because, trust

me, a lot of them have seen friends of theirs killed in high school and in university and college because of alcohol, or because of an older driver hitting a carload of kids who haven't had a drop. That happens, too.

I'm hoping that the government, before they put this into law, takes a hard look at some of the concerns because, I'll be honest, I have been inundated with calls and e-mails from young people concerned about this bill and the way it's coming forward. I do believe that the transportation minister will take a good, hard look at it and I believe, as my colleague pointed out, that Mr. Bradley has a social conscience and he is a reasonable individual.

We don't want to punish the young people in the province; we want to work with them to make our roads safer and our public safer. I believe genuinely that 99% of the kids out there want to be part of that program; they don't want their rights taken away from them; they want to earn the respect of the elder population. I believe we have a lot of good kids out there who want to get better training. It's very sad when you see these incidents in the paper or funerals of young people who have sometimes innocently been killed by a drunk driver, an older drunk driver, or they themselves have been a little reckless. It's sad. I don't believe those things will never happen again. I'm not that naive, but I do believe we can cut down the numbers and cut down the percentages.

I want the insurance companies not to gouge the young drivers and not punish the entire population. I think that it should be dealt with on an individual case, not right across the board punishing every young driver. Why should my daughter or your son pay more for some irresponsible person out there who should not even be driving, yet they get punished too? It's just not right. I think Grey Power, the insurance company, should be made for young people, for "young power," as good drivers should be rewarded for their good records as well. I don't think that the present insurance system is correct.

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So in closing, I encourage the minister and the committee to work hard, because this is going to have a major impact on a lot of people in our province. I do believe that everybody in this House wants to do the right thing. I hope that we can work together to get this solved.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have listened to the submissions both by the member from Timmins-James Bay, I believe it is, and Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. I can appreciate their comments. However, if we didn't have the foresight of the Minister of Transportation in introducing this bill, we wouldn't be here discussing it today and looking forward to some changes to the Highway Traffic Act.

By no means are we looking at all the young people and young drivers as being bad drivers or being bad young people. The fact is that the percentage of young drivers 19, 20 and under involved in accidents is a very high number.

I have also heard from the two previous members with respect to the fact that maybe changes are needed or

required in the education system and stuff like that. That could very well be anything that would enhance the driving of our young people, but there is something that we cannot put in writing and cannot put into legislation, and that is experience. We can't expect that a young driver, a brand new young driver has the experience of the road, road conditions and others—the ability to spot problems as they see them on the road. Those are driving skills that you cannot have in a piece of legislation.

What is important, and I have to commend the Minister of Transportation for introducing the bill—hopefully this will be travelling. Indeed, we take this very seriously. I think both the Premier and the minister have said that this is a very important piece of legislation, that indeed we will be looking at receiving submissions and recommendations. Who knows, we may see good amendments coming out of that that will indeed improve the bill as it is.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I listened with interest to my friends from Timmins-James Bay and Hamilton East-Stoney Creek on the question of this bill, which I think even the government is prepared to admit has a number of holes in it at this point. I'm optimistic that, in committee and over time, we'll see some significant change.

I think what we have to look at are restrictions based on experience, not particularly on age. I happen to have a great deal of confidence in young people. I've had in my riding and, indeed, in my business life the opportunity to meet an awful lot of young people. Sure, there are bad apples, but for the most part the tree is in very, very good shape. We're bringing people along.

I listened as my friend from Timmins-James Bay talked about piloting. I share that avocation and have been trained. I've got to tell you, the first instructor that I ever had was a 20-year-old woman who had begun her training at 16. She certainly understood the idea of restraint and care, and I learned that from her. So there's something in this area that you can learn from young people.

As far as the kind of groundswell that you've seen, young people who organize themselves and express themselves—and even the Premier has acknowledged this—have used something that I've also had experience with since its inception, the Internet. I've got a technical background; I've been on the Internet for 20 years—other people, not so much. Having said that, when you look at 170,000 and growing who are saying to the minister, "You've got to take a look at this bill. You've got to take a look at the concept of restricting us and making us different and discriminating against us on the basis of age by, for example, not allowing the same number of persons in an automobile at the same time as anybody else"—I think that that, again, requires some review. So I urge the minister to consider this as we go forward and I look forward to the hearings on Bill 126.

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

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the comments from the member for Timmins–James Bay and the member for Hamilton East, and maybe I could assist them a little bit as we go forward with bringing forward the actual regulations and bill provisions.

First, with the blood alcohol, I would say, yes, zero is the standard that will be put forward in this bill. It will be similar to what happens in all American jurisdictions. Just for members' information, a spoonful of cough medicine or a little bit of rum cake will not affect this. It will be possible to do those sorts of things that one might do if you have a cold, or if you were at grandma's for Christmas dinner.

I also would like to point out to members that the restricted licence in G2, when we're relating that to the number of passengers in the car, would be in place for one year of your G2 licence. It would be similar to what happens right now between midnight and 5 a.m.

Why would a government consider doing this? Well, the government would consider doing this because statistics show that, when you get to more than one passenger in the vehicle under 19, there are twice as many accidents when there are three people in the car—the driver and two others. When there are four, it is triple the number of accidents that that car might be involved in. We think that's significant. We think that's something we might be able to do something about, and we're looking forward to talking about it in committee.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: We are being serenaded by the long-term-care workers outside. They're singing Solidarity Forever. This government, of course, has not lived up to their promises of the last election when they talked about further funding.

I would like to comment that the Minister of Transportation is in the House. We're not supposed to comment on whether people are absent from the House, but I think it's okay to comment when they're in the House. The Minister of Transportation is in the House so often during debate on a bill. If the minister who's carrying the bill is not in the House, I'm sure they're briefed on what goes on in the House. But today, the minister is sitting there and paying attention. I would say to the minister that I am philosophically opposed to any bill that targets one segment of our society. I can understand where the concept of this bill came from—I may not agree with it, but I understand the concept of it—and I would find it more palatable if we were to target the first three years of your driving experience: Whether you're a teenager, whether you're 40, or whether you're 60, the first time you get a licence, you have these restrictions placed on you. Then it's fair to all of society. But when you target someone who is a teenager for no other reason than the fact they're a teenager, I'm philosophically opposed to that. I think that's unfair. If you're 25 and you just got your driver's licence, and you may have a similar learning curve—in fact, your learning curve will probably be a little slower than it would be if you were a teenager,

because we know that during those teenage years from 14, 15, to 18, 19 or so you learn at a very rapid pace. I think the minister should consider making that as a change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I let it go this time, but I just say to all honourable members that the standing orders don't allow us to refer to whether a member is in the House or not in the House.

The honourable member for Timmins–James Bay has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank members for the comments that they made; I listened intently to them. I don't agree with everything that's been said, but let me just take on a couple of things.

The parliamentary assistant says, "Well, when you look at the stats there are more accidents happening when there are more passengers in the car." This is basically the argument that he makes. When you take—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: No. Young drivers.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, this is the point I'm making. First of all, I think that's true not just for young drivers. I think that's true overall. If there is a distraction in the car, certainly there can be an accident, and that is as likely to happen to a 30-year-old as an 18-year-old. So I just say, be careful with the stats, because I've been listening to some of the people who have been speaking, who have far more knowledge on this than we do, and there is a discrepancy within the data that you're talking about.

The bigger issue here is, are we all in agreement that we need to find ways to make our highways safer? The answer is yes. Are there provisions in the bill that are a step in the right direction? I think, clearly, the blood alcohol one is one of those. But the real issue, to me, is twofold. It's that this is a highly discriminatory bill. We're going to treat younger people as a different class of citizens. I think that's the issue that really bothers me. If we want to make our roads safer, then let's have some standards and training that will apply to all drivers so that we make the roads as safe as possible for all passengers and drivers on the highways and streets across this province. But to just point the finger at younger drivers, I think, is highly unfair. As I pointed out earlier, a young person, at 17, can serve their country, and we think that's a great standard and we're proud that they do so, but we're saying they are lesser citizens when it comes to their ability to drive a car. So I just think we should really be treading very carefully down this road.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you very much. It being just about 10:15 a.m., this House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Sarah Danchuk, we would like to welcome her mother, Carol Danchuk, and her father, Nick Danchuk, to the public galleries this morning.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We'd just like to congratulate the honourable member from Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, on his birthday today. Happy birthday, Ernie.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. The Ontario Hospital Association has stated that a majority of Ontario hospitals are facing "serious financial challenges." We hear on a daily basis about hospitals that are being forced to fire nurses, cut beds, cut services, eliminate emergency rooms, and people who are postponing surgery—they're closing surgical units, operating rooms.

I want to ask you, what plan do you have to deal with the crisis that we are seeing today in our hospitals when they don't have enough funding to balance their budget, when the costs have increased?

Hon. David Caplan: First of all, I'd like to say to the member, I reject the premise of her question. The crisis that we had in health care under her government is when there were absolute cuts: an immediate 7% cut to funding for our health care partners. Those days are over. They would come back, however, I would say to the member opposite, if her plan to cut the Ontario health premium—a \$3-billion cut to health care—were ever implemented.

This government has the courage to invest in our vital health care services. Since 2003, we've embarked on a plan of unprecedented investment to build a more sustainable health care system in Ontario. Health care spending has increased by 37% since 2003-04, the highest level that it has ever been in the province of Ontario. So to highlight: a 32% increase to hospital funding, a province-wide wait time initiative that has seen—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Despite the rhetoric, this government still has no plan, and that's the biggest problem that we face today. It also stands in stark contrast to the plan we had. We actually increased hospital base funding by 40%. I'm very proud of the continuum of care that we created.

But I say to you today, we are seeing cuts on an annual basis, whether it's Barrie, Owen Sound, Cambridge, Quinte, St. Mary's, or Kingston General, who have cut 157 full-time positions and eliminated 20 beds. I ask you today: You've had five years to address growing hospital volumes as well as developing a population needs-based funding formula. When are you going to get the job done?

Hon. David Caplan: The member opposite can fabricate all she wishes. However, the truth of the matter is that those members cut services to health care, fired thousands of nurses right across the province, closed 28 hos-

pitals in the province of Ontario. By stark contrast, 630,000 more Ontarians have access to a family doctor who did not previously; 8,900 more nurses have been hired; we've had a 50% increase, a \$1-billion increase, to long-term care. The plan is working and it's going to continue.

The health care sector continues to rise as a dominant employer in Ontario now and will for years to come. Our population continues to age, and demands on our health care system will continue to increase.

Patient care will remain my top priority. That means we're going to hire more nurses; we're going to recruit more doctors. We need them in our hospitals, we need them in our long-term-care—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This minister has now been in his place for several months, and I can tell you that people in the province are pretty tired of the rhetoric, reaching back, trying to communicate messages which are not truthful. For example, we increased funding by \$10 billion, despite the fact that the Chrétien Liberals cut health payments by \$2.8 billion. So maybe you'd better speak the truth.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Oh, certainly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Yes, withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm happy to compare the record of this government with the record of this member and her government any day of the week. Their record is one of firing health care professionals. Their record is one of closing hospitals. Our record: We are rebuilding hospitals; over 100 health care capital projects; over 8,900 nurses hired here in the province of Ontario in our first five years alone; and a plan to hire an additional 9,000.

We have worked very hard to eliminate a hidden deficit left behind by the members opposite, while at the same time improving the level of care and the level of service in our communities.

This member, unfortunately, has no creditability when it comes to health care in the province of Ontario, given the sorry record, given the sorry state of affairs, that she and her colleagues—the member can read old Conservative Party press releases all she wishes. But—

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

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Deputy Premier.

Yesterday, we heard that you have appointed Jim Arnett as your special adviser on the auto industry. It's good to see that you've finally recognized that your auto strategy is broken and needs fixing. Today's official opening of the Toyota plant is good news, to be sure, but

the industry as a whole, as you know, is reeling. While I'm confident in the expertise of Mr. Arnett, I'm hopeful that you will also engage in significant consultations with other interested parties, consider various points of view, and listen carefully to critics of all stripes.

Deputy Leader, can you promise here today that your new auto strategy will include broad and meaningful consultation?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that I understand that when you have the word "opposition" in your title, it does set you up for a certain kind of contrast.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nobody would know better than you.

Hon. George Smitherman: Indeed, as the honourable member said, at different times I've had that role, which I consider to be a privileged one as well.

I think that people watching the honourable member and listening to his words—as if the circumstances which are well known to people with respect to the economic challenges are something that are just Ontario circumstances. So the honourable member's criticism about the auto strategy and the like does seem a little bit odd, especially considering that that member and his party voted constantly against supporting the emergence of a bigger and stronger automotive sector in the province of Ontario.

Jim Arnett is a quality individual. We have confidence in the work that he'll do. I'll be happy, by way of supplementary, to tell—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm a little disappointed in that answer. I'm a little skeptical, because this government has shown very little willingness to co-operate or listen. They have a nasty reputation for formulating policy alone and sticking to it at all costs. Whether it's because of stubbornness, pride or blind ambition, it is inappropriate during this harsh economic crisis. Minister, why should we believe you this time?

1040

Hon. George Smitherman: Not a lot of value added on the honourable member's part, in terms of the quality of the question that he's asking. Everybody recognizes that the automotive sector—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, who is not in his seat, to withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I withdraw.

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

Hon. George Smitherman: I think it's very, very important—

Mr. Peter Kormos: He's got to withdraw from his own seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to return to his seat, please, and withdraw the comment that he made. I ask him to withdraw the comment that he made.

Mr. Tim Hudak: From my own seat, I withdraw the comment from the other seat.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As representatives, we in the opposition want to bring forward the ideas of our constituents. We want to share the knowledge we have gained from our own consultations, but unless you give us a forum and unless you allow for real consultation, we will only see more of the same, more talk and more games.

We saw it during their phony, self-congratulatory debate on the economy. What a political game that was. We see it every day in committee, where all the opposition amendments are routinely squashed. We saw it when they refused to form all-party committees, as requested by my colleague from Newmarket—Aurora. We saw it in the young drivers' bill, where the people who were most affected were talked down to and ignored—the teenage drivers. Again and again this government acts alone. Minister, how will you include opposition voices and when will you begin to sincerely listen to what is being said?

Hon. George Smitherman: When the member has something of quality to offer would be a good starting point, because in three questions, all that the honourable member had to offer was a litany of partisan digs. As an example, he talks about how circumstances at the committee haven't worked out as the member might have hoped, but he fails to recognize that when he was a member of the party that was a government, they didn't even have committees.

The matter at hand is an important one and Jim Arnett is an accomplished individual who has lent expertise to the efforts with respect to Stelco that have resulted in sustained employment and economic activity. Working with the government of Canada, which is an important part of the priority in this circumstance, we believe Mr. Arnett can help to lead us forward in a fashion which sustains, as best as possible, the automotive sector in the province of—

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

POVERTY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Acting Premier. After 1,400 days in office, the McGuinty government finally promised a poverty plan. Today, another 430 days after that, the McGuinty government now says that it has a plan, but that's all it is, a plan, and a plan that ignores hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who struggle in poverty—youth, people with disabilities, laid-off older workers, new immigrants, people of colour and aboriginal people. But the question is this: How many more days, months and years will Ontarians have to wait for the actual investments to take on poverty, not just the plan?

Hon. George Smitherman: We're into one of these rather awkward moments where the forward gaze of the

leader of the third party has outstripped information available to him. I know that he wants to foreshadow negative and pessimistic circumstances, but what people in the province of Ontario—the hundreds and the thousands who offered contributions through the course of a very important, crucial and well-informed discussion on poverty—will see is a government that's committed to moving forward in a fashion which uses real measures and targets. This is historic in the province of Ontario.

On the matter of investments, the honourable member really does need to take a review of the public accounts, which will be a very, very powerful demonstration of the extraordinary contribution that has been made by our government to the circumstances for people living in poverty and to the services that those same individuals call upon. There is more that needs to be done and today's report will—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Well, the McGuinty government talks about something being outstripped. The only thing that's been outstripped is a McGuinty government that has talked about poverty for five years and done next to nothing as poverty has increased and deepened in the province of Ontario.

The reality is that if anything is going to be done about poverty, the minimum wage will have to become a living wage. Will we see an announcement today to increase the minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour now and \$11 an hour by 2011? Will we see a commitment today to fund 7,000 affordable housing units this year? Will we see a commitment today to have a full Ontario child benefit now, not waiting until 2011? Will we see a commitment to social assistance benefits that actually cover the cost of rent, of keeping a roof over someone's head? Will we see a commitment to any of—

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

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for the question, because as he enumerated all of those sub-questions, those themes, he actually helped to illustrate the areas where our government has been active already. Past actions are a very, very good demonstration of future intentions. The Ontario child benefit has emerged as a substantial financial contribution to the families who are living in lower-income circumstances in the province of Ontario.

The minimum wage that the honourable member asked about has been raised five times. I would say that our commitment to continue to raise the minimum wage is one of those things which have been supported by the people of the Ontario. They had an opportunity in the last election to support the honourable member and his party's call for the increase all at once, and that didn't happen. But we've moved forward five times, and we'll continue to move forward with meaningful increases in the—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again, I asked if the government was going to commit to any of these things, and again silence from the McGuinty government, just as there has been next to silence on an issue of a dental program, something that was announced now almost a year and a half ago, and not one red cent has gone into a dental program for low-income families, low-income kids.

Government talks again about the minimum wage. The fact of the matter is Ontario's minimum wage is a poverty minimum wage. It doesn't come anywhere close to the cost of living.

We return to the question at hand again: Will there be a substantial new investment in these things which people living in poverty say would really make a difference, or are we simply going to hear more talk, more promises to maybe, perhaps, possibly do something in the—

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

Hon. George Smitherman: It sounds like the honourable member used the last few words of his question to define his time in politics.

What this bill is going to be about is the real measures and targets that have been called for by so many of the hundreds of thousands of people who participated in the discussion over the course of the last many, many months. We're proud of the work that our cabinet colleague Deb Matthews has led, as an individual who is able to bring to that effort the capacity, from a statistician's standpoint, to analyze the numbers and circumstances for people and the heart of someone who's very dedicated to making improvements in these areas.

Through hundreds of millions of dollars of investments so far, in things like the Ontario child benefit, we've made a meaningful difference in the lives of Ontarians, and especially Ontario's children, living in lower-income circumstances. Today's announcement will be a demonstration of the government's commitment to be held accountable to work alongside others as we—

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

POVERTY

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the acting Premier: The reality is that this has been a government for five years, a government that has talked about poverty for five years, but a government that has lacked any sense of urgency of addressing poverty for five years. This is a government that thinks it's fine to increase its own pay by 40% in 19 months, but says to people who can barely keep a roof over their heads, no increase in the housing allowance in social assistance benefits to cover housing. This is a government, once again, that says, "Oh, yes, there will be a child benefit, but you have to wait five years before anything meaningful happens from a child benefit." This is a government that says, "Yes, we'll raise the minimum wage, but we're going to keep it a poverty wage."

The question again is: We hear this government talk about a plan. Are there going to be any real, actual, new investments—

1050

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

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, the honourable member's characterizations of the Ontario child benefit, which has received hundreds of millions of dollars of investment on an ongoing basis, which rises every year and will continue to do so, is an example of a place where the member's credibility runs up against reality. We know the honourable member wants to characterize these efforts in a negative fashion—of course, that's his responsibility—but I think that what we see today in the actions that will be taken by our government is, for the first time in the history of the province of Ontario, the willingness on the part of a government to adopt real measures and targets. This holds us collectively accountable to progress in this very, very crucial area. We're undertaking this in difficult and challenging economic times, for sure, but there's a strong demonstration associated with today's activities of a contribution and commitment to the people of the province of Ontario who are living in impoverished circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government wants to talk about “for the first time in Ontario.” What's really happening is, for the first time in Ontario, just in the last weeks, we are seeing reports that more people are being forced to food banks than ever before in the history of the province, and that more children are living in poverty than ever before in the history of the province. That's what's really historic about the last week or so, the last month or so. But what we want to see is, is there going to be anything besides a promise to possibly, maybe, perhaps, do something about poverty in five years? Children can't wait five years to eat. They need to eat every day. What's the McGuinty government going to do to really address poverty instead of talking about five years from now?

Hon. George Smitherman: Children do need to eat every day, and I thank the honourable member for raising the issue of student nutrition, which has experienced, just this year, a doubling. This is an example where the honourable member's credibility really runs shy. He said for the first time in Ontario, in the last few weeks and months, that food bank use, as an example, has been on the rise. This is the best example of a point we have been making for a long, long time, that for five years in the province of Ontario the honourable member was on a prolonged bathroom break. We know that Ontario has faced challenging circumstances—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would say to all the members that the personal shots across the floor from all sides—and it's on all sides; I just ask that we would have some respect for the each other within this chamber.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm sorry. Mr. Speaker, perhaps “missing in action” would be a more appropriate way to characterize the honourable member's circum-

stances. He comes to the Legislature today and he pretends that the circumstances that are present in the world are circumstances that have never been seen before. We will rise to the challenge and work with Ontario—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think what we've seen here is an indication of the sincerity of the McGuinty government.

For example, in Peel region, 45% of newcomers with children under age six live in poverty, says the director of Family Services of Peel. She says, “This is startling news, a wake-up call to all of us.” What is the response of the McGuinty government's spokesperson? He refers to bathroom breaks. I think what we're seeing here is a real indication of the lack of sincerity of the McGuinty government. They will promise, they will talk, they will develop a plan, but when you look at the details, it's always about something that might perhaps, possibly, maybe happen five years from now.

The question remains: As more kids are forced to food banks, as more kids are living in poverty, what's the McGuinty government actually going to do today, other than refer to bathroom breaks?

Hon. George Smitherman: Well, the honourable member didn't like the point, but he wants to belabour it. It's a very, very direct reflection on the fact that the honourable member for five years—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: For five years, the honourable member was part of a government in challenging economic times that saw welfare roles double. But he brings to this Legislature today a statement that led with the comment that only in the last weeks and months have the people in the province of Ontario been faced with the challenges that they're facing. This is an assertion which has no foundation in fact and is irresponsible. At the heart of it, what we see from the efforts of our government is a willingness to adopt real measures and targets upon which we will all be held accountable as we move forward in partnership with dedicated advocates and others across Ontario to address the underlying circumstances for people in this province who live in poverty. We do those on behalf of those people—

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

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Deputy Premier as well and, as he knows, we only have four sitting days left in this chamber.

For months now, if not years, we have been expressing concerns from the official opposition's perspective with respect to the economic challenges this province is facing. We've asked for a jobs plan. We've asked for meaningful restraint. Just earlier today, we heard that Henniges Automotive in Welland has announced they're laying off over 300 people at the end of January. Minis-

ter, we've seen you increase spending, going from a \$5-billion surplus to a \$500-million deficit. The province is now in have-not status. We see the Minister of Finance talk about symbolic restraint. With four days left, when are we going to see a real jobs plan and a real restraint program?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government is going to continue to work with all families and communities who have lost work as a result of the crisis going on in the world economy. We have invested, for instance—and I'll go through the full list—\$9.9 billion in infrastructure, which has created more than 100,000 jobs. Those jobs are on the street today. There's no doubt that there's more to do.

In terms of restraint, we have laid out \$1.1 billion in our budget of last year. In my fall statement we added another \$110 million across a range of things, including travel and accommodation. Finally, the other day we laid out further restraint measures. There's more to do. We're taking—

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Step by step.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague says we're going to take a step-by-step approach to this, and we will be better and stronger when we get out of this situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: They're great at announcements but that's about as far as it goes. We talk about symbolism with respect to restraint. The real symbol with respect to this government's approach to spending—we highlighted at least two yesterday. One was your appointed president of the WSIB making close to half a million dollars a year, living an extravagant lifestyle, staying at the Waldorf-Astoria for \$1,300 a night; your Minister of Government Services spending \$108,000 last year at the Royal York; these people—your people, your government, Minister, your appointees—exploiting their access to scarce tax dollars. Apparently you're addicted to reruns of *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*. Minister, you're the Liberal Robin Leach in this picture. We ask you once again, when are we going to see a real, meaningful restraint program on the part of your government?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Tell us about it, Robin.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for Renfrew.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The leader of the third party may want to turn to his colleague next to him and ask him why he spent \$1,000 a month on alcohol and food as a minister. He may want to ask why Mr. Flaherty stayed at the Willard Hotel, and The Pierre hotel in New York, and why his colleague travelled to Tokyo and Hong Kong, all on the taxpayers' expense.

You know, there is always more to do—oh, we've got the list and I'll be happy to table it. There's a lot more. There's always more to do, and we welcome the conversion on the road to Damascus by the opposition on these issues. Frankly—

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

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Ontarians living in poverty have waited a long, long time for this day, including the adult with autism from Barrie who works hard to augment her ODSP benefits, only to have half of her earnings clawed back by this government; including the 45-year-old auto parts worker in St. Thomas whose employment benefits have run out and who can no longer afford to pay the rent; and including the 21-year-old from London saddled with student debt and unable to find a full-time job. What is this government planning to do for adults in serious need?

1100

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that we've noted, of course, his very genuine interest in matters related to poverty. That's why I know that he'll be looking forward to this afternoon and what it holds. At the heart of it, what he'll see on the part of the government is a willingness to imbed the principles of real targets and measures that can hold us all accountable to the progress that's necessary for people who are living in impoverished circumstances.

He spoke first off about a circumstance with ODSP. In this example, already there have been, I think, two occasions when the amount of resource that an individual could earn would be exempt from clawback, or other reforms. This is a substantial improvement over the record that past parties had with respect to ODSP and is a further example of how we've been working to try and enhance the revenue generation, income earning potential of people living on ODSP.

Mr. Michael Prue: The fact still remains that you are clawing back money from people with Down's syndrome and autism, and it is a shame.

Something that we often hear from modest-income Ontarians is that poverty is all about the shame of being treated as though one were less worthy, one were less human than those who do not live in poverty. Disabled adults are penalized for trying to lift themselves out of poverty. Shelter allowances continue to be grossly inadequate, and the minimum wage won't increase now when workers need it the most. Why won't this government recognize that poor adults deserve our help too?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member in his very question has made a misstatement. The minimum wage indeed has already moved five times, and it will continue to move forward. We've laid out that plan. There's certainty in it for the individuals who are earning it and for the companies that are working and obligated to pay it. We've been able to make increases in the minimum wage, just as we've been able to substantially free up resources for earning potential for people living on Ontario disability support.

I accept the honourable member's point that he would like to see that at higher levels, or no clawback indeed,

but I remind the honourable member that that has not been the history in this place. When people who sit around him were around, the clawback was far more extraordinary and the disincentive to earn income for people on ODSP was much, much greater. We've made substantial progress in that very area, and I thank the honourable member for bringing it to the attention of the Legislature today.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, in the poverty consultations in Peterborough in May and June, many community groups raised the issue of adequate affordable housing. I know that you have been to Peterborough to visit new housing projects like the 60-unit Myrtle Terrace project that was funded through the affordable housing program. But some housing units in Peterborough are aging, falling into disrepair. There are 2,000 social housing units in the city, Minister. People in Peterborough who rely on affordable housing can't wait for repairs. They need money now. I know Peterborough council is working hard. Minister, I'm demanding today to know, what are we doing for those units?

Hon. Jim Watson: Mr. Speaker, I didn't write that question.

Let me begin by thanking the honourable member, who served on Peterborough council for 18 years and together with Mayor Ayotte has done such good work in providing their share of funds for social housing. But they are not in it alone. The McGuinty government is there with the good people of Peterborough, and in the 2008 budget, my colleague Minister Duncan provided \$100 million province-wide for housing repair funds. Peterborough's share was close to \$850,000. When this funding was announced by my colleague the member from Peterborough, Susan Bacque of the housing division of Peterborough said, "This is very good news." I understand that Peterborough will be putting the money towards new doors, upgraded heating and plumbing, and energy-efficient upgrades. We look forward to working with the people of Peterborough to ensure adequate and affordable housing in that community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: In Halton, there's also a need for affordable housing. I know my own community of Oakville is doing what it can to invest in affordable housing. No doubt the uploads this government just announced last month are going to help.

The Tories downloaded services, including housing, onto my municipality. They provided no support for municipal service. The Harris-Eves and the Hudak Tories have forced these costs onto municipalities.

Minister, as a former councillor myself, I know the importance of provincial and federal dollars for housing. Municipalities can't go it alone. They need the province and the federal government at the table.

Minister, what can you do to support my community's efforts to invest in affordable housing for the citizens of Oakville?

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank the honourable member from Oakville, because he, too, served for many years on municipal council and understood the damage that was done by the previous government when the downloading took place.

We're doing our share. Halton region has received \$1.83 million to help with social housing repairs in the region. Halton region also, as a result of the Investing in Ontario Act, received \$41.7 million. The town of Oakville itself received \$7.4 million.

I know that Mayor Burton has a passion and interest, as the member from Oakville does, with respect to social housing

I'm hoping that municipalities will use a portion of the Investing in Ontario Act for social housing repair and new builds, because it is eligible, it is qualified, for that.

Next year, we are going to be beginning consultations on a long-term affordable housing strategy. We look forward to coming into Halton region and other parts of the province to hear, first-hand, good ideas and good suggestions on how to improve—

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

MINISTRY SPENDING

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion. The 2006-07 public accounts for your ministry state that nearly \$1.1 million was paid to a company by the name of Bensimon Byrne, a very Liberal-friendly ad agency, to put it mildly. More than anything, this company is known for producing the famous Dalton McGuinty promise-breaking "I won't raise your taxes" ads. Minister, can you tell the members of this Legislature what Ontario taxpayers received in return for that nearly \$1.1 million?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member opposite for the question. I would like to take the information that the member opposite has provided and I will look into it further and provide her with an answer to that question.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Minister, earlier this year, I requested the order paper question of the regional breakdown of what you've allocated for advertising for the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Since 2006, your own ministry spent over \$10.2 million on media buying services. That's almost \$14,000 per day, every day. So we've already asked you earlier this year to provide breakdowns.

You need to be honest with the people of Ontario. We're certainly living in tough economic times, when we have to tighten our belts. We want some accountability from the ministry on what she's spending the money on. We've already asked the order paper question, and we didn't get an answer. When will the minister provide this answer?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'm certainly going to take this opportunity to talk about some of the ways our money is spent in the Ministry of Health Promotion to address the issue of smoking, smoking cessation and smoking prevention.

As you know and as the member opposite knows, smoking is the number one preventable cause of death in Ontario. In fact, 13,000 Ontarians die each year from smoking. As a result of that, we invest in many different smoking cessation products.

We have to tell you about the products. We've provided close to \$15 million for cessation programs in 2007 and 2008. To date, \$8.9 million dollars has been approved to support cessation—

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a question to the Deputy Premier.

The availability of licensed, affordable, not-for-profit, publicly funded child care must be a priority for poverty reduction in the province of Ontario. Only 12% of Ontario families have access to child care in this province. There are more than 23,000 eligible children on waiting lists in this province who are unable to obtain subsidies for affordable, licensed child care.

As part of her poverty reduction strategy, will the Minister of Children and Youth Services be committing to adequate, stable core funding to meet the need for child care spaces in Ontario for all families?

1110

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for the question and encourage her to watch, with interest, the announcements today and the actions that stem from them. There are associated with the issue of poverty, of course, a wide variety of influences; the honourable member has raised an additional one. That's why, at the heart of it, we viewed the word "comprehensive" as essential to the work that's being undertaken.

I think that the honourable member will see, from the announcements that take place, the work that the minister has done in leading our government forward and creating a framework that will allow for targets and measures to be adopted against which we can all be held accountable and that we can all strive to make progress, even in these uncertain and challenging economic times.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In the response I heard nothing about child care, nothing at all. The reality is that struggling families in this province are desperate to break the cycle of poverty, and it's very clear that a robust child care program can break the cycle of poverty.

This government has talked about a full-day learning program. Nobody even knows when or if it's going to be implemented, but what we do know is that's not a substitute for child care for all children of all ages in this province. We want to know, and we want to know very clearly from this government: Do they have a commit-

ment to implement a child care program for all of the children of this province that is affordable, that is accessible universally and that is reliant on the QUAD principles, as was once their plan some seven or five years ago?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member. The honourable member knows of the Best Start circumstances in the Hamilton community that has led to the creation of more than 2,000 child care spots. We think this is a very strong example of the commitment that our government has made. But, like I said earlier, we recognize there is a wide variety of areas that can benefit from additional resource and that families and children living in poverty can benefit from. But at the heart of it, we think that it's important that there be targets and measures associated with that, that we can hold accountable the resources that are put into the system to make sure they're achieving the resources that are desired.

On the matter of full-day kindergarten, I want to say to the honourable member that there are exciting opportunities that will be forthcoming, and I appreciate, again, the honourable member raising an issue which demonstrates further the government's commitment to our youngest citizens.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I spent many years working within the Ontario education system, both as a school trustee and chair of the safe schools action team. I've often heard from educators who told me how challenging it can be to help troubled students find appropriate mental health supports. I know the government is committed to connecting Ontarians of all ages with needed mental health programs. It is a difficult task and one this government has been working to achieve since it was elected in 2003, but I have still heard accusations from some of my constituents that we have not done enough yet. Can the Minister of Health reassure the House that we are working to improve mental health services in Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member from Guelph for the question. I'd like to assure her and her constituents and, indeed, all Ontarians that mental health and addictions are one of my top priorities. Our government will continue to work hard to improve the capacity and the quality of Ontario's mental health system.

I'm pleased to inform the House that today more than 200,000 Ontarians who did not have access to mental health services in the year 2003 are getting the help they need. Since being elected, we have increased funding to community mental health agencies by more than \$200 million. That's a 50% increase to over 300 community mental health agencies. I believe the way we deal, as a society, with those living with mental health issues, in many ways is a measure of us as a compassionate soci-

ety. I know Ontarians are compassionate people. That is why I'm confident that we will have the support we need to continue improving the province's mental health and addiction services.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm happy to hear that mental health is one of the minister's top priorities, and I know in my riding of Guelph, one of the big steps forward has to be to introduce an assertive community treatment team to help people in the community with really complex needs.

But to truly improve Ontario's mental health system, we need to better understand the needs of the people who use it. Too often there is a stigma around mental health and addiction issues. Thankfully, it seems times are changing. Today, there is greater awareness of mental health issues than there was when the McGuinty government first took office. I'm confident that greater awareness can create a momentum for change.

I ask the Minister of Health, what more can be done to improve awareness of mental health issues and to improve the services that we are providing?

Hon. David Caplan: I again thank the member for the question.

I do think that members from all parties in this House can agree that we need to work together on this important issue. As a province and as a government, we need to speak more openly about mental health and addictions. I'm sure that the province is ready for a constructive conversation.

That's why I want to take this moment to thank the member from Whitby–Oshawa. She has proposed creating a select committee to develop a comprehensive Ontario mental health and addiction strategy. The member opposite is starting a much-needed dialogue.

We have made significant investments, but we want to find ways to link these efforts in a more coordinated fashion. I'm excited to work in partnership with stakeholders, with experts, with health care workers and indeed with all of our colleagues in the House. Together we can develop a long-term—

Interjection.

Hon. David Caplan: Well, maybe not the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Together we can develop a long-term mental health and addiction strategy that will improve mental health—

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

UNIVERSITY LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Deputy Premier.

This week, York University students as well as CUPE held demonstrations at Queen's Park in protest of the York University strike. Both sides are clearly frustrated with the four-week-old work stoppage and are reaching out to the government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. If the members want to have a discussion, I'd encourage them to go to the outer antes to have that discussion and to not be hollering across the floor. I'm trying to listen to a question, and there's a minister who's trying to listen to the question as well.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker.

Both sides in this strike are clearly frustrated with the four-week-old work stoppage and are reaching out to the government. The mediator has been unsuccessful. The strike isn't any closer to being resolved than it was on the day it started, perhaps less so.

Deputy Premier, I have repeatedly asked for back-to-work legislation so the students can return to their studies. Is today the day that you'll see the light and end the strike?

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

Hon. John Milloy: As I had a chance to say earlier this week, the honourable member doesn't have any monopoly in this Legislature on concern for students. I think all members are concerned about the situation facing students at York University.

Universities, as the member knows, are autonomous institutions.

All of us call, on both sides, to get back to the bargaining table and to reach an agreement as quickly as possible so that the students can resume their work in the classroom.

The government, as the member knows, has offered mediation, and we have a mediator on-site who is trying to work with both sides.

Again, I think every member of this Legislature calls on both sides to get back to the bargaining table and reach an agreement as quickly as possible.

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is double-talk.

With questions, statements and a private member's bill, I have attempted to get this government moving in the right direction. I ask that the government table and pass back-to-work legislation before this Legislature rises for the winter break next week.

The university has stated that it cannot go any further and has offered binding arbitration. Students, who are paying the highest price in the strike yet don't have a voice at the table, were here this week asking for your help, and so was the union.

Are you really willing to go on your winter break, enjoy the holiday season, and completely abandon 50,000 students, whose only hope to salvage their academic year is to have this Legislature pass back-to-work legislation?

I ask again: Will you finally step up to the table, put back-to-work legislation on it and end the strike?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the member seems to come across as though he has a monopoly on concern for students. Every member of this Legislature is concerned about the situation at York University.

I think the member has to acknowledge the fact that York University is an autonomous institution.

All of us are concerned about what's going on there, and all of us urge both sides to get back to the table as quickly as possible. Through the offices of the Ministry of Labour, we have a mediator who's on-site, who's working with both sides, and we call on them, in the strongest terms possible, to return to the bargaining table for the best interests of the students.

1120

HIGHWAY 406

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a question to the Minister of Transportation. Does the minister understand how important it is to resume the four-laning and extension project of Highway 406, especially when the region has been so hard hit with job losses and when regional leaders are scouring the globe, desperately looking for job-creating investment?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Yes, I do. I know sometimes we say, "Thank you for asking that question," and sometimes it's not always sincere when the questions come. This one is sincere. I know of the member's genuine interest in the expansion of Highway 406. He will know that our government expanded the full four lanes to Port Robinson Road, and he will know that it's important to continue that expansion.

I can report to him that the planning and preliminary design study is under way for the widening of the next section of Highway 406 from two to four lanes between Port Robinson Road and East Main Street in Welland. As part of the planning study, a range of options will be considered for the design of the termination of the 406 extension and East Main Street. In the supplementary, I'll elaborate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Knowing, as you do, Minister, that the crisis in lost jobs is as bad in Port Colborne as it is in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Hamilton, will you tell us now that those plans include ensuring that the city of Port Colborne and that four-laned Highway 3, with its connection to the Peace Bridge and the QEW, is a part of the plan, in terms of the extension of Highway 406, to assist that hard-hit region in attempting to recover from these desolate economic times?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member makes a very good point when he says that when we are developing these highways and widening them and expanding them, it's not only for the purpose of meeting the existing situation in terms of traffic flow, but for assisting in economic development. I can tell him that it's anticipated that the study I made reference to will be completed in the spring of 2009. It will be followed by detailed design, property acquisition and the remaining environmental approvals.

We're making every effort towards getting the project under way by the summer of 2011. Construction timing is dependent on obtaining environmental approvals, property and funding. And yes, further study will go into the road as it leaves Welland and heads down towards Port

Colborne. The municipal officials there have made representations. I've met with them, and the member has expressed his view on this. I thank him for raising the profile of this issue at the appropriate time.

CLASS SIZE

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is for the Minister of Education. As a former educator, I know first-hand the importance of investing in our youth so that they can reach their full potential, especially in today's knowledge-based economy.

Yesterday, when looking at the primary class size numbers in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, released by your ministry for the current school year, they showed that 90% of primary classes in the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board and the Algoma District School Board now have 20 or fewer students, and 100% of students attending schools at both local boards are learning in classrooms with 23 or fewer students. This means more individual attention for some of our youngest learners, and this is absolutely crucial to building a solid foundation for learning. Yet members of the opposition say our cap is overly rigid and that we are inadequately supporting these lower class sizes.

Minister, can you clarify this issue for members of the House?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for his question. He is truly a tireless advocate for education in Sault Ste. Marie and across the province.

Because of his experience as an educator, he knows how important it is that our youngest students have the opportunity to have access to their teachers and smaller classes. In fact, across the province, we now have over 90% of those primary classes at 20 students or fewer. That is a huge accomplishment, considering that when we came to office in 2003, only 31% of those classes were at 20 students or fewer. So that means that 540,000 students are now getting more support, which is up from only 166,000 five years ago.

We know from the research that if we can get those class sizes lower in the early years so that they have access to teachers, those kids will do—

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

Mr. David Oraziotti: Thank you, Minister. This is indeed progress. Smaller class sizes have been identified as a priority by educators across the province, as studies show that greater attention in the early years leads to increased success for students throughout their school career.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank parents, teachers, students, principals, support staff and all educators who have partnered with us to make the positive impact in Sault Ste. Marie's elementary schools and in elementary schools across the province.

Some Ontarians are concerned that the reduction in primary class sizes has led to other challenges. Issues have been raised that our plan is not flexible enough to

respond to local needs, and it's causing class sizes to balloon in grades 4 to 8. Minister, can you comment on the flexibility of our plan regarding class size challenges in grades 4 to 8, please?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We know that you can't just magically reduce class size without making investments, so in Algoma there are 23 additional primary class size teachers, and in the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board there are 27, which means that we have made the investment to get new teachers into the system. What that means is that the average class sizes in the grade 4-to-8 panel have not been affected as they might have been had we not made those investments. In fact, the averages have actually gone down in grades 4 to 8 from 25.7 students to 24.9 students. The impact has not been what it would have been had we not made the investments.

We knew when we came into office and we put this plan in place that 100% of classes at 20 students or fewer was going to be too rigid. That's why we introduced the flexibility of 90% of classes at 20 students or fewer—

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. In the central east region, 321 people have applied for Passport funding; only 63 have been successful. In Peterborough alone, over 111 individuals with a disability are sitting on a waiting list, waiting for some action. Will you commit today to make the Passport program a priority and give some hope to the hundreds of individuals sitting on a waiting list that you're actually going to do something?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member for her question. It's a very good question, and this member is talking about the investment in Passport. What we invested is 100% more than what her party provided when they were in power, because this program was created in 2005, and we have invested over \$27 million in annualized funding, which has supported more than 2,100 individuals.

We know that we need to do more for people living with developmental disabilities. We know that we have to create a link between when they graduate from high school to when they—we don't want them to stay at home. Parents need to continue to work, so we need to invest in Passport and we will—

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This minister continues to talk about history. I want to talk about the future. I want to talk about Anne Currie and her daughter Megan in Peterborough. Her daughter Megan has been aged out of the school system. She doesn't have any other options. All you have offered Anne Currie and Megan is a spot on the waiting list, Minister. They expect more; they want more.

I am asking today if you will stop talking and actually bring some action to this Passport funding file and bring some hope to the hundreds of individuals who want to see action by this government, not a history lesson.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I understand that the member doesn't want to talk about history, because their history is not too brilliant.

I want to say that we have invested more than \$27 million. This year alone, we've invested another \$7 million into Passport. We know we need to do more. We know that we need to invest in Passport. Bill 77, that we just adopted, is a really good bill that will permit us to do that and more.

Interjection: It's a landmark.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's a landmark bill. But what is strange is that when we put more money for Passport, what this party did is they voted against it.

Hon. David Caplan: They voted against it. Shame on them.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: They voted against it. I hope that the next time we put money into the budget for Passport, this member will vote for it.

MINING INDUSTRY

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Today, Vale Inco announced that it is shutting down South mine. Three hundred sixty-five workers will be redeployed. But contract workers developing the Copper Cliff Deep project won't be as lucky. Hundreds will be put out of a job with project postponement.

Given the serious impact that lower base metal prices will have on northeastern Ontario communities, when will the minister table a long-term strategy to sustain mining jobs and protect affected workers and their families?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you to the member from Nickel Belt for the question. Indeed, it was not good news coming out of the Sudbury operation of Vale Inco this morning. I think everyone in the Legislature recognizes that the global financial crisis has had an impact on all industry, and certainly the mining sector is not exempt from that. Yes, the announcement this morning will impact some workers. I'm very pleased that the key people at Vale Inco made it clear that they remain extremely committed to their Ontario operations, and obviously the large number of employees and operations they have in Sudbury, and that they intend to redeploy the workers at the Copper Cliff South mine.

As we go through these challenging times, we will work closely with the industry. You're right that the commodity prices have certainly gone down. There is certainly great optimism and hope they will rise again, but we are working closely with the industry, and our hearts go out to the workers who were affected today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: This announcement is the beginning of tough times for Sudbury and other mining

communities in northern Ontario. While we can't change international base metal prices by ourselves, we do need a long-term strategy to make those good mining jobs less susceptible to wild short-term market swings. Why won't the minister table a long-term strategy for the mining sector?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly our government believes strongly that even in these challenging times the mining industry is, and will remain, a very important contributor to our economy, and I think that's the case.

Also, may I say that we are moving forward with modernization of the Mining Act, working very, very closely with industry, with other stakeholders and obviously with First Nations as well. We think that moving forward with that process and bringing forward clarity and stability will, in and of itself, be really positive news for the mining sector.

We are conscious of the impact the global financial crisis has had, and conscious of the impact that commodity prices have had, but we continue to work closely and remain optimistic, as does the mining sector itself, that indeed this will turn around. Most significant is the fact that not just the Vale Inco announcement today, but others who have had operations impacted are continuing their commitment to the mining sector, and they'll keep looking forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. The time for question period has expired. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1133 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PESTICIDES

Mr. Toby Barrett: I urge the Minister of the Environment to rethink his pesticide regulations. We feared the devil in the details and the devil has now reared his ugly head. Pesticide legislation was supposed to get rid of the patchwork of pesticide bylaws and create a level playing field. This was encouraging to industry, and they offered to work closely with the environment minister to assure that was achieved. What happened?

For example, this government promised cemetery boards they would be exempt; now they aren't. This government spoke of a three-year phase-in period to allow industry to adapt—again, a promise broken.

This legislation fails to clearly define "pesticide." It seems that the minister's office has arbitrarily assigned products to categories instead of using a scientific rationale.

Further, schedule 7 of the bill limits consumer choice, places burdens on retailers and allows products that cannot be used by licensed lawn care companies to be sold to individuals. How is that going to help the environment? The law will not control insect infestations.

I've received e-mails from small lawn care companies, many who feel that this legislation will force them to wind up their hoses.

To the Minister of the Environment: Given the economic demise, will you not work with all stakeholders to ensure—

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

NATIONAL FAMILY DINNER NIGHT

Mr. Dave Levac: I wish to recognize in the House today the efforts of M&M Meat Shops from Canada, including those in my riding of Brant, for their contribution to building stronger family ties across Canada through their National Family Dinner Night program.

Now in its fourth year, this program encourages families to sit down to dinner together, an idea based on the fact that family time produces a number of benefits to all involved. Research has shown that children who frequently have family dinners are more likely to be emotionally content, have positive peer relationships and develop healthier eating habits.

Originally coming from a busy family of nine, I know how important it is to make time for something as simple as a shared meal together. While our family dinners sometimes had the odd squabble and discussions about whose turn it was to do the dishes, the fact of the matter is that we were all together as a family at that time. I feel that these family dinners were instrumental in my development and kept me close to my family, even today.

While the National Family Dinner Night program works to strengthen family relationships, for each person who is registered to participate in the program, M&M donates \$1 to the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada. So far, over \$82,000 has been raised through the National Family Dinner Night program.

Family dinners build strong family relationships, which in turn serve to strengthen communities. For this, M&M's National Family Dinner Night program deserves our recognition and, indeed, our support.

Thank you to M&M of Canada, and thank you to all the families who participate in National Family Dinner Night.

SHIRLEY HICKMAN

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in the House today to honour Ms. Shirley Hickman, a citizen in my riding of London-Fanshawe, who is a pioneer in victim services. Ms. Hickman is the founder and executive director of an organization that provides peer support to families who have suffered from a workplace fatality, life-altering illness or occupational disease. Threads of Life is the only organization of its kind in Canada and, in only five years, has assisted over 20,000 Canadians.

Threads of Life was created out of need. Ms. Hickman's son was involved in a workplace explosion and found no source of guidance or support. Threads of Life guides survivors in understanding the procedures, legal system and services offered to victims and their families. Even more importantly, it provides peer support and counselling to family members who are often in despair.

On November 27, Shirley Hickman received the 2008 Attorney General's Victim Services Award for outstanding achievement and dedication in the victim services field. Shirley is an example of the great citizens of my riding of London–Fanshawe. Her strength, creativity and courage make her the kind of person Ontario needs. I wish Ms. Hickman all the luck.

UNIVERSITY LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today with the hope that my continued efforts, the voices and frustration of York University students and the members of CUPE who are here at Queen's Park this week will finally resonate with the McGuinty government and will result in the immediate introduction of back-to-work legislation.

This insanity must stop, and the McGuinty Liberals have the means to stop it. Why they haven't yet utilized those means to end the four-week-old York University strike is something that I can neither justify nor understand.

In response to my questions, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities answers only that I do not have the monopoly on caring about students and that they've offered mediation. That is not an acceptable response to my calls for immediate action. To hide behind the word "autonomy" is irresponsible for this government. If they care, as I do, about the academic futures that are being sabotaged by this strike, they will enact back-to-work legislation immediately, yet this government has done nothing and continues to hide behind excuses and messaging.

My constituents are outraged at the unreasonable demands of CUPE 3903. They are further concerned about the possibility of future disruptions in 2010. The university, meanwhile, has made it clear that they can't move further to meet CUPE's demands.

The McGuinty Liberals have to see the light and do what is right. They have to look ahead and commit to protect York U. Students have to be protected now, as well as students at many other universities, from the potential of work stoppages in 2010. It is high time that the McGuinty Liberals acted decisively to mitigate the consequences of their grave errors. They've allowed the CUPE 3903 strike to continue for four weeks, and it is their responsibility to end it now.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There are thousands of Ontarians who work for the Ontario civil service—tens of thousands—and particularly those who work at maintaining our highways, making sure the remedial work is done to make our highways safe, plowing the roads and making sure they are salted in winter, so that we all can drive safely. And I've got to say there's a growing frustration within the civil service in regard to how this government is not dealing adequately with the demands that are being put at the bargaining table when it comes to negotiations.

These are people who work hard. These are people who have been with us in the province of Ontario for some years, making sure that our roads are safe. These are people who are only asking that this government doesn't do what the Ernie Eves government and the Mike Harris government did previously, which is to stymie the process of negotiations and not meet some of the demands that are put on the table.

I'm hearing from people I talk to, within OPSEU and others, who are involved in this, that they are feeling there's not much difference, quite frankly, between the way that this Dalton McGuinty government negotiates and a Mike Harris government negotiated before.

So I'm saying to the government across the way, you have an opportunity to do the right thing. You have an opportunity to go into bargaining and be fair employers, and make sure we are able to negotiate a contract for those workers at OPSEU who are trying to get a fair settlement when it comes to the very important work they do. I urge this government to do so. I urge them to take the responsibility as a government and as an employer to negotiate fairly with the brothers and sisters of OPSEU, and if you don't, then you're no different than Mike Harris.

OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY

Mr. Jeff Leal: On Friday, November 21, I had the distinct pleasure of attending a news conference at City Hall in Peterborough. The purpose of this news conference was to inform the residents of the riding of Peterborough that the Olympic flame would be travelling through our city on December 15, 2009, on its way to Vancouver for the opening of the 2010 Olympic Games.

The Olympic torch relay will touch over 90% of Canadians who live within one hour's drive of its route. The Vancouver 2010 torch relay will take 106 days to complete, will travel over 45,000 kilometres, and it will be the longest domestic torch relay in Olympic history, passing through 1,000 Canadian communities.

The flame inspires not just the athletes but all of us. It represents harmony between countries and provides an opportunity to forge new relationships and friendships. It brings the world together at one event in a spirit of unity and peace. December 15, 2009, will be a historic day for the great city of Peterborough.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Frank Klees: In a letter to the three federal opposition party leaders, I called on them to reconsider their plan to bring down the recently elected federal government, and I'm asking the Premier and every member of this House, to join this call for national stability. At a time when plants are closing and job losses are mounting, the last thing our country and our economy need is more uncertainty. The actions of Messrs. Dion, Layton and Duceppe are wrong-headed and self-serving, and threaten to plunge our already fragile manufacturing sector into crisis.

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This is a time when every member of every Parliament in the country should be working together to build confidence in our governments, our economy and our manufacturing sectors. The last thing we need is to be thrown into another election or to be led by a coalition of three political parties, one of which has no loyalty to Canada. They have no mandate to govern, have contradictory policies and have self-appointed the man who would be the Prime Minister should this so-called coalition have its way.

This is not the Canada I know, and we all have a responsibility to stop this abuse of power and protect the integrity of our parliamentary system of government.

STREETSVILLE

Mr. Bob Delaney: With the 2008 Christmas tree lighting ceremony, the events to celebrate 150 years of history and tradition in two great Ontario municipalities, my own village of Streetsville in Mississauga and the town of Hawkesbury in eastern Ontario, will be nearly over.

Streetsville village founder Timothy Street was granted 1,000 acres of land in a new township he had surveyed. In 1824, this area became known as Streetsville. The village was formally incorporated in 1858.

Streetsville has the largest number of historically designated buildings in all of Mississauga. All of western Mississauga got a taste of Streetsville during 2008. Ontario helped Streetsville publicize history and events throughout 2008. We completely renovated the Vic Johnston Arena, held a great Bread and Honey Festival in June, saw Shakespeare Under the Stars in a summer drizzle, brought together dozens of clowns for the kids, and closed historic Queen Street for an equally historic day-long celebration of Streetsville's 150th birthday on September 13.

We'll light the tree on Streetsville's 150th Christmas a week after Santa arrived in the biggest-ever parade in Mississauga history. The carollers will sing, the year will change, and the hard-working, creative and right neighbourly families who make up Streetsville in western Mississauga will set about making more memories and more history.

HAWKESBURY

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Last week, I had the privilege of attending the kick-off of the town of Hawkesbury's 150th anniversary. We gathered at the Robert Hartley Sports Complex to embrace Hawkesbury's rich history and promising future. The communities of Hawkesbury and Streetsville are thriving, just as they have been for the last 150 years.

Le premier maire de Hawkesbury était du nom de John Hamilton. La famille Hamilton était propriétaire d'une entreprise de marchand de bois sur la rivière des Outaouais. La famille Hamilton était sans aucun doute

très fière de leur fils John, qui, en plus d'avoir été le premier maire de la ville, a également été un membre fondateur du Sénat canadien.

The 150th anniversary of Hawkesbury is a time of celebration. So far, we know of an upcoming jamboree with 500 Scouts and the 2010 Olympic torch run ceremony.

I look forward to celebrating Hawkesbury's successes and I encourage my seatmates to pay a visit to the great town, which is also the neighbouring town of the 2011 IPM, the International Plowing Match.

J'encourage tous mes collègues à visiter la belle ville de Hawkesbury et celle de Streetsville.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

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

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to protect Ontario's children / *Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille afin de protéger les enfants de l'Ontario.*

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 3, 2008, the bill is ordered for third reading.

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and I move its adoption.

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

Bill 98, An Act to promote the sale of Ontario grown agricultural food products by amending the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act / *Projet de loi 98, Loi visant à promouvoir la vente de produits agroalimentaires cultivés en Ontario en modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités et la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun, the title of which is amended to read, "Bill 98, An Act to promote the sale of Ontario produced agricultural products by amending the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act / *Projet de loi 98, Loi visant à promouvoir la vente de produits**

agricoles ontariens en modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun."

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oakville.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It feels like Groundhog Day, Speaker.

I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

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

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 3, 2008, this bill and the previous bill are ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Hon. Michael Chan: Today, the province of Ontario joins with nations and jurisdictions around the world to mark International Volunteer Day. In this spirit, I salute the more than five million Ontarians who share their valuable time and skills in communities across the province.

Volunteers contribute to every dimension of community life: social services, arts and culture, sports and recreation, the environment and faith communities. Right now, there may be a young person planning for a group of friends to clean up trash along the banks of a stream. Somewhere else, a senior is delivering library books to other seniors. Volunteers nurture the civic pride that is at the heart of every strong community and contribute more than 800 million hours annually. They strengthen Ontario as a whole.

The government recognizes Ontario's volunteers through several awards. The Volunteer Service Awards, for example, recognize people who volunteer their time to a single organization over a number of years, ranging from five to 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 and even 60 years. These volunteers are truly the bedrock of their organizations

and their communities. The June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Awards for Voluntarism are named for one of Ontario's best-known and well-loved volunteers and social activists.

I am really proud to say that the volunteer spirit lives in Ontario youth. Our young people have the highest rate of volunteering in Canada. They are truly ensuring the future of Ontario's proud volunteer tradition.

I had the opportunity this past April to assist the Lieutenant Governor in honouring 10 young men and women with an Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. These medals were awarded in recognition of their outstanding volunteerism.

We had other great examples of youth volunteerism earlier this year. During National Volunteer Week last April, nearly 1,000 youth in seven pilot communities took part in Change the World: Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. We intend to build on this success by expanding the youth challenge next year to involve thousands of young volunteers in communities across the province. I will be counting on members of this House to help us make young people aware of the challenge and participate in the provincial traditions of volunteerism.

A strong province helps to ensure that all its residents are included in the life of society. This is why our government works with organizations to engage and recruit newcomers to volunteerism. When newcomers volunteer, they become part of the community. We are currently supporting pilot projects that are opening doors for more newcomers to volunteer. At the same time, we are creating welcoming and inclusive communities.

1320

As we observe International Volunteer Day, I encourage members of the Legislature to consider nominating people from their communities for volunteer awards and I ask my colleagues to join me in saluting one of Ontario's greatest treasures: our volunteers of all ages.

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

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Mr. Peter Shurman: Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985, International Volunteer Day is a commemoration of the dedication and endless contributions that volunteers make to societies around the globe. Each and every one of us has benefited from the work that volunteers do and, on December 5, it is our opportunity to say thank you.

Whether in schools, hospitals, police and fire services, churches, synagogues, mosques and temples, scouting organizations, Girl Guides and athletic clubs, volunteers contribute to a better quality of life for all Canadians and help create a shining example of a civil society.

The people whom we honour on International Volunteer Day also often leave their homes, their families and their country to bring hope, aid and relief to people in need in faraway corners of the world. They are faced with countless challenges, put themselves at risk, but

they persevere and help those who have been neglected, injured, abandoned or are ill. They provide much-needed education to children in places where schools are a luxury that is unaffordable. They lend a helping hand and deliver aid in refugee camps where thousands of people look for shelter, safety and sustenance. They show the depth and courage of the human spirit and they are an inspiration to all of us.

Our communities, our cities, our country and this world would not be what they are today without the hundreds of thousands of volunteers who give their time freely for the betterment of others. Canadian volunteers contribute about two billion volunteer hours annually. That's the equivalent of roughly one million full-time jobs. The Canada Survey for Giving, Volunteering and Participating tells us that about 45% of the Canadian population over the age of 15 contributes volunteer hours. Included in that are about five million Ontarians who contribute over 800 million annual volunteer hours, or the equivalent of over \$10 billion annually if they were paid. These numbers speak highly of the quality of kindness and compassion in our province and in Canada.

Most importantly, our youth have caught the volunteer bug. Young people are starting to give up their own time in order to help others. They have been taught by the example of older generations of Canadians who understand that to help a person in need brings a reward more meaningful and lasting than any sum of money or material benefits.

I appreciate the comments made by the minister, and I, as do the PC caucus and our leader John Tory, wish to extend my most heartfelt gratitude to the many Canadians who are tireless in their volunteer work and commitment to their communities.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't have to read from a script this time, because I would like to commend the minister and my fellow colleague from the official opposition on their comments.

Volunteers are the heartbeat of my community. Anything from Little League baseball to hockey to hospitals to all these service groups—we've got anything from the Lions Club, Optimist Club, Kinsmen Club, Kiwanis, volunteers from all walks of life and all different parts of our society, from all different groups. It doesn't matter where you come from in our community or what group you are from, everybody chips in. And then—

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's the grandparents raising grandkids.

Mr. Paul Miller: Of course, our grandparents raising grandkids are another important part of our community.

I must say, the lists go on. I couldn't even begin to think about how many people in my community volunteer time. In every community in this province and everywhere in Canada, volunteers are the backbone of all our communities. These people are unsung heroes. They

give up countless hours of their personal time. They even give up financial means to help other people in our community.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's because they lose their jobs—

Mr. Paul Miller: My colleague from Welland is chipping in here to help me out because he'd like to get his two cents in. I will leave you two minutes and you can do a little bit, Peter.

Anyway, all I'm saying, in closing, is there's nothing more to be said about volunteers. They're wonderful people. They're great organizations. They do great work for our communities. They help us immeasurably, and it saves our province probably hundreds of millions of dollars a year that would have to be put out to service these different causes. So hats off to the volunteers in our province and Canada.

I, too, concur with the minister and my colleague from the official opposition that these people are absolutely wonderful.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Indeed, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, as workers continue to lose their jobs, more and more people are going to have an opportunity to spend their time volunteering.

But look, it may well be a time, from this government's point of view, to celebrate the contribution that volunteers make. Let's understand why there is an increasing reliance upon volunteers. That is because there is an increasing diminishment of services provided to people in need.

The people I know at the food banks down where I come from are volunteers, and people have to volunteer in those because this government's absence of commitment to anti-poverty programs forces food banks run by volunteers to exist. Thoppil Abraham, a psychiatrist in Welland, volunteers at the Hope Centre, dealing with people living in the greatest of despair and poverty and mental illness. He volunteers because this government won't provide adequate levels of mental health services and supports for people suffering mental illness or people enduring drug and other substance addictions or recovering from them.

So while we may stand here and make feel-good statements in an attempt to disguise the depths to which this province has plunged under the stewardship of Dalton McGuinty, let's understand that when we're celebrating volunteers, we're also celebrating—dare I say it—the contribution of people to mitigate the tragedy of others who have been victims of government policies that have abandoned the poor, government policies that have abandoned abused women, government policies that have abandoned seniors, government policies that abandoned people with mental illnesses, government policies that have abandoned children in dire straits who need supports.

I suppose if there had been a couple of volunteers in the Family Court down at 311 Jarvis when Katelynn Sampson was handed over to her murderers, there might have been somebody to prepare an assessment or an

opinion about the capacity of those proposed custodial parents to take her into their abattoir—it wasn't a home; it was an abattoir.

So you see, there are two sides to this coin. While I would love for us to be able to join hands and burn incense and talk about how great things are in this province, New Democrats understand that you can't. This government's effort to candy-coat an increasingly desperate situation in this province has reached the depths of despicable.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

I approve this petition, I've signed my name to it and pass it to page Swapnil.

CHILD CARE

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and hereby affix my name.

1330

HOSPICES

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas hospices on church or hospital property do not pay taxes;

“Whereas hospices are not-for-profit organizations providing emotional, spiritual and bereavement support and respite care to terminally ill individuals and their family members;

“Whereas a residential hospice (usually an eight- to 10-bed home-like facility) provides around-the-clock care to terminally ill individuals and support to their families;

“Whereas hospice services are provided free of charge;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to allow hospices across the province to be exempt from municipal taxes.”

I agree with this and will send this with Sahara to the table.

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

Mr. Robert Bailey: This is a petition from my riding as well as across Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 117, presented by MPP Helena Jaczek on October 27, 2008, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the driving and operation of motorcycles with child passengers, is amended by adding the following section:

“Prohibition of passengers under 14 years old on motorcycles;

“38.1 No person shall drive or operate a motorcycle on a highway if another person under the age of 14 years is a passenger on that motorcycle;

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

“That Bill 117 be removed from their agenda and never become law.”

I agree with that and affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Theresa Darby, a hard-working volunteer in Mississauga, Ontario.

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures

that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I agree with this petition and give it to page Kush.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise with a petition. I’d like to assist my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville.

“Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I thank my colleague from Hamilton East. I would like to read the same petition myself, and I would like to thank Theresa Darby, who works at Credit Valley Hospital, for having collected the signatures.

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I would like very much to sign and support this petition and to ask my page, Jason Fernandes of Mississauga–Streetsville, to carry it for me.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

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

“Whereas the government of Ontario is introducing a policy of forcing 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.”

It was brought to me by my local CFIB, and I’m going to hand it to page Swapnil.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to join with my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora in this petition which is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill” entitled “An Act to proclaim” April 2 “Pope John Paul II Day” in Ontario.

It contains the signatures of a number of people, primarily from the Polish community, and some from my own community. I’m pleased to sign and support it and to send it down with page Brittney.

UNIVERSITY LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have a petition from 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, affix my name to it and give it to the page Jenna.

1340

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to read this petition on behalf of my hard-working seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

This contains the signatures of a number of people from Toronto, Etobicoke and, of course, Niagara Falls. I’m pleased to sign it and once again ask my page, Jason Fernandes, to carry it.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario; this petition has been signed by tens of thousands of people.

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition, sign my name to it and pass it to our page Luis.

BATHURST HEIGHTS ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to save the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are over 2,000 adult ESL students being served by the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre, operated by the Toronto District School Board, in partnership with the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas this is the only English as a second language (ESL) learning centre in this area of the city located directly on the Spadina subway line ...

“Whereas newcomers in Toronto, and in the Lawrence Heights area, need the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre so they can succeed in their” future jobs and careers; and

“Whereas the proposed revitalization of Lawrence Heights threatens the existence of the centre;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand” and ask “that any revitalization of Lawrence Heights include a newcomer centre and ensure that the Bathurst Heights centre continues to exist in the present location.”

I support the petition and affix my name to it.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CHILD PASSENGERS ON MOTORCYCLES), 2008 LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (ENFANTS PASSAGERS SUR DES MOTOCYCLETTES)

Ms. Jaczek moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the driving and operation of motorcycles with

child passengers / Projet de loi 117, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d’interdire la conduite et l’utilisation de motocyclettes transportant des enfants comme passagers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I’m pleased to rise in the House today for second reading of my private member’s Bill 117 to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the driving and operation of motorcycles with child passengers. The purpose of this bill is to protect children from preventable injury and thereby promote safety on Ontario’s roads.

I have received many endorsements of this bill. Among these, we have with us today in the west members’ gallery, Brian Patterson, of the Ontario Safety League; Patrick Brown, president, Ontario Trial Lawyers Association; and Katie Mellor and Nigel Finan, representatives of concerned parents who support this bill. In the Speaker’s gallery we are also joined by Lynda Staples, of the Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario. I’d like to thank my staff, Valerie Dixon, Frank Belluardo and legislative intern Rosanne Waters for their hard work on this bill.

As a family physician working in the emergency room, one of the most tragic cases I ever saw was a boy of about 10 who had been run over by a car. He was conscious and in extreme pain as we removed his clothes to examine his torso, where the tire marks were clearly visible and had done severe damage to his internal organs. Happily, he survived after emergency surgery, but it is an image I will never forget.

As a former medical officer of health in this province, I took my responsibility to administer the injury prevention program of the Health Protection and Promotion Act very seriously. Now, as an elected member of this Legislative Assembly, I believe one of our prime duties is to enact legislation that protects the most vulnerable members of our society. This, of course, includes our children, who, through lack of physical development or mature judgment, are exposed to harm.

Before I detail some of the harm that can be done to children riding as passengers on motorcycles, I would like to explain what this bill is not about. It is not about questioning the love that those parents who have ridden motorcycles with their children as passengers have for their own precious children. In fact, I’m sure that the vast majority of those parents have thought about and implemented a number of safety mechanisms that they feel will protect their kids. However, unfortunately, the numbers speak for themselves. Children are being hurt, and seriously.

According to the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario’s road safety reports, from 1995 to 2005, a total of 199 motorcycle passengers aged zero to 15 years of age sustained injuries. Since then, however, SmartRisk, an organization that compiles injury data, has noted that in the fiscal year 2005-06, of those hospitalized in Ontario

due to serious motorcycle-related injuries, eight were aged five to nine and 38 were between the ages of 10 and 14, for a total of 46. Furthermore, of the emergency department visits in 2005-06 for motorcycle-related injury, eight were aged zero to four years of age, 106 were between five and nine and 442 were aged 10 to 14. That is a total of 556 injured children in one year in Ontario.

These numbers would also seem to indicate that injuries are increasing. It is important to know that riding on a motorcycle is more dangerous than driving in a car. The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has found that, per vehicle mile travelled, in 2006 motorcyclists were 35 times more likely than passenger car occupants to die, and eight times more likely to be injured. While it has been pointed out to me by some that there are more injuries to children from other types of activities, I simply must say, for the family of that child injured while a passenger on a motorcycle, the impact is 100%.

Certainly, the risk is sufficient for Pamela Fuselli, executive director of Safe Kids Canada, which is the national injury prevention program of the Hospital for Sick Children, to say: "On behalf of Safe Kids Canada, I would like to extend our organizational support for your private member's Bill 117.... The amendments you propose to the HTA through Bill 117 represent an important component of injury prevention best practice, which will prove beneficial to improving the safety of Ontario's roads and highways." Her words are echoed by officials from the Ontario Brain Injury Association, the Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario and the St. John Council for Ontario.

What does the current legislation require in terms of safety measures? No Canadian province currently sets a minimum age for motorcycle passengers, although four states in the USA have varying restrictions up to the age of eight. However, MTO does not recommend children as passengers on motorcycles until they are old enough and strong enough to understand that they need to hold on and are able to negotiate turns with the driver. Through regulation in Ontario, a helmet and ability to reach the footrests are requirements for all passengers on motorcycles. Ontario does have voluntary driver training that includes an emphasis on safety. However, child passengers are still getting hurt, even though most Ontario motorcycle riders are well trained. Even the most diligent motorcycle rider can be involved in an accident, and the helpless child passenger is very likely to be injured.

1350

Here's a quote from an online article from motorcyclecruiser.com, by concerned parent and experienced motorcyclist Art Friedman:

"Here's a typical disaster in the making, one that I've seen far too frequently. A motorcyclist rides down the street with a kid sitting in front of him, a helmet four sizes too large bouncing around on the child's head, its little hands trying to hold on to the gas tank or the rider's legs. The kid interferes with the rider's control of the

bike, the first strike against them. What's going to happen if the rider must stop quickly? Will he grab the child with one arm, and thereby probably lose control of the bike if he really has to panic stop, or will he keep control of the bike and watch the kid fly off the front of the bike? Neither option bodes well for the child."

He goes on to say: "So he or she will sit behind you. That raises the issue of control. A child, especially a small one, can simply fall off. Even an older kid can fall asleep on a longer ride. Mine do, all the time. Any child can be flicked off in a brake-skid-stick situation or just a quick avoidance manoeuvre. Holding onto the rider can be difficult for small hands and short arms. My research uncovered an alarming number of instances when a child fell or was ejected from a motorcycle that didn't crash, often with horrifying results."

The author goes on to talk about the child's CRV riding belt that involves a harness that secures the child to the driver. He concedes that in a crash, "the child would be attached to you, which might cause additional injury if they ended up between you and whatever you bounced against."

Although Mr. Friedman concludes his article by saying he believes children can safely be passengers with proper preparation, I must disagree. Many riders will not go through the elaborate preparation of training, clothing, including proper-sized helmets and gloves, eye protection, hand holds and harnesses that he recommends for their child passengers. There is too much risk with these complicated voluntary measures.

And Don Forgeron, vice president-Ontario, Insurance Bureau of Canada, agrees. He wrote to me saying: "I would like to take this opportunity to offer our support for Bill 117.... Children are amongst the most vulnerable road users. In the case of motorcycles, many have not yet developed the strength to hold to the rider of the motorcycle.... Insurance Bureau of Canada, as a responsible stakeholder in the promotion of road safety, continues to support initiatives that make Ontario roads safer for all users."

People asked me why Bill 117 proposes the age limit as under 14. First, 14 is the age by which children typically reach their adult height. Also, there's current Ontario legislation which applies to the age of 14, such as going to the movies and working at a first part-time job—activities that require a certain level of maturity and judgment. As Linda Stewart, executive director of the Ontario Association of Local Public Health Agencies—or ALPHA—notes in that organization's letter of support, "We agree that the risk to passengers under the age of 14 is likely magnified by factors such as inexperience and strength, that child passengers are less likely to be fully aware of the excessive risk inherent in riding a motorcycle, and that they are less likely to fully appreciate the increased awareness and concentration required of both passengers and operators."

Ontario has a proud history of being a leader in road safety legislation. In 1976, Ontario made wearing seatbelts mandatory and became the first jurisdiction in

North America to do so. Through the years, additional measures have been taken to protect children, from child seat safety and mandatory booster seats, to safer school buses. However, as Brian Patterson, president of the Ontario Safety League, notes: "As with all safety initiatives we are confident that many will stand in opposition to our mutual position.... The same arguments were raised with respect to seatbelts, child car seats, better driver education and extreme driving enforcement. All of these initiatives are now universally accepted as life-saving and have played a significant role in ensuring that Ontario has the safest roads in North America."

Let Ontario be a leader again by our sending this bill to committee for further debate. I know that there is interest from members of this assembly in this matter. Our colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, a former Minister of Transportation, made a statement in this House on October 30, 2008, requesting the current Minister of Transportation to include, among other items, the following in a bill: "To make it illegal for children under the age of 12 to ride as passengers on motorcycles, thereby reducing the risk of serious injury or death."

As Patrick Brown of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association wrote to say, "We believe that this bill will eliminate serious and debilitating injuries to children, not to mention the horrific loss to society when a young child is killed."

On behalf of Katie Mellor and Nigel and all those concerned with an undeniably unnecessary risk to vulnerable children, I ask for the support of all in this House to do the right thing and protect them by passing second reading of Bill 117.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise in support of the bill that is under debate. The member for Oak Ridges–Markham has brought forward a bill which I believe just makes good common sense.

Now, that is perhaps strange for some members here, because they have heard me time and again argue against much of what I've referred to as the nanny state legislation that this government brings forward from time to time. No doubt there will be colleagues arguing here today that the last thing we need is for government to provide yet one more not-to-do list for the citizens of Ontario.

As a former motorcycle rider, I sold my Harley-Davidson just two years ago. I've been a rider since age 17. I can tell you that in the entire time, as much as I enjoyed getting onto my motorcycle and taking it for a ride through the countryside—I can also on numerous occasions still experience the rush, the fear, of the near miss. I have two children; my daughter is now 30 and my son is 26. At no time when I was the owner of a motorcycle would it ever have crossed my mind to put my small child on the back of the motorcycle. The reason is that it's one thing for me to take the risk that comes with riding a motorcycle; it's yet something totally different for me to take my young child and place that child into present danger.

What we do know is this: When a motorcycle is in a crash, for the individual on that motorcycle, be it the one who is doing the driving of that motorcycle or the passenger, the chance of serious injury is considerably greater than if a crash takes place in a car. It's just common sense.

The member for Oak Ridges–Markham has done an excellent job of setting the context in terms of providing statistics and in terms of providing technical support for this legislation, so I won't go there. What I will say is that, contrary to what I would typically do with legislation when government tries to tell us how to live our lives, in this particular case I really believe there is a role for legislators; there is a role for the law to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

I will be the first one to admit that, yes, I have had many e-mails and phone calls in my office from a very organized lobby group who are asking me and have asked me to vote against this, and they've given us the reason. No doubt I have lost some votes, but I'm prepared to do that, because at the end of the day, what I do on this legislation here today is something I have to live with. If we can save the life of one child, if we can save one child the injury that may well be incurred as a result of a crash, then we've done our job.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: As the New Democratic Party justice critic, I stand in opposition to this legislation. Let me tell you why.

The arguments of protecting people against harm can evolve into *reductio ad absurdum*. Yes, a motorcyclist is more vulnerable in the event of an accident, because there is no cage around him or her, than is a person in a car. But I put to you that you in your tiny little cheap Toyota Tercel are far more vulnerable than I am in my Chevy pickup truck in the event of an accident.

1400

If we want to protect children from harm, well then let's protect them from all harm and all motor vehicle accidents. Let's prohibit children under 14 from being passengers in motor vehicles. Now this is silliness. But of course, it's also an accurate response to the argument that is being made.

There is already inherent in the Highway Traffic Act restrictions on who can be a passenger on a motorcycle. The passenger has to be physically large enough such that their feet ride the rear pegs. I appreciate that there's some weakness in regulation 610 with respect to safety helmets, because while the regulations require an approved safety helmet—and there are rigid standards about what constitutes an appropriate motorcycle safety helmet—there don't appear to be strict standards on the requirement that they fit. Look, I am not about to dispute the observations by the author of this bill or anybody else. There will inevitably be the scofflaw who's going to put a person as a passenger on a motorcycle with an oversized helmet.

Like Mr. Klees, I have had the occasion to drive a couple of motorcycles. Unlike him, I had the occasion to

be a passenger—because I've been involved with motorcycles all my life. I had the occasion to be a passenger on one many, many times as a 12-year-old, a 13-year-old, a 14-year-old and so on.

Look, I like motorcycles; I confess. I also like bikers. I find them to be incredibly open-minded, free-spirited people, adventurous and tolerant. I have so many good friends in the Welland County Motorcycle Club. I'm blessed to be there on an annual basis with their awards banquet, and I know them in so many other respects in the community. I also know them to be the most safety-conscious people on the road.

The motorcyclists I know are far more cautious than most of the automobile drivers I know, because they know that in the event that they get mowed down by a drunk or reckless or careless driver, their risk is higher. The motorcyclists I know use all the safety precautions in the world. The motorcyclists I know, know that it's important, for instance, for a motorcycle to be loud enough so that people enclosed in their cocoon of an automobile, playing their stereo cranked up—and again, a motorcyclist doesn't have much chance with that driver, does she or he?—hoping that they can hear that motorcycle when it approaches.

I also know motorcycling is a sport. Folks down at the Welland County Motorcycle Club—Wes Pierce, I've known him all my life, and Randy Doane, the new president. The event is one of the largest sporting activities in Niagara region, stretching over into Niagara frontier. The mini-bike operators are operating mini-bikes out on the track at the ages of five, six and seven years old, and they're being taught safety standards that, I tell you, one rarely finds let's say in traditional automobile licensing driver training. Then I attend awards banquets and watch motocross races down at the Welland County Motorcycle Club. Again, it's attracting young people. It's a tremendous sport. It's a family sport. It's a healthy sport. It's outdoors. It's a camaraderie that is outstanding and exceptional. Quite frankly, I would hope that most parents would far sooner see their kids out there racing motocross than hanging around the mall. There are skilled motocross champions at the ages of 10, 11, 12, and 13 years, and these are youngsters who have developed some great motorcycling skills, who are driving bikes that are the appropriate size and who are wearing helmets and other safety equipment that's of the appropriate standard and fits such that it constitutes a real safety standard.

I had a talk just today with Randy Clare from Clare's Cycle and Sports down on Highway 20 in Fenwick, and they've got the new Harley dealership up in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Johnny Clare, his father, is semi-retired now, but, as a matter of fact, up at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Clare's Harley Davidson—fantastic—this Saturday is their Christmas open house until 3 p.m. So if you want to take a look at some Harleys and talk to motorcycle enthusiasts, by all means, go to Clare's Harley up in Niagara-on-the-Lake this Saturday.

Johnny Clare, heck, he's well into his retirement years. They've been operating Clare's Cycle and Sports

since about 1951. Johnny Clare is an active supporter of motorcycling and so many other activities in the community, but he shakes his head in response to propositions like this. He shakes his head.

Whether the—I'm sure at this point—obsolete and totally invalid and inaccurate perception of bikers helps bring people to this point, I don't know it. I'm not going to suggest by any stretch of the imagination that it does.

You want to create safer circumstances for people on motorcycles? Then start enforcing the Highway Traffic Act on our major highways so that automobile drivers who zip in and out and are oblivious to what's going on beside them or behind them and, more often than not, what's in front of them, aren't putting motorcyclists in danger by their driving practices.

But understand that if you want to ensure that people under 16, or in this case, under 14, are wearing appropriate helmets, the government doesn't even need legislation to do this. Amend regulation 610 to ensure that the helmet being worn by a passenger, as well as the helmet being worn by the operator, is one that not only meets all the DOT standards etc., but is also one that's sized and fitted appropriately in the same way we demand people wear seat belts appropriately. There are still some clowns that drive around with the shoulder belt tucked under their arm. Well, that's a violation; that's an improper wearing of the seat belt; you're effectively not wearing it.

Understand that most passengers on motorcycles who are youthful are the sons and daughters or granddaughters and grandsons or nephews and nieces of the people operating that motorcycle. My colleague talks about the rush of driving recklessly and the near miss. Well, thank goodness—if his good judgment didn't prevail then, it will at least prevail to the point where he wouldn't submit his children to that. I'm serious.

But the motorcyclists I know wouldn't think of doing stunts with their kid on the back of the bike. Do you think a motorcyclist is going to do wheelies with their kid on the back? Of course not. No more so than Mr. Klees would have; not by any stretch of the imagination.

I had an interesting talk with Peter Salter. He happens to live in Welland. The Canadian Vintage Motorcycle Group is a group of guys and gals that restore and collect old bikes, World War II and pre-World War II bikes. Again, he just shakes his head. What is going on? Not a single jurisdiction in Canada embraces this. The United Kingdom adopts basically the same standard that we have now, and that is that a passenger has to be able to reach the foot pegs and be able to be accommodated on the bike. In the American jurisdictions, they're talking about five-year-olds. No five-year-old's feet are going to hit those pegs. It's prima facie illegal to put a five-year-old on a bike. You don't need new legislation.

1410

I put this to you: If a licensed adult operator of a motorcycle, or an unlicensed operator for that matter, is putting a passenger at risk, regardless of their age, and harm ensues, I have no qualms about that person being

prosecuted for, let's say, criminal negligence causing bodily harm or criminal negligence causing death. Quite frankly, if a motorcycle operator were to be driving in such a way that she or he put their passenger at risk, regardless of the age of the passenger, and were to be driving negligently and caused bodily harm, they probably would be found guilty of criminal negligence causing bodily harm, just like the operator of any other vehicle would. I have no qualms about standing alone in this Legislature. I have done it before, and I suspect, before I'm either sent out of here by the voters or carried out of here by whomever, I'll do it again.

I just find it incredible. This is the companion to Bill 126, the one with the ban, the section about how many teenagers fit into a Volkswagen. This is the companion to telling a youthful driver, regardless of how competent that youthful driver is, that she or he can't carry more than one schoolmate to a football game or a church meeting.

No. This legislation shouldn't pass. There are other, more thoughtful and more thorough ways to address highway safety, including motorcycle safety, and motorcyclists would be the first to tell you how to do it.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased that I've been given time to comment on the private member's bill brought forward by my colleague the member from Oakridges–Markham.

I know that we talk about safety. I've been listening to many speakers in this House who spoke about safety. The most important thing for all of us in the province of Ontario is to protect our children.

The most important thing is that this bill is brought forward by a doctor, by a physician who practised for many years, a person who knows the medical system very well, who has been exposed to many different tragedies and accidents, and who has dealt with many different issues concerning the safety of children.

I was listening when she was speaking about the reasons for passing the bill. She spoke about bikers. Definitely this bill is not against bikers, as she mentioned. I know that the biker community does an excellent job on behalf of all of us in the province of Ontario. They do a lot of charitable work for children, adults, seniors and disabled people. I know that many of my friends who own motorcycles love to do it. They develop a habit and a way to gather and socialize.

The most important thing in this bill is how we can protect our children. I was listening to the member from Welland speak about passing this bill in order to protect the children. We have to talk about it here. We can amend it without going back to the legislation, and just do some kind of technical exercise on the Highway Traffic Act; we can protect the children. But the most important thing from this bill is to bring awareness to all the people who are listening to us, who are attending with us and who participate with us in this debate. We always talk, but the most important thing is that we have to act.

We have to act, not just by wishing, but by changing laws and regulations, and putting them in place in order to protect our children.

I know that many bikers are cautious about this issue. I know they are not going to put their children or loved ones in danger. But sometimes you make rules and laws just to protect those few who do not respect the law, who are not able to implement their wishes and ideas. I think it's important for all of us in this place to continue to work together to create a safety mechanism to protect our children and also educate people across the province about how important it is to protect our children in general. I know, by passage of this bill, we are going to create safety mechanisms for all bikers to follow one rule, one law, in order to save the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: First of all, my colleague for Oak Ridges–Markham is proposing a solution to a problem that just doesn't exist. It's not my quote; that's coming from the Canada Safety Council in a letter. The CSC does not see any cause for the restrictions that she proposes for motorcycle passengers and has found no statistical evidence that would merit these restrictions.

What is the motivation of the proposal, then? If you ask me, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham has overdone on the Liberal nanny-statist Kool-Aid and is suffering from the father-knows-best hangover that ails her party and stems right down from Premier Dalton McGuinty, a.k.a. Big Daddy. Another ban—kill me now.

If the member had bothered to research the opinions of stakeholders in the area of motorcycling safety she would have found that she does not know best. Furthermore, bills like the one that we're debating today convince me that we are dealing with more than an addiction to bans. I think a better term for these ban-happy Liberals is legislative hypochondriacs: Not only is their solution to every problem a ban, but they're now introducing bans to resolve problems that aren't there. You want to regulate motorized two-wheel vehicles? Then what you do is you go after what's going on off-road, not what's going on on the road.

The Motorcycle and Moped Industry Council does not support Bill 117 because "it is not based on sound research or on scientific data. Statistics do not indicate the need for such a measure."

I look back in my own family history to my brother, the owner of two Harleys. He has been a motorcyclist for the past 40 years of his life, has three kids, and he's 55 years old. Both of those motorcycles are treated as well as his kids in the sense that they look like they came out of the showroom yesterday. That's what motorcyclists are about, including some of our people in the gallery from my constituency of Thornhill who have beseeched me to speak against this—and they didn't have to beseech very hard, because that's what I believe.

In my brother's family there was a rite of passage that involved becoming not old enough, but large enough to

sit astride one of these metal beasts and join their dad, my brother, on one of his many cross-country trips: from here to Vancouver, from here down to Mexico in one case, back and forth across the United States, through the mountains, through the valleys, seeing—can you imagine seeing the countryside that way with your dad? And, no, there has never been an accident. His oldest son, now 30-plus, has a Harley-Davidson of his own. These are responsible bikers.

The Canada Safety Council says that children in Ontario are four times as likely to have been injured as passengers on bicycles than on motorcycles and 262 times as likely to suffer injuries as a passenger in a passenger vehicle than on a motorcycle. So I am assuming that the members opposite who support this are not going to start banning passengers in cars, are they?

The province already has legislation that outlines safety precautions. The Highway Traffic Act requires that motorcycle passengers be able to sit astride and rest their feet on the footrests, as mentioned by my friend the member from Welland. You have to be able to fit the bike. It's not about age, it's about size. It says you have to reach the pegs and it says you have to be 16. So why are we wasting time on this?

From the statistical information that's available to us from the opinions of stakeholders such as the Canada Safety Council, the Motorcycle and Moped Industry Council and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, it appears that the current legislative requirements are working to ensure the safety of young motorcycle passengers. So introducing a ban on children under 14 riding as passengers on motorcycles accomplishes nothing other than cutting yet another family activity from the lives of Ontarians.

1420

There are a couple of other points that need some underscoring.

It puts a portion of our tourism industry at risk. It attracts people to this lovely province, so are we talking about deterring visitors from other provinces and the United States, people who are doing what I've described my brother having done with his family, doing it safely and avoiding accidents and teaching their children well what it means to sit astride one of these amazing machines that can cause damage but that when used properly are no less safe than anything else—and if they were, why wouldn't we be banning motorcycles? Let me not put that idea in anyone's mind.

The people in the gallery today also happen to be people who take their children on rides on motorcycles. They want to be able to continue to do so.

Let me conclude by saying that being trigger-happy is not the way to go. "Ban first, ask later" attempts to regulate every aspect of the lives of Ontario families, whether necessary or not, are not something that I like to see. I've spoken out against them before, and that's why I won't be supporting this bill today.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: It's a privilege to speak in support of my colleague Dr. Helena Jaczek of Oak Ridges–Markham.

I appreciate the fact that the MPP from Thornhill, Mr. Shurman, is an excellent ambassador for his views, but I would have expected somewhat more diplomatic language coming from him.

I also detect that there seems to be a little bit of a disconnect within the Tory regime here, as well as perhaps in Ottawa, with regard to a former Minister of Transportation, the honourable Frank Klees, in complete support of this particular bill.

I'd also just like to note for the record that it's very heartwarming for me to see that Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP for Oak Ridges–Markham, and Frank Klees, a former Minister of Transportation and the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora, former opponents of each other for the same riding, are now able to display a new spirit of co-operation and coalition. I would encourage other members of that caucus—and broadly, across the country—to do so.

Of course, we always have the well-staged theatrical remarks of the MPP from Welland, Mr. Kormos. He is often offering us what I would call "Kormotic" repartee, as a lawyer. Of course, we agree together that there's no shortage of lawyers and this Legislature can always use more lawyers. I would never disagree with that. But I do think it's exceptionally important to realize that this particular bill is being brought forward by a very well-versed physician who has had long experience with viewing the other side of this, the injured parties.

As well, our MPP colleague from Welland, in his usual theatrical style, used the phrase "reductio ad absurdum" to reduce the opponent's arguments to the level of absurdity. But I have to say that it was he and he alone who provided the absurdity to the arguments; for example, saying that somehow this is equivalent to banning children from cars. He is saying that this bill is equivalent to attacking the nation of bikers, somehow equating all children who may ride on motorcycles with skilled, trained motocross drivers, and saying that the relationship of the driver and passenger, meaning father-son or grandmother-granddaughter, somehow confers an added level of safety in the view of an accident.

I really have to say that what this bill is all about, le projet de loi modifie le code de la route afin d'interdire la conduite ou l'utilisation d'une motocyclette transportant un passager de moins de 14 ans sur une voie publique.

I think this is essentially part and parcel of, yes, a fairly long and noble history of legislation working toward public safety, whether it's seat belts or helmets or perhaps the imminent removal of the possibility of using hand-held cellphones while driving an automobile etc. Those of us on the front lines, as doctors who have seen the other side of this, who have seen individuals whose youth has literally been robbed from them because of, yes, of course, loving parents and well-intentioned, duly licensed, trained drivers, through really no fault of their own—subjecting people inadvertently, by accident, to some extraordinary, extraordinary injuries.

The MPP from Welland did legitimately raise the fact that there's an absence of a "cage" in the motorcycle situation. That, of course, offers extraordinary trauma to brain, to heart, to internal organs.

This is really an attempt, I think, by my honourable colleague physician Dr. Jaczek, MPP from Oak Ridges–Markham, to remedy the current state.

I would of course join with the new spirit of coalition and co-operation coming from former opponents, the MPP from Oak Ridges–Markham and the MPP from Newmarket–Aurora, in supporting this bill.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add a few comments in the few minutes I have left on Bill 117, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the driving and operation of motorcycles with child passengers. I'm sure the member from Oak Ridges–Markham has good intentions and concerns in bringing this bill forward, but I did want to get on the record my strong opposition to the bill.

First of all, we already have sufficient rules on the books to do with younger passengers. In regard to the size of the passenger, the passenger has to be large enough that their feet can be firmly on the pegs of the motorcycle. I think that's what makes sense in terms of providing the security of that passenger.

I would simply like to say that government cannot legislate away all the risk we face in the world. What this will do is deprive a lot of parents and grandparents and kids of the opportunity of enjoying the sport of motorcycling and time spent together. I would suggest to members to read the Toronto Star article written by Mark Richardson on avoiding a nanny state, which points out, "Nowhere else in North America does such a law exist." It goes on to say: "We have to be sure that what we do makes sense to the citizen; otherwise, the citizen is going to lose faith in the system. We're going to start making a lawbreaker out of every citizen."

I would like to, in the short couple of minutes I have, get on the record some of the e-mails that I've received from constituents in Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I received an e-mail from Blair Hickey in Bracebridge. He quotes the Canada Safety Council: "It is the CSC's position that there is no statistical evidence to support this legislation." I reviewed all seven Ontario Road Safety Annual Reports from 1999 to 2005. I did not find any fatalities for motorcycle passengers less than 14 years of age. I also looked at injuries for motorcycle passengers less than 16 years of age and compared them to bicycle passengers less than 16 years of age and car passengers less than 16 years of age, over the same period (1999 to 2005). Ontarian children were four times more likely to have been injured as passengers on bicycles and 262 times more likely to have been injured as passengers in passenger vehicles than to have been injured as passengers on motorcycles."

I simply make the point that we cannot legislate against all the risk there is in the world. I do have a

conflict in that I enjoy motorcycling myself—I have a Yamaha FZ1—and I do a few other things in life that involve a little bit of risk. But I say that the great majority of people out there will have some common sense, and parental responsibility will kick in.

I received an e-mail from Philip Goldsmith. He says, "Let's consider danger. Do we keep kids off bicycles as, even with helmets, there are many accidents and injuries a year, especially in our major cities? Do we stop people boating as a few children every year drown? I took my children canoeing and camping in the bush. Was I an irresponsible parent? Do we stop them sailing in open water? I took them sailing with me since they have been young. Do we stop them from hiking in the forests of our vast country? A few children a year fall from trees or are attacked by animals."

I think he makes a good point, that we just cannot legislate against all risk. We have to allow some common sense to occur.

I see this bill as being a nanny state type of bill, where we're trying to make rules for problems that don't exist, and Big Brother, the government, knows best.

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to stand in this Legislature and support my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham and make a few statements on the merits of this bill, Bill 117, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the driving and operation of motorcycles and child passengers.

This is just another means of protecting the children of Ontario, children who in some cases may not be able to make an informed decision on their own safety. I believe it is important that this House support this bill. On behalf of these children, we should be doing the right thing.

1430

Everyone who has spoken so far has talked about the responsible operator of a motorcycle etc. What we fail to add to the debate is, a person can be on that motorcycle on the highway, but they have to realize that there are four other vehicles, maybe more, around them, and they can't speak for the safety of the other drivers on the highway.

What we don't need is that one accident that may not cause a fatality—but I think the most important one and the tragic one is if it leaves a child with a lifelong injury and that person becomes a problem and a responsibility of society. That responsible parent who was taking them along on a motorcycle may not be around when this child is in their elderly state—and has left them with this injury that has affected their whole lifestyle.

I just want to read parts of a letter by Katherine Mellor. Katherine is in the gallery today. She wrote this letter back in June 2008 to Minister Bradley, as a parent.

She says:

"In my daily parenting plight, I have recently had a new situation cross my path, which has served to be both alarming and perplexing.

"To make a long story as concise as possible, my soon to be ex-husband has decided, to my chagrin, that my son

Liam (8 years of age) should be a regular passenger on his motorcycle.”

To her dismay, she found that the “only two requirements the Ministry of Transportation in Ontario have are that any passengers need to wear a helmet with a chin-strap, and their feet must touch the footrests. I would like to add that depending on the motorcycle the footrests could be quite high, meaning; even a very small child of 3-5 years of age could potentially be a passenger!...”

“The bottom line is that children under the age of at least 12 do not truly grasp the ramifications of riding as a passenger on a motorcycle.”

She goes on to say:

“Ontario likes to lead the way with respect to how we protect our children, and the current and past governments have done an effective job when necessary to amend the Highway Traffic Act to ensure safety standards for our children.

“My request to you Minister Bradley, is that changes to the MTO rules and regulations regarding children as passengers on motorcycles be looked into immediately. Not just the next time the issue is up for review, as it might be too late for my son at that time.”

One member went on to rant and rave about this particular legislation and how it’s banning this and banning that. I’ll bet you there were members of this Legislature who complained the same way in 1976 when the Legislature brought in, for the first time—as the first jurisdiction in North America to deal with seat belts in cars. I am sure that back then, everybody thought that they were safe drivers. But do you know what? That legislation was the start of many safety initiatives for drivers and passengers, and I hope we continue to bring them as we see fit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Oak Ridges–Markham, Ms. Jaczek, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I’d like to thank my colleagues from London–Fanshawe, Etobicoke North, Scarborough–Rouge River, Newmarket–Aurora, Welland, Thornhill and Parry Sound–Muskoka for their comments, which do in fact reflect public opinion, as I’ve heard it since first reading of this bill.

Denial of risk is a very common human reaction. In my career, I’ve seen young girls who thought they could never get pregnant and smokers who thought they were somehow magically protected from the dangers of tobacco. “It can never happen to me,” unfortunately, is not reality.

In the case of child motorcycle passengers, the risk is real. The question is, is it an acceptable risk to impose on a child? In my view, it is not; it is an unnecessary risk.

As with all proposals for change, this bill has generated considerable discussion. I know that the vast majority of motorcycle riders understand the vulnerability of their passengers and take what steps they can to protect them. However, the facts speak for themselves: Children are being injured.

The major organizations in this province that are concerned with preventable injury, including the Hospital

for Sick Children; the Ontario Safety League; the Canadian Paraplegic Association, Ontario; the Ontario Brain Injury Association; the St. John Council; the Insurance Bureau of Canada; the Association of Local Public Health Agencies; many health units; and the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, all support this bill—a most diverse group; very broad-based support—as do so many parents and grandparents and extended family of vulnerable children. They are all concerned for the health of our children.

It is time to address this issue in a fair and open-minded fashion in committee. I urge all members of this House to support Bill 117.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. For our guests in the gallery and those watching at home, we will vote on this ballot item standing in the name of Ms. Jaczek in 100 minutes. Orders of the day.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a select committee should be established immediately to develop a comprehensive Ontario mental health and addictions strategy;

That, in developing its strategy and recommendations, the committee shall focus on the following issues:

- the urgent need for a comprehensive mental health strategy in Ontario to work in co-operation with the Mental Health Commission of Canada and to coordinate the delivery of mental health programs and services in Ontario;

- the lack of coordination in Ontario for the delivery of mental health programs and services across many provincial ministries;

- the mental health issues of children;

- the increase in suicide among young people;

- the mental health and/or addiction problems of homeless people;

- the mental health needs of residents of long-term-care facilities;

- the lack of access to even basic mental health services for aboriginal Canadians in many parts of Ontario; and

- the issues facing courts and police across Ontario in dealing with increasing numbers of alleged offenders with significant mental health and/or addiction problems;

That the committee shall have authority to conduct hearings and undertake research, and generally shall have such powers and duties as are required to develop recommendations on a comprehensive Ontario mental health and addictions strategy; and

That the committee shall present an interim report to the House no later than the end of 2009, and a final report no later than June 30, 2010.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Elliott, the member for Whitby–Oshawa, moves private members’ notice of motion number 65.

Pursuant to standing order number 98, Mrs. Elliott, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very grateful for the opportunity today to speak about the need for a comprehensive mental health strategy for Ontario. This is truly a non-partisan issue. I do appreciate the support that has been extended by Minister Caplan, by many government members and members of the third party, as well as by members of my own Progressive Conservative caucus.

We've all heard truly heartbreaking stories from constituents, over the years, who have struggled with mental illness and have been unable to access services. We've also heard from many of their family members who've been unable to access care for them when they've needed it. We know that the need is great, but despite the best efforts of many governments over the years, we have not succeeded in creating a comprehensive mental health service and system to serve the needs of Ontarians with mental health problems. I would suggest two principal reasons why this is so.

The first is the stigma that is still associated with mental illness. I would like to refer to the Kirby report in this respect, because it did deal extensively with the issue of stigma and commented on the fact that it is really preventing inclusionary provisions from happening in our society and is not allowing people to access mental health programs and services.

The Kirby report, in its foreword, did quote from *More for the Mind*, which was a study of psychiatric services in Canada undertaken by the Canadian Mental Health Association. It stated: "In no other field, except perhaps leprosy, has there been as much confusion, misdirection and discrimination against the patient, as in mental illness.... Down through the ages, they have been estranged by society and cast out to wander in the wilderness. Mental illness, even today, is all too often considered a crime to be punished, a sin to be expiated, a possessing demon to be exorcised, a disgrace to be hushed up, a personality weakness to be deplored or a welfare problem to be handled as cheaply as possible."

Even though those words were written nearly 50 years ago, I would suggest that the situation has not improved markedly to date.

Stigma prevents people from speaking about mental illness and from seeking treatment. It isolates and marginalizes people. It prevents many from seeking and maintaining meaningful employment, because they are fearful of dismissal. But it goes even further than that.

1440

As was noted by Carolyn Abraham, a medical reporter with the *Globe and Mail*, in their excellent, recent series on Canada's mental health crisis, the practice of psychiatry itself is "a specialty relegated to the basement." Psychiatry is seen by some members of the medical profession as a lesser science, and as Ms. Abraham noted, is contributing to a national shortage of psychiatrists and shoddy care for mentally ill people.

I would like to quote a little bit more from Ms. Abraham's article, because it so aptly describes the problem:

"It's the patients who doubly suffer from the stigma', Dr. Shah said. 'First, from the social perception of their illness and then, on top of it all, from the shortage of treaters, and the gaps in care reflect the stigma within the medical profession and that contributes [to the social perception] ... so it's a vicious circle.'

"Studies suggest these attitudes take a toll on medicine's front lines: Mentally ill people have a tougher time finding a family doctor, are more likely to need urgent medical care and less likely to receive life-saving treatments. They're also more likely to die of conditions such as heart attacks, strokes and cancer.

"At the same time, funding for mental health research and psychiatric services has paled compared with monies doled out for physical ailments. Mental illness, meanwhile, is the number one cause of disabilities in Canada and accounts for 20% of all hospital admissions.

"The inequities are so apparent that the Mental Health Commission of Canada has made it a top priority to fight stigma among health care professionals, and this year the Canadian Medical Association, which represents the country's doctors, has launched a campaign to combat the stigma within its ranks."

So the stigma is pervasive and it's clearly going to take a concerted effort to eliminate it, something that the select committee is ideally positioned to deal with.

Secondly, mental health programs are many and varied and are delivered across many ministries besides the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. They include the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Ministry of the Attorney General.

As you know, ministries tend to operate in a silo fashion with the result that various programs and services, as they're brought forward, don't necessarily mesh with the other programs and services that are being offered through other ministries. This was noted by Mr. Curling and Mr. McMurtry in their recent report on the roots of youth violence and one of their principal recommendations was a change in the governance structure to allow for cross-ministry communication. This was seen to be the key to success in dealing with youth violence. I would suggest this would apply to any action to be taken with respect to mental health issues as well. All of these issues can be explored by the committee members as they conduct their work over the course of 2009.

I am very pleased that the government has agreed not only with the establishment of the committee, but also with the timelines, because the need is great and it's becoming ever more urgent as our economic difficulties continue. As people struggle with financial pressures, the need for mental health services increases. We can see those needs in all aspects of our society. Children's mental health has been called "the orphan's orphan," with mental health being the orphan of our health care system, and children's mental health being the orphan of the mental health care system.

According to the Canadian Paediatric Society, mental illness among children is threatening to become the next pediatric epidemic. The pre-budget submission made by Children's Mental Health Ontario noted some startling statistics:

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 19-year-olds, accounting for 24% of all deaths. It's exceeded only by death by accidents according to Statistics Canada.

Each year, on average, about 110 children and youth in Ontario commit suicide—more than two each week—again, according to statistics Canada.

Doctor visits for pediatric depression more than doubled from 1995 to 2002. In the Toronto District School Board, referrals for assessments for special education services, including speech and language and psychology, have risen 18.5% from 2001 to 2004—only three years.

By 2020, childhood neuro-psychiatric disorders will rise by more than 50% internationally to become one of the five most common causes of morbidity, mortality and disability among children.

But it's not just children's mental health needs that are increasing exponentially. Long-term-care facilities are being overwhelmed by the mental health needs of many of their residents. Aboriginal Canadians in many parts of Ontario lack access to even basic mental health programs and services. It's estimated that at least 30% to 40% of people who are homeless suffer from mental health and/or addiction problems. In fact, one of the first priorities for the Mental Health Commission of Canada is to study the issue and to establish demonstration research projects in six Canadian cities to combat homelessness.

Finally, I would like to speak briefly about the medical/legal issues surrounding mental illness. This was explored by Mr. André Picard in the excellent series on mental health issues featured in the *Globe and Mail* just recently. Events of recent weeks have also raised serious questions about our mental health laws. I would just like to comment on the nature of the problem that we're discussing here.

I am pleased to be joined by several experts on mental health issues here in the gallery today. First of all, Mr. Chris Bovie from the Whitby Mental Health Centre was here with us this morning, as well as Ms. Vani Jain, who is the manager of policy and community relations at the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. I'm very pleased that they're here to join us because they have made some excellent comments on this issue.

I would just like to quote from Mr. Picard's article that really capsulizes the extent and nature of the problem: "Mental health services are in short supply, even for those who want care. But for those who refuse treatment, the situation can be dire and deadly. Many end up caught in the revolving door of the criminal justice system, their health—mental and physical—spiralling downward.

"Vani Jain, manager of policy and community relations at the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario, which runs the innovative justice and mental health program to sup-

port parents, says: 'The number one question we get here is, "How do I get help for my loved one who doesn't want it?'"

"There is no easy answer to that question, which pits people's civil rights against their health and the safety of others.

"John Gray, a psychologist and co-author of the legal text *Canadian Mental Health Law and Policy*, says that decades ago, people with mental health problems were hospitalized indiscriminately and often treated in a horrific fashion.

"As the Dickensian institutions were shut down, the pendulum swung to a point where civil rights ruled and involuntary hospitalization and treatment were next to impossible. Only those who posed an imminent danger to others could be held and treated, and an army of untreated people took to the streets and soon found themselves sleeping on cold slabs in prison. 'The fundamental problem is that we've deinstitutionalized the mental-health system, but we haven't deinstitutionalized mental health law,' Mr. Gray says.

"In his view, British Columbia has the country's best mental health legislation because it balances the rights and needs of people with severe psychiatric problems, and heeds the interests of families. People can be hospitalized involuntarily if they pose a danger to themselves or others—the traditional criteria—but also if their mental health risks deteriorated markedly without care.

"The purpose of the BC law is to treat people who are sick, not punish them,' Mr. Gray says. 'That's what you want.'

"At the other end of the spectrum, he says, is Ontario, where it can be difficult to commit and treat people, even if they are very sick."

That is indeed a problem that we are facing here in Ontario, and we can look at the events of recent weeks to see what has happened there, looking most recently at the situation of Mr. Steven Chau, who was recently found by an Ontario court to be not criminally responsible for the deaths of his wife and two children because of his mental illness at the time. This is despite the devoted efforts of his family to seek treatment for him when it became apparent that his mental illness was spiralling downward in the few weeks preceding the murders. That's why Mr. Chau and his family had asked for the Ontario coroner to conduct a coroner's inquest into this matter, so that the lives of other people could be saved in the future. They really believe that our mental health laws need to be looked at, and I certainly support that.

I believe that this is an issue which could also be dealt with by the committee as it explores the issues of mental health in the province of Ontario and the challenges that are currently facing us. There is a lot to be done, but the responses that I've received from many members in this Legislature and the enthusiasm with which they've approached the opportunity to work together on this most important cause have been truly extraordinary. I thank all of the members who have spoken to me about that, and I look forward to hearing their further comments.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am happy to be here to support this motion moved by the member from Whitby–Oshawa. I want it to take this opportunity as well to say how much I enjoy some of the resolutions that come forward from the Conservative members, because I've noticed over the years that there is a positive streak from time to time on some of the issues that I really can support. I have to say, opposition has done the Conservative Party a lot of good. I suspect within a couple more years they will get better at it. Who knows, they could be here yet for another four years in opposition, and with the growing time, become much more progressive. So I like this, I do.

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The member for Whitby–Oshawa has spoken very well on the issue, has talked about many facts, and we support all of that. We support everything you have said. There is no question that we need action on issues of mental health and addiction in this province. No question. The NDP supports the creation of a select committee dedicated to developing a comprehensive mental health and addiction strategy. That's a good thing. We know that the cost of substance abuse and mental illness for Ontario is \$34 billion each year; the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and partner organizations have provided that figure. They would know. We're talking about \$34-billion costs associated with substance abuse and mental health. It's huge. And 20% of the general population will suffer from mental illness or an addiction in their lifetime. Again, it's huge. Those statistics ought to worry us in terms of what we are doing to deal with it, to treat it, to prevent it and to provide the supports for so many people who are suffering from substance abuse and mental illness and/or will suffer in the future from this particular problem.

As it relates to youth, one in five of Ontario's youth will experience a mental health or behavioural disorder. Youth struggling with addictions often closely tied to mental illness issues fare no better; the facts on this are evident. The question is, what are governments doing about it? That's the real question. So I read an article in the Tribune and read comments made by Dr. Thoppil Abraham; he led a lecture titled Emotional Illness—Where Are We Going? He quickly answered that question by saying, “I don't think we are going anywhere.... This is the status quo. Canada is lagging 10th out of 16 countries in health care,” Abraham said, referring to a Conference Board of Canada study released Oct. 28.

“The study placed Japan, Switzerland and Sweden in the top three positions. He said, ‘Canada was given poor marks for failing to address mental illness. As you know, we still don't have a realistic plan for mental illness.’”

These are experts talking about this issue. They're telling us that we're spending \$34 billion to deal with these problems, but I don't think we have a coordinated approach to prevent the problems where we can, and I don't believe we have the supports to help people as best

as we can so they can lead healthy or productive lives in the best way that it is possible in those circumstances.

So, yes, we need to do more, but I have to tell you, we couldn't help finding the following information to tell you how many problems we have in the system and what we're doing to deal with them. In 2000 and 2001, nine regional task forces were established by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The task forces' mandate was to focus on developing recommendations for regional and local improvements to mental health services across the province. In accordance with the ministry's mental health policy—it was called Making It Happen—the following forces were established: Northeastern Ontario; Northwestern Ontario; Champlain region; Southeast region; Central South region, Hamilton; Toronto-Peel; Central East, Whitby; Central East, Penetanguishene; and Southwest.

The MHITFs were designed to serve as mechanisms through which recommendations would be developed for the ministry with respect to provincial psychiatric hospital restructuring, community reinvestments and the implementation of mental health reforms. What happened to that? What did we do over the years? We have the knowledge, we have the expertise, but we're not using it, and we keep going back to more studies. While I support the studies, there are so many experts in the field. So let's not fool ourselves about the countless studies, the organizations, advocates, families, policy papers etc. that can already tell us what needs to be done to fix the system.

Coalitions such as are formed by Addictions Ontario, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Ontario Federation of Community, Mental Health and Addiction Programs have released invaluable reports that provide analysis of the work for the LHINs in terms of mental health and addictions: A Focus on Addictions and Mental Health: Review of LHIN Integrated Service Plans, 2007; and addressing ER wait times, Addressing Emergency Department Wait Times and Enhancing Access to Community Mental Health and Addictions Services and Supports. That was done in July 2008.

And what about other invaluable organizations that do this work on the front lines and are more than willing to share their ideas for policy reform, like Children's Mental Health Ontario, the Griffin Centre and, yes, the John Howard Society? So much advice has been given to us over the years, and the only thing that's missing is a commitment from governments to actually do something. If we don't do it when the economy is good, when are we going to do it? Then all of a sudden we have bad economic times and governments become very hesitant about what they are going to do—and yes, mon ami David, it's about cuts. It's the wrong time to make cuts. It's the wrong time to be doing it. It's the right time to be investing, because if we don't invest, more and more of the people who we're talking about today will have conditions that will be aggravated as a result of the lack of supports that we do not give them, the supports that they desperately need. So when we're talking about

spending \$34 billion—it will increase to the billions in time. We impoverish ourselves each and every time by not providing the supports we desperately need. We do this each and every time as governments. We are so short-sighted. We would rather spend on treating the problem than trying to prevent it; we do this each and every time.

We've got Steve Lurie, who's been the executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association's Toronto branch since 1979. It's the largest community mental health organization. Last year it provided community support and housing services to 8,876 people living with mental illness in Toronto, and 2,880 people were served through the public education and mental health promotion programs. Mr. Lurie is also an adjunct professor of health and mental health policy at the University of Toronto faculty of social work and chair of the Mental Health Commission's service systems advisory committee. Here are Mr. Lurie's top 10 things that are needed to improve mental health care in Canada:

He says, what do they need? They need, first of all, a home: "Governments must commit to meeting the target of 57,000 supportive housing units for people living with mental illness, as outlined in the Senate report *Out of the Shadows at Last*. This must include funding for services and supports to help people choose and keep safe, affordable housing."

He talks about, second, a job: "Unemployment among people with ... mental illness is 80% to 90%, yet there is evidence that people with psychiatric disabilities want to work and can work if programs are put into place. People who are already working and experiencing mental health problems need access to employee assistance programs and programs like Mental Health Works that help workplaces accommodate workers who are living with mental illness."

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Three, they need a friend: "Many people living with mental illness want to connect with other people with similar experiences and help each other. Mental health systems need to dedicate 10% of their spending to funding peer support programs for people living with mental illness and their families, as well as fund drop-ins, activity centres, community kitchens and programs that foster a sense of community."

Four: "Cultural competence, language interpretation and newcomer services. Immigration is at its highest level in 75 years and there is evidence that immigrants' mental health declines the longer people are in Canada, due to migration stress, racism and employment difficulties."

Five: "Improve access to primary health care and chronic disease management."

Six: "More mental health services." There's a long list of what he recommends, and I don't have time to talk about that.

Seven: "More money."

Ten: "Health human resource strategy."

These are things experts know about and tell us, by way of suggestions, what we need to do. Yes, we need

more studies; they would be helpful, and maybe we could coordinate once and for all. But what we desperately need is a commitment from governments, both provincially and nationally, to spend the money we desperately need to provide services to people who are suffering from substance abuse and mental illness, and then we can have a civil society that indeed can be proud of itself.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is indeed a pleasure to stand in support of the motion by the member from Whitby–Oshawa. I'd like to focus, in the next few minutes, on one aspect of our province's mental health mosaic that, while it's not directly mentioned in the member's motion, is indeed important nonetheless.

There is a narrow band, what's called the grey area, in the spectrum that runs from intelligent to smart to gifted to brilliant to eccentric and beyond into the realm where the imbalance between the gift of genius is often counterbalanced by gaps in other areas, and these other areas we associate with mental health issues.

The issue I'm discussing is one in which our very, very best often find themselves coping with issues that need mental health assistance. I saw this, for example, among gifted, creative people in the private sector in my years working in public relations and advertising. Indeed, when I worked in the IT sector, I saw the very same types of issues all over again among the very best programmers and systems analysts who wrote software.

During the years I taught at Ryerson University, I remember discussing this particular phenomenon one time in class. The next week, and for a few weeks thereafter, some of my best and brightest students came to see me and talked about struggling with what amounted to mental health issues that revolved around their superior intellect. Indeed, they expressed the need for coping and adaptation skills. This is almost counterintuitive. You would think that the types of issues the member raises, and justifiably so, in an absolutely excellent resolution probably wouldn't touch these people. But indeed it's not limited merely to the people she mentions in the resolution.

I remember in particular a student in whose family a superior intellect runs through the generations. She referred to the wonderful mind God gave to her and her siblings as, and I'll use her own words, "the curse." It is said, I think with some basis, that the line between genius and madness is a fine one. Yet some of the most precious gems in Ontario's intellectual crown are found in the minds of our most brilliant and talented men and women. There can be no doubt that the mental health needs of our most gifted and most brilliant minds also figure in the intent of the fine motion brought forth by the member for Whitby–Oshawa.

It is true that we need a comprehensive Ontario mental health and addiction strategy. We need that strategy to address who needs the resources Ontario can bring to bear. We need that strategy to address how we might deliver our resources to those who truly need them. We

need that process that leads our province's strategy to engage our best minds and our stakeholders and draw out their thoughts and suggestions and needs, and do it in their own words.

To further this dialogue, I've added in these few minutes the concerns of gifted minds of boys and girls, men and women, fathers and mothers, employees and professional people, business owners and people from all walks of life who grapple with the dark side of creativity, of being a gifted writer or an actor, a musician, a performer, a composer, a designer, of having the insight to be able to see complex patterns in computer code or in mathematics or in nature or to have an intuitive grasp of the workings of machinery.

I think this is a fine resolution by an intelligent, and let me say gifted, member who brings a trained legal mind into her work on behalf of her constituents and for our province. I very strongly urge support for this resolution and I hope that the select committee that it proposes is formed and deployed quickly.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to be able to speak to the private member's motion put forward by my caucus colleague from Whitby–Oshawa and to add my full support for Mrs. Elliott's notice of a motion calling for a select committee to develop a provincial mental health strategy—something that is long overdue, I might add, and I think that is coming from the sentiments of all of my colleagues in the Legislature this afternoon.

As was mentioned previously, the province is responsible for the delivery of most mental health and addiction services, so it's fitting that Ontario follow up with the federal government's lead through the Kirby report that was mentioned and the Mental Health Commission that he now serves. I remember when he was a senator and brought down the in-depth report on our health care situation.

I'll quote from the Ontario Hospital Association, a recent article on mental health and addiction, on how government can help. It lists three solutions: (1) improve access; (2) reduce stigma and discrimination; and (3) develop a province-wide mental health and addiction strategy, and increase resources.

Recently, one of the major papers referenced Mrs. Elliott's motion saying it will "put ... MPPs to work on a major contemporary issue that is exploding into a crisis." I believe the Minister of Health has also voiced his support of this motion. So hopefully we can come to some common ground on this very important matter.

The provincial budget of this year quoted about developing a mental health strategy. We haven't seen it or heard about that since, but I'm hoping again this is a push forward today by this resolution. Therefore, the intent of this motion will get the support of the House, and some government action will be put forward.

In my own riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I want to acknowledge some hardworking organizations that are geared to providing mental health issues

and the care that's involved with them: CHIMO Youth and Family Services, Four County Crisis and their community mental health crisis response program. Certainly I've had a lot of dealings with the Kawartha Lakes chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association, which serves the large geographical area of my riding. It certainly goes beyond the city of Kawartha Lakes; it includes Haliburton, Peterborough, Peterborough county and Brock township. Mr. Naresh James is the executive director there, and I've had the privilege to work with him and his staff in respect to many of their projects and initiatives. He is certainly a dedicated and proud individual of the commitments and successes that they have accomplished with limited resources and the geographical challenge that does exist in the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. But they work hard, and they've been very successful in integrating services with partners so that there's a seamless stream of care for the people they do serve.

It's essential that the transfer of individuals in such difficult situations and mental health situations is done smoothly, and with the care and support that's needed. Mr. Naresh James has assured his full support of this motion and agreed with the need for a select committee.

He did add some further comments, which I want to include. There are three areas to which the province needs to respond: children and youth, adults and seniors. The needs to each of these are unique, yet also have some very common threads: the need for mental health promotion along with physical health promotion, controlling the stigma of mental illness, supportive housing, employment and income support. It's also important that we recognize the families who are providing care for the children or the parents in their own homes. The support, both financial and otherwise, that's required is crucial in order to help keep their family members in their homes. Certainly, a little bit of support to them can make a lot of difference. I think that what was brought up about the recent events that we've read in the newspapers, the tragedies that have occurred just within the last month and the connection with a mental health illness that has not been properly addressed is something that we all need to take notice of. It's a tragedy that could have been prevented, if we could only deal in a coordinated fashion with the mental health needs that are in our province, in our communities, that we see and that we can prevent.

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I certainly appreciate the fact that my colleague the member from Whitby–Oshawa has brought forward this motion for accountability, providing timelines and a deadline for a final report in 2010. We'd like to see that. We're happy to see a deadline come forward on this. Let me quote the following: "Clearly there is a need for a strategy in Ontario to respond to the Kirby report, and to coordinate the delivery of provincial services. The need is becoming urgent.... The time for action is now." That's from MPP Christine Elliott in the Ontario Bar Association Queen's Park report, and I certainly agree 100% with her report and her quote. I hope that the Legislature

moves forward this afternoon with this important select committee.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand up and speak in support of the resolution brought by the member from Whitby–Oshawa. I think it's a very important issue to talk about openly on a daily basis. I had the chance to serve with the member on the social policy committee when we toured the province of Ontario, when we were dealing with disability issues. I know her passion and her commitment to this file.

It's important to all of us to speak in support of and talk about this issue openly because it's important for all of us across the province of Ontario. I want to agree with what the member from Trinity–Spadina said about the Conservatives finally showing some kind of commitment toward health care and mental issues. I think it's very important for all of us.

I don't see anyone from this House not being able to support such an initiative to deal with the mental health issue in the province of Ontario. It's because it will affect all of us. Especially when we walk in the streets, we see a lot of mental patients walking the streets. We see a lot of people; they have no place to live. We see a lot of people suffering from mental issues or addiction. I think it's also important to bridge the health mental issue with the addiction issue, because they're related to each other.

I want to commend the member for bringing such an important issue to be discussed in this place. I also was pleased when I heard the Minister of Health, the Honourable David Caplan, speak in support because I think that he's committed to dealing with mental health issues in the province of Ontario, as all of us, as members of government since we got elected in 2003, have been exposed to this issue. We committed ourselves to deal with it, not just by talking about it, not just by publishing the report regarding mental health issues, but also by investing money in this area to support many patients across Ontario and support many organizations across the province in order for them to deal with such a severe and tragic issue.

When we deal with mental health issues, we indirectly deal with the safety of our people in the province of Ontario. We lower the cost of policing. We lower the cost of many different elements in our society. I think it's important to speak in support. Hopefully, as I said at the beginning, all of us will come together in the end to deal with such an important file, and deal with it once and for all.

I want to commend our government. I want to commend the previous Minister of Health, George Smitherman, and now David Caplan for continuing to invest money in this area in order to deal with it. Hopefully we'll continue to support it, and hopefully in the future we will see a lot of solutions. I think that to establish a committee from all the experts in the province of Ontario is such a great idea to help us to focus more on this issue.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise in support of this resolution. I want to thank my colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa for bringing this matter to the House. We're encouraged by the response so far from the government. It appears that the very act of tabling this resolution has been met positively by the Minister of Health and by the government, and we look forward to working together.

I was looking forward to speaking to this resolution, and I thank the member for giving me the opportunity because I represent the riding of Newmarket–Aurora in the region of York. This is generally considered to be an area that has few problems, so to speak. It is above-average income, generally; the demographics are such that there's a lot of growth. Typically, up until recently anyway, there's very good employment. However, I've now been a member of the Legislature for some 13 years, and I can tell you that if there is an area that I believe needs the serious attention of this government, it is the area of mental health services.

Time and again I meet with parents, with individuals, with young people who are having a very difficult time accessing mental health services, and it's reflected in so many ways. I pulled together a group, a round table of individuals from my riding, this past May. The participants included Dr. Ras Paramsothy, the psychiatrist at Southlake Regional Health Centre—in fact, he's chief of psychiatry there; Patrick Lake, director of the York Region Children's Aid Society; James Thomson, executive director of Pathways for Children, Youth and Families; Dr. Dick Mean, the director of clinical services, Kinark Child and Family Services; and Sylvia Pivko, the executive director of Blue Hills Child and Family Centre. The reason for convening that group was to help me as the member get a better understanding of just what the circumstances were, what the needs are, what the challenges are in York region regarding mental health services. Much of our focus was on children's mental health. As a result of that meeting, the summary, the recommendations that came out and the facts that were shared with me were really quite disheartening. I committed at that time that as the MPP, I would do what I could to ensure that the government addressed the situation.

I want to share with you some of the highlights, the conclusions that were reached at that meeting; first of all, the need.

The fact is that the province-wide crisis in meeting the mental health needs of children and youth has been exacerbated in York region simply by the rapid growth of population in York region. A report prepared for the Strong Communities Coalition by PricewaterhouseCoopers showed that as of 2004, the per-child funding for children's services in York region was only 42% of the provincial average. The report York Region's Children states that approximately 39,000 children ages 0 to 18 experience mental health issues which require some intervention. At that time in York region, there was a capacity to serve about 5,000—5,000 of the 39,000 children who need help—and that gap continues to grow.

What was pointed out is that where the problems are, many times it's the resources that are lacking. Specifically, they refer to staff turnover. They mention that the reason that staff turnover in this area is so high is because salaries in children's mental health are significantly lower than for comparable positions in hospitals, schools, and the CAS. So a loss of competent staff obviously impedes service delivery.

The other aspect was provincial funding. There have been only two relatively small increases in base budgets, 3% and 5%, during the past 14 years. Each year, rising costs are addressed by reducing services and staff, leading to increased wait times. In York region, if a child today needs psychiatric attention, the waiting time is six to 18 months for a child to see a psychiatrist. For emergency services at Southlake Regional Health Centre—emergency services—the wait time is 24 to 48 hours. This is unacceptable.

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So I want to again commend my colleague the member for Whitby—Oshawa for bringing this forward and for ensuring that the government addresses this issue in a very comprehensive way through a select committee where it is not a function of trying to defend what the current state of affairs is. The fact that the government has agreed to address this through a select committee gives us reason to be hopeful that in fact this issue will be addressed.

Let me just conclude by saying that all of the good work that the select committee may well—and I'm confident will—do must then be met with the appropriate level of funding, so that we have a comprehensive plan to deal with mental health services throughout the province but we also have the attention of the government and the commitment, through the budgets of this province, to ensure that the appropriate resources are there to meet those needs that have been identified.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. I certainly support the motion on the floor and would agree with many other speakers who have spoken so far in that I believe it's long overdue. I commend the member for bringing it forward and commend the minister for being so receptive. Often in this place, we end up in an adversarial situation, but I think this is an issue that maybe transcends partisan politics.

If members from other parties are getting the same visits in their constituency office that I'm getting—often we'll see people coming in who have children with eating disorders, children who are dealing with addictions. If you talk to the police officers in my community, they tell me that amongst young people there's barely a crime that gets committed that doesn't have a drug involvement. I talk to the people who treat drug addictions for young people in our community and what they tell me is that there's barely a drug addiction that doesn't have an underlying mental health issue. The two I think are connected in such a way that we need to coordinate the ser-

vices. Perhaps some of the services we're already providing we need to coordinate in a way that can do a much better job for our young people.

There's a group of people led by Michael Kirby that I've become very familiar with that is trying to bring this issue out of the shadows. They're trying to elevate the issue to the same way we treat an illness such as heart and stroke or cancer, any one of those illnesses. This group is trying to put it on the front page and is trying to put it in the forefront of all our minds. They need to be commended for that. The economic cost alone of mental illness to our society is something that we just haven't come to grips with.

I think many people would be absolutely surprised at the impact that it's having, not only in our schools and on the future lives of our young people, but indeed on the businesses that operate on a daily basis. The impact is staggering when you get down to it. When you look at the link to homelessness, you'll find that there are underlying mental health issues as well. When you look at emergency room admissions—this absolutely shocked me. I assumed anybody going into an emergency room in my community was bleeding, had a broken bone, had a sprained whatever or had an illness. A large proportion of those people are attending for psychiatric disorders, attending for things like panic, anxiety and a number of things that are related to mental health. I believe there are a number of people out there who are self-medicating because they can't get the sort of treatment they should have for mental health conditions, and that's something we need to come to grips with.

On a purely voluntary basis, my wife and I went down to an addiction centre in Pennsylvania this year because we'd heard they were doing a good job and a number of Ontario's young people were down there. So we took a few days out of our summer vacation and went to see some of the services that can be provided. I'll tell you, I was absolutely surprised that the image I had in my own mind of somebody dealing with mental health issues was blown apart that day. I met some vibrant, dynamic young people from our province who couldn't get the treatment they needed in our province and really had to go out of country to get that treatment. They allowed me the privilege of sitting in a group therapy session. I thought that was very accommodating of them because it is a tough thing to do, to pour out your soul while there is a complete stranger in the room. I left that meeting thinking that these kids wouldn't be too far out of place running a major corporation on Bay Street. These were some of our sharpest minds, these were kids that had tremendous futures ahead of them, and yet they were dealing with the demons of either drug addiction or alcoholism. They just hadn't gotten the treatment for mental health issues in the past that they should have.

I want to commend the member. I think this is a great issue for us to unite around from all three parties. It's something that I think is going to have a tremendous impact on the future of our society. It's something that I want to get involved in myself, obviously, because I just

have too many trips into my constituency office from constituents who need help, and that help currently simply isn't available in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Whitby–Oshawa, Mrs. Elliott, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank the members from Trinity–Spadina, Mississauga–Streetsville, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, London–Fanshawe, Newmarket–Aurora and Oakville for their very helpful comments and suggestions. I certainly do appreciate their support for this resolution.

I would like to just make a few comments on some of the points. They were all excellent points that were raised, but one that was raised by the member from Trinity–Spadina was with respect to the issue of employment opportunities for people with mental health problems. It's true that many people do want to work but are faced with a whole host of problems in facing employment, such as a fear of clawback of or elimination of ODSP benefits, and there are a lot of reluctant employers out there who, quite frankly, are fearful of hiring people with mental health problems.

So I think that there is a whole campaign of education that needs to go on out there to reduce the stigma and also to let employers know that there's a whole host of people out there who want to work. We're eliminating thousands and thousands of people from our workforce who could be productive, who could make great contributions to our society. It would help us as a society to advance inclusionary practices for them to be involved in the workforce and to make their contribution.

I'd also like to just comment on something that's happening locally in my own community that is quite innovative—I really would be remiss if I didn't mention that—and that is a drug court that has been started in our riding. They're hoping to expand that to a mental health court as well. This is a really truly innovative project that has involved the co-operation of the Pinewood Centre and on the addiction side, Durham Mental Health Services, a great community mental health program and service agency in Whitby, and Oshawa, the police, the defence counsel and the crown attorneys and courts in our area. What they're really trying to do is work with people to help them overcome their problems and become productive members of society.

I thank you for the opportunity. I thank all the members who contributed to the debate today and for their support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will vote on Mrs. Elliott's ballot item in about 50 minutes' time.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Robert Bailey: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government should: (a) immediately order the Auditor General to conduct a thorough audit of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to

determine if the plan to eliminate the unfunded liability by 2014 is on target; and (b) order the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to publicly release quarterly reports on the status of the unfunded liability.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Bailey moves private members' notice of motion number 70. Pursuant to standing order 98, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure for me to rise today to move this motion asking for the Auditor General to do a review of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's long-stated plan to wipe out the board's unfunded liability by 2014. If passed, this motion will also demand that the WSIB provide quarterly updates on the status of that unfunded liability to members of this Ontario Legislature. This is a key accountability issue that all members should take very seriously and be very concerned about, and I hope it will get their support.

What is the unfunded liability? Well, the unfunded liability is that difference in value between the board's assets and the future commitments against those assets. It is by far the best indicator of the board's financial health.

1530

Privately owned insurance companies and pension plans are forbidden by law from having unfunded liabilities. If they occur, the pension plans are ordered by the government to eliminate them, and if not, they would have to wrap up those programs.

In 2006, the unfunded liability of this government agency was just under \$6 billion; it had been going down. At that time, the WSIB chair announced that the board had "turned the financial corner." Yet, even at the time those words were published in the summer of 2007, the board's finances were still slipping, and the board ended 2007 with a negative investment return. The corner that the board turned ran them right into a brick wall. The unfunded liability jumped 35% from 2006 to 2007, to \$8.1 billion. That was before the recent market meltdown. The frightening reality is that this unfunded liability has likely more than doubled in the last two years. This is unprecedented.

Businesses in the past have agreed to premium increases as long as it meant that the unfunded liability was being reduced. The unfunded liability hampers the ability of the board to offer benefits to injured workers and threatens future employers with increases to their premiums. This mismanagement of the WSIB must be reined in before it worsens and threatens the long-term viability of the safety net that workers across this province depend on.

Will the Minister of Labour come clean and announce to this House now what the state of the WSIB unfunded liability is? Will he let Ontarians know that the good ship WSIB is taking on water and sinking fast?

It's true that there are reasons that the unfunded liability grew so dramatically.

First, the government moved to index benefits beyond statutory levels, which added \$2.8 billion to the unfunded liability.

Second, the number of injuries has declined steadily over the years, but the benefit costs have been going up, as has the average time on claims and benefit costs.

Third is the most troubling: It is the board's investment portfolio and the returns they are getting on those investments. In order for the board to meet its plan to eliminate the unfunded liability by 2014, the board has to have a net return of approximately 7%. According to the board's financial statements, last year's rate of return was in the negative column. I can only imagine what the investment portfolio would be doing now. When stock markets worldwide are melting down, the \$14-billion-plus WSIB portfolio must be taking a huge hit. Of course, the board won't tell us how their investments are doing, but I think if you watched your own investment statements, you would know that their investments have probably followed the same.

The money that the board has invested is Ontario taxpayers' and workers' money. We deserve to know how those investments are doing. All MPPs should be interested in how this investment portfolio is doing.

As I said, the unfunded liability jumped a whopping 35% from 2006 to 2007. I would warn every member here that the WSIB's unfunded liability will spike again this year, and I bet we'll be closer to \$12 billion by the end of the year, if not higher. It is in the interests of workers across this province and our constituents that the financial management of the WSIB be put under review.

My objective with this motion is that we should know the state of finances at the WSIB. We should know what we are expecting.

I also believe that we need an unbiased view on whether or not the WSIB can in fact eliminate the unfunded liability by 2014. If they can't make that deadline, then change it and come up with a realistic plan that will eliminate that unfunded liability. The government and the WSIB, if they are serious about wiping out the unfunded liability, are faced with some pretty tough choices. They will either have to reduce benefits, raise rates charged to businesses, or both.

Given that the government has just passed Bill 119, which has imposed a heavy new tax on small business in the form of WSIB premiums, I would hope that the board is not giving consideration to raising premiums charged to these new businesses. That would be an economic disaster for Ontario and put the brakes on job creation like nothing else. I would like to see a commitment from the government that employer premiums be frozen for the next four years. The board needs to admit that the plan to wipe out their unfunded liability is not going to work, and they need to develop a more realistic strategy on that unfunded liability.

The government should also demand an audited financial statement from the board as of October 31 this year, to be publicly released by the end of December. Financial statements should be released every quarter after that. This is something that happened in the 1990s during hard times, and it should happen again.

We should be demanding that the WSIB and the Minister of Labour come clean about the state of finances

at the board, and they should tell us whether or not they can make the 2014 deadline for wiping out the unfunded liability.

This government is developing a sorry reputation on WSIB reform. Under their watch, the unfunded liability will grow to historic levels, and they will be responsible for making fundamental changes to the way the WSIB works that will, in the end, add to the unfunded liability.

When Bill 119 was forced through this House, it included a whole group of people who can now make new claims on the WSIB system. We have no idea what the financial impact will be on the board because of these changes. Everyone remembers these changes. They were forced through this House with minimal debate and over the objections of many small business owners from all over Ontario. We believe that was a mistake.

What is clear to all of us is that the government and the WSIB need to change tracks. Holding the course will only make the unfunded liability worse; it will not make it better.

The global financial meltdown may be beyond the total control of this government, but when things have changed so much, they need to look at what exposure the WSIB has to the equity markets and make sure that this money is being handled appropriately. The best way to do that is through the Auditor General.

We can surmise how the board's finances are doing just by reading the newspapers. In the Toronto Star on October 10, there was the headline "Pension Plans Take Biggest Hit in Decade." At the end of the third quarter of 2008, Canadian pension plans reportedly suffered their biggest quarterly loss in a decade, and that was before the crash that we saw in October.

Private pension plans are typically better capitalized than the board's. According to the Star, they were capitalized at a peak of 120% funding ratio in 1999; private funds are in the low 70s, as of September 2008.

In early October, Ontario's finance minister warned that "tough times" are ahead for Ontario. The board is not immune, nor is it alone. Action does need to be taken, though. It has to start with a thorough discussion about whether or not this unfunded liability can be reduced to zero by 2014. The Auditor General could help with us that. If this plan is found to be not working, the board needs to accept that and come up with a realistic plan to solve this problem, and I would urge the minister to work with them to do that.

One of the things that they could do to help get some of their costs under control and help solve some fraud issues would be to move to a named insurance system, so that the WSIB would know exactly who is covered and who isn't. I know people say that this is a complex system that could take years to implement. Somehow we manage to do this with OHIP, we manage to do it with EI, we manage to do it with many government-run programs; so why can't we do it with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board? I think we can; it's just easier if we don't.

We believe that the WSIB is in serious need of reform so that it better serves our injured workers and helps con-

tribute to the economic growth of the province. Unfortunately, we aren't sure that the government has the will to do that.

I am looking forward to the rest of the debate today. I hope that the government sees that this is an accountability measure that would help all MPPs better understand the finances of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, which is so important to so many of our constituents.

This House must force the WSIB to rein in their financial mismanagement practices and put an end to the unfunded liability. This problem not only threatens the taxpayers' pocketbooks, but more importantly, it threatens the long-term viability of that safety net that's so important to our workers across this province and which they depend on so much.

I look forward to the rest of the afternoon's debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Just so you know, I say to Mr. Bailey, the remaining two and a half minutes you have will be added to your two-minute summation time, if you so choose.

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Aw, jeez, the member for Sarnia-Lambton is such a capable member of this Legislature, and I really do like him, and he has done a good job since his election, but I'm just not with him on this one, and let me tell you why.

I have no qualms, quite frankly, about an audit of the WSIB. As a matter of fact, I'd love to see Steve Mahoney's expenditures. I would delight in looking at the restaurant receipts and the bar tabs. I have no qualms about saying that. I don't think any of us should be frightened about the prospect of the Auditor General auditing WSIB.

1540

It's not rocket science to note that there isn't a pooled fund in the world that isn't worth less on December 4, 2008, than it was a month ago, never mind two or three months ago. As a matter of fact, I take some perverse pleasure, I suppose, because there are more than a few people here, including Conservatives, who adopted a self-controlled pension plan back in 1996. Mike Harris and the Conservatives came up with this spectacular proposition of ending MPP pensions. I delighted in the proposition. It's not that we don't have pensions. We have what are called defined contribution pensions, which are becoming the vogue; it's part of a whole trend internationally—a very frightening trend—not just here.

It's fine if you're a 401(k) kind of pensioner. If you're making \$500,000 a year, you can deal with it. You've got such huge amounts that if you lose 10%, 20%, 30%, you're still not going to end up on welfare; you're still not going to be on the relief line. But what MPPs did here at Queen's Park—the Tories led the way, and the Liberals and New Democrats followed in lockstep—was they collapsed the defined benefit pension plan, which was overly rich. I remember, at the time, presenting a private member's bill that simply said you had to be 55 before you could collect. Remo Mancini, from down Wind-

sor way, was in his early 40s and collecting a pension that would choke a horse. It probably did choke more than a few horses down Windsor way.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Bailey interjects, and I'm not sure how appropriately.

So here we have all these MPPs with a pension plan, but it's self-controlled. Every year—what is it?—10% of our gross salary gets put into this pension plan. Mind you, just like WSIB's pooled funds are worth a heck of a lot less now than they were a month ago, I dare say there are more than a few members here whose pension plans are worth a heck of a lot less than they were a few months ago.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He interjects. That was Flynn?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Please refer to the honourable member by his riding name.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I tried to get him on the record. If he's going to heckle and be in Hansard, he has to speak up so the young woman here can get him at the point at which I acknowledge him.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I was helping you.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Now, let's understand that the WSIB shouldn't be immune from an audit proposition. We fundamentally disagree, though, with the observation that you address shortfalls in funding, underfunding and unfunded liabilities by reducing benefits. Quite frankly, one of the most effective ways of addressing the issue of unfunded liabilities is reducing exposure and increasing workplace safety. The other very important way of doing it is ensuring that every employer in this province—that means every worker in this province, every working woman and man—is entitled to WSIB coverage.

We supported the most recent legislation that extended WSIB coverage to construction workers who were contractors/self-employed; we supported that without hesitation. But at the time we made note of the fact that there remain huge numbers of workers, over a million workers in this province—I should apologize; that number may be outdated, because so many people have lost jobs in the last short period of time that the number could be fewer than a million, but at one point not that long ago, before Mr. McGuinty became Premier, over a million workers who were working in this province had no WSIB coverage. One third of the workforce in the province doesn't have mandatory WSIB coverage. That means that those employers aren't making contributions to the plan.

And who or what are the biggest chunks of those employers? The financial and banking industry, and this government has demonstrated itself to be so deep in the back pockets of the big banks that it's spitting out lint. The big banks have won every round, whether it's the reduction in capital taxes—we know who that benefits: the big banks. I must note: Take a look at profit reports. While profits are down, profits are still substantial for the big banks. And do you know why? Because they nickel and dime you every step of the way.

You ever play poker, Mr. Speaker? You've been in a couple of poker games; I don't know that for a fact but I can presume that. Well, you play poker and you know that at the end of the day, if you play poker long enough, who's got all the money? It's the guy holding the poker game who is taking the rake. You play long enough, and nobody has any money because the guy holding the game, the house with its rake, takes every penny. The banks are the same thing. At the end of the day they'll have it all, because whether your investments with them increase or decrease, the bank is charging you every step of the way. Yet these are the people whom this government gives breaks to, not only when it comes to its reduction of capital taxes but when it comes to deferring to the banks and ensuring that banks do not have to participate in WSIB. I can't say with certainty—and this is the sort of thing, quite frankly—that a report by the Auditor General might well prove useful about, as to what banks' and other financial institutions' participation in the WSIB system would do to unfunded liability. I suspect it would make a significant dent in unfunded liability.

Let me make it clear: You don't address unfunded liability by reducing workers' pensions. You don't address unfunded liability by reducing compensation. You don't address unfunded liability by exempting more and more employers from having to participate in WSIB. You do it, in fact, by ensuring workplace safety, by being tough, mean and hard about workplace safety. You do it, for instance, by rewarding good employers with good health and safety programs, employers which encourage and assist workers who are injured in filing claims, and then not targeting, because they've been honest and frank with the system, by having them marked, red-flagged, tagged as high-risk. Because when you do that, it sends a message out to employers across the province that they're better off, that they have an incentive to deny and suppress claims and encourage workers to not make claims when workers suffer injuries in those workplaces.

So here we are; New Democrats are not at all afraid. I don't know why the government would be, either. The government, I would think—I don't know; I can't anticipate what they are going to do. It's a Liberal government and one of the nice things about being a Liberal is that you don't always have to be, so who knows where the government is going to be on this particular issue? It could be over here, it could be over here, it could be right up here, it could be over—it could start right up here and then go over here. So I have no idea. But for the life of me, here's a resolution. The government disagrees with the Conservatives around the issue of the WSIB coverage of the contract or self-employed construction workers. I understand that.

What we've witnessed over the last couple of weeks are a couple of old dogs circling, raising their hind legs, marking turf. Quite frankly, the Minister of Labour and Mr. Bailey can engage in that exercise. It's not our dispute. We have made our position very, very clear. But for the life of me, if the government was confident about

the governance of WSIB and its funds, if they were prepared to be as transparent as Mr. McGuinty promised to be—but then again, it was a promise, so can we expect him to keep it? I ask sarcastically. One would think the government would say, "Of course. We welcome the Auditor General examining what's going on down the road here, all the way from the plush, thick-carpet offices where Mr. Mahoney with his Prada shoes and his fine—well, his Harry Rosen suits, shuffles along"—his biggest fear is static electricity from the plush carpet.

So you would think the government would welcome an examination, an audit of what goes on down the road here, everywhere from Mr. Mahoney's plush office with its lavish bar and the expensive Baccarat crystal all the way down to the hard-working WSIB workers who are out there staffing in the field, dealing with workers' claims with some incredible pressure from management. One would think the government would welcome that. One would then, question, without imputing motive—because of course, you can't impute motive, can you? Far be it from me to impute motive. One would then question why the government wouldn't agree to do this. The motion leaves the timing entirely up to Mr. McGuinty and his minions. The motion doesn't say it'll happen now or it'll happen in three months; the motion simply is a recommendation from this Legislature to have an Auditor General examination of the books and, more and most importantly, public disclosure. What's wrong with that? What's wrong with public disclosure, some sunshine, as we approach these dark, gloomy December and January days?

1550

Hon. David Caplan: You were a Sunshine Boy.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I was a Sunshine Boy, you bet your boots, Mr. Caplan; and one thing I can tell you is, you'll never be one.

Hon. David Caplan: I'll never be one.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Caplan responds. That is a certainty.

So here we are: I leave this dispute to the Conservative and the Liberal caucuses, but I await with great enthusiasm the government's rationale for not supporting it, if indeed they're not going to.

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

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Bob Bailey, the member from Sarnia-Lambton, introduced the following motion to be debated today: "That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government should: (a) immediately order the Auditor General to conduct a thorough audit of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to determine if the plan to eliminate the unfunded liability by 2014 is on target; and (b) order the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to publicly release quarterly reports on the status of the unfunded liability."

The Auditor General can examine any area of the government's financial accounts and transactions. There is no area of government spending that is out of bounds, including the WSIB. The Provincial Auditor has formal

and regular representation on the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's audit and finance committee. The Provincial Auditor also performs regular reviews as contained in his 1993, 1997 and 2005 annual reports. There are no restrictions, no limitations on what the auditor can examine.

The Auditor General Act gives the auditor the mandate to examine the government's financial accounts and transactions, and to report his findings to the Legislature. He is to report on instances of misuse or mismanagement of public funds, overexpenditures and other irregularities. The Auditor General is also charged with assessing whether public resources are well administered, and whether government and broader public sector activities are managed with due regard to economy and efficiency. Under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, section 169, the WSIB's accounts must be audited each year. In addition, the Provincial Auditor has a permanent representative on the WSIB board of directors' audit and finance committee. As a member of this committee, the Provincial Auditor has access to all WSIB funding strategy discussions.

In 2004, the Ministry of Labour commissioned a third party audit of the WSIB. The WSIB's books were opened and a team of auditors reviewed its operating procedures and practices. Sixty-four recommendations were made, and the WSIB developed a comprehensive and strategic response which has ensured that each of these recommendations has now been addressed. The follow-up audit results noted that significant progress has been made in modern management practices at the WSIB, and that work continues to achieve full maturity of these practices.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board has a robust and responsive plan in place. The funding framework, the investment strategy, the five-year strategic plan and the prevention strategy work together to address challenges in the system, provide appropriate worker benefits and ensure financial sustainability.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's financial situation has changed with the volatility in the financial markets, the economic uncertainty, the impact on employment rates and the negative effects being felt in key industries such as construction, manufacturing, automotive and forestry. Today's volatile markets mean that short-term low returns are inevitable for most, if not all, investors. It is important to remember that for any investor, the principle of staying the course must be applied.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board has sole responsibility for setting premium rates and dealing with its unfunded liability. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board takes its stewardship role of the insurance fund investments very seriously, as it has a legal obligation to ensure that premiums are prudently invested. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board governance framework for the insurance fund includes oversight and approval by the investment committee and the board of directors.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is constantly reviewing its investment strategies and has engaged some of the most highly regarded experts in the field to advise and to provide management services for its investments. Over the last several years, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board has made significant progress in improving worker benefits, proactively addressing rising costs and improving customer service, all while holding the line on premium rates for three years running.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's funding framework is a planned and disciplined approach to managing the risks and uncertainties presented by the unfunded liability, as well as increasing health care costs and the impacts of occupational disease. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's board of directors approved the 2008 funding framework in April 2008. Employer stakeholders were invited to participate in consultation and information sessions. The funding framework is posted on the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's website.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: With this motion by my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton, really what he's looking for is for the Liberal government to do a little extra, a little hard work. The response from the member for Brampton West reminds me of my days in the union when we used to have a little slogan that went something like this: "A little hard work never hurt anybody, but why take the chance?" Right? That's what this Liberal government is like. Why take the chance on a little hard work?

I think it's clear we have an \$8-billion unfunded liability, and we're asking for the Auditor General to investigate and provide some disclosure. But I think what's important and we also have to recognize is that this WSIB—this is what happens when government creates a monopoly. The monopoly just grows and grows out of control into a monster of unfunded liability, an \$8-billion anchor of liability on the people of this province.

As my colleague referenced in his opening comments, this is unacceptable. It would be illegal if it was a private insurance fund; unfunded liabilities are disallowed. If we look back at our traditions, we have a tradition in this House that government is neither above nor beneath the law, that our agencies, our actions, cannot be above the law, but that's what we've done with the WSIB. We have created this monster that is beyond the law; it is above the law. The WSIB is not subject to the checks and balances of the marketplace; it's not subject to competition. It's really only subject to the pressures of political patronage from the other side, and this is what happens: Taxpayers are on the hook for that lack of checks and balances.

Now, as my colleague asked, is the time to rein in this monster somewhat, to put some checks and balances in there with the Auditor General. But instead, we've seen this Liberal government with their Bill 119. What they are interested in doing is not reining in the WSIB, but

feeding it more and more, feeding it with our small businesses—and I'll tell you, its appetite is endless. We are putting our small business people in jeopardy, and you won't do anything. You won't do that little bit of hard work.

1600

I'm in support of this motion by my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton. It's an important first step in bringing accountability to the WSIB, and it's also an important first step for this Legislative Assembly to take ownership of our responsibility and to exercise our oversight over our crown agencies, commissions and boards. I encourage all members in this House to support this very reasonable, appropriate and practical motion and save the people of this province from another Liberal boondoggle.

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

The honourable member from London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me a chance to speak about the bill brought by the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

I was listening to the member from Sarnia–Lambton speaking about the WSIB. I'm not sure what he has against the WSIB. Before, he talked about different bills in the House and he asked us not to support all the workers becoming enrolled under the WSIB. I don't know why. Now he's coming back again in a different format and in a different fashion to speak against WSIB.

I just want to clear something up for the many people who are listening to us today, and especially the member from Sarnia: I think the Auditor General has a right to go to any government agency or board and investigate and report on them. This is his job. I had the chance to sit in public accounts the other day, and I remember we were talking about all the ministries and many different issues. I think the Auditor General's role is to investigate and to keep all those agencies and boards and the ministries accountable to the taxpayers.

I don't know what this member has against the WSIB.

I'm not going to support this bill because I think it does not—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Motion, Khalil.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Motion. My apologies. I'm not going to support this motion because I think it does not reflect reality. I think the Ministry of Labour and our government have been taking this issue seriously for many, many years. We believe strongly in the right of all the workers in the province of Ontario to be covered by WSIB. I believe strongly that WSIB is a great tool to protect all the workers and to give them support when they need it. Again, that's why I'm not going to support it.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd just remind the honourable members not to have their Black-Berrys near their microphones. It has happened three times in the last hour, and it plays havoc with the ears of our translators.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is a wonderful motion that has been introduced by the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

I think it was our government that set the goal that we would balance the unfunded liability of the WSIB board by 2014, which is its 100th anniversary in the province of Ontario. We've been looking after injured workers in this province for 100 years. It was pretty proactive legislation back before the First World War, so it's something that certainly should be looked after properly.

I think it's important to understand the magnitude of the problem that we're facing. In 2006, the unfunded liability was about \$6 billion. That was only two years ago. Today, with the meltdown in the markets, it's estimated that it's in excess of \$11 billion or \$12 billion. We don't know. I think it's a very dangerous precedent to set when a crown corporation of this government doesn't know what its situation is; when the people of Ontario, who are ultimately responsible for their workers' compensation board, don't know. One of the first tenets of managing anything is to have the numbers. If you can't measure the numbers, you can't manage the company. Not knowing where that unfunded liability sits is extremely dangerous.

Some of the things that have happened at the WSIB recently that have led to this unfunded liability are also of concern. When the board gives generous increases to workers' benefits—it's lovely to give increases to workers; that's a great thing to do; it's wonderful—when you can afford it. When you can't afford it, it's irresponsible to do it. Those generous increases that were given, which were well beyond the indexing and the statutory levels, created \$2.3 billion in excess unfunded liability.

I say that's an irresponsible way of managing the resources of this province—the WSIB being an important resource of this province. That is a very difficult, difficult thing to have to swallow, when they go outside their mandate. We understand that the number of accidents has been declining in the province of Ontario, and that's a good thing. That speaks well of management. But the benefit costs have gone up, and the medical costs have gone up. So some of the things that are going on within the board are not being managed very well, I would say, from those results. Perhaps with a good audited report, they would prove me wrong. But the fact again is that we don't know. The numbers can lead you to believe that there are some poor management practices going on, but we don't know, and not knowing makes it very, very difficult to manage.

The critical thing about this motion is the oversight aspect of it. Someone has to have oversight of these huge amounts of money. It doesn't seem to be this government taking that responsibility.

I take great pleasure in supporting this motion from the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

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

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to all the members here, and to those watching on TV, it does speak volumes that the members of the provincial Conservative Party here

never once, not once, mentioned injured workers—not once.

Today I had at the Ministry of Labour the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups meeting with me, and I see the sacrifices that many of these injured workers go through daily. The members from that party over there, provincial Conservative Party, want to see those injured workers suffer more.

In 1994, for those watching and those listening, there was something that was called the Friedland formula that was brought forward that affected the benefits of workers. That came through under the NDP, and then there was the modified Friedland formula under the Tories where the Tories just slashed and burned the benefits of injured workers—155,000 workers out there, some with amputations, who have lost limbs and those with different health conditions who can't work today. What that party is saying over there is, "Who cares? Who cares? Let's just cut their benefits even more."

Well, the Ontario Liberal Party does not believe that. We believe that those workers need our support. We believe they deserve respect and dignity, and that's why, after all these long years—I'll tell you, over 10 years, from 1994 to 2004, where inflation rose by 29%, in particular the Conservative Party over there raised benefits by only 2.5%. That is shameful. That is so despicable. That party allowed that the benefits of those vulnerable workers would be diminished by almost a third.

Well, we have reversed that trend. We've increased, now, benefits to those injured workers twice, by 2.5% each time—5%. We're going to be increasing those benefits again by 2.5%; that'll be 7.5%.

1610

Here's what the Tories think about the Auditor General. Listen, we like the Auditor General. In 2003 here's what the Provincial Auditor said at the time: "That party over there, the Conservative Party, has saddled your new government with \$5.8 billion in deficit." That's what the Provincial Auditor told us. We had to overcome that and continue to work on those important services of health care, education, infrastructure and social services for our communities, saddled with \$5.8 billion by the Tories. Tories attacked the Auditor General instead of working in partnership with him.

I guess you didn't do your homework, I say to the member from Sarnia-Lambton, because the Auditor General today sits permanently on the WSIB board, sits permanently on the audit and finance committee. Do your homework, sir. Under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, the WSIB accounts must be audited each year. Do your homework, sir. Annual reports are tabled here every year. Do your homework, sir. The Tories attempted to avoid a—

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I find it fascinating to stand here and listen to the labour minister ostensibly discuss the content of this motion, invoke what he thinks may have been historically the case with the WSIB under previous

Conservative governments, talk about imaginary deficits, talk about anything but the motion. The motion deals with an audit. Take an abacus and count: one, two, three, four, five. It's an audit. We want to know numbers. I would think that the labour minister and the McGuinty government would want to know exactly the same thing that my friend from Sarnia-Lambton wants to know, so I rise today to support the motion introduced by my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton on WSIB and unfunded liability.

Let's first of all define very particularly for people who may be watching us at home, what is unfunded liability? It's a technical term for unpaid debts that have yet to be paid; in other words, coming debts. We know we owe the money. We just don't have to pay them quite yet. That's illegal for private insurance companies. People go to jail if they have any unfunded liabilities, and rightly so. Besides, have you ever heard of an insurance company that doesn't make money? I never have. I'm thinking of an old joke here: Do you want to start a small business? Start a large one and let that labour minister run it.

At the end of 2007, the WSIB had \$8.1 billion more in long-term liabilities that are owed than it has in assets. Actually, in the real world that would be called bankruptcy. This is a 35% jump from 2006 to 2007, and I'm sure the government will say that the recent stock market meltdown has caused this outrageous jump. But you know, it's funny, I don't see any private insurance companies going broke, and they would be if they had those numbers. We need—

Hon. David Caplan: AIG.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's not a Canadian insurance company. This is the Canadian system. We need the people on the other side of this House to stop stonewalling on this and every other issue.

I would like to point out that the WSIB issue was the case before the market started fluctuating. The minister said in committee, on September 12, 2008, "We need to be prepared to stay the course." What, keep increasing the unfunded liability? Is that staying the course? Staying the course is not enough to work in these tough economic times.

We need to have the Auditor General conduct the audit that my colleague is demanding so that we in this House can see how well and if the plan is proceeding. That's what this is about. With a funding ratio of 66% in 2007, one can only imagine what the books look like today. The estimates that we hear from my friend from Sarnia-Lambton are potentially \$12 billion. With how the markets have been doing lately, it is reasonable to assume that there has been a massive spike in unfunded liability. Some say it may even have doubled, but how do we know? That's why we're asking the question, and that's why my friend has put forward this motion.

I fail to understand why the government can't just say, "Sure." It's an audit. After all, it's not your money; it's everyone's money. Let's find out where it is. The government likes to keep everyone in the dark on important

issues; for example, when you're going to send the people of York back to work. But I digress. Why is it that the number of injuries has declined but the costs have risen? Inverse relationship.

You've got to come to the table. You've got to answer the question. The question is framed very well in the motion. It's succinct. My friend from Sarnia–Lambton speaks for us on the labour file. He deserves an answer.

I will support this motion, and I would ask that all members of this House do likewise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Sarnia–Lambton, Mr. Bailey, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great pleasure to reply to all the excellent feedback that I had today on this resolution. I'd like to thank the members from Welland, Brampton West, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, London–Fanshawe, Halton, the Minister of Labour himself, of course, and also the member from Thornhill.

One thing I'd like to get clear and put on the record is, the Conservative Party supports the WSIB. In fact—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Well, just wait a minute now, before you ooh and aah too much. It was actually Sir James Whitney and Sir William Hearst, both Conservative Premiers—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I know not too many of you were here. Some of them are gone, the more senior members. But it was their governments in 1914 that introduced the compensation board—not as we know it today, but the first forms of WSIB. So there's a little history for some of you guys. I like history myself.

Anyway, what we're trying to do is just bring some light, shed some light, open up the doors and the windows, let the light in and look at this unfunded liability. We've got a concern on this side of House, as I know all the members do, with the finances of the public. All three parties do; I know they do. So I'd just ask them to take a look at that and support this resolution. It's not going to do anything drastic. I mean, if it's an unfunded liability, let's find out how much it is.

I don't think we have an Auditgate here, as far as I can understand. What does everyone have to hide, right? The member there in the front row is agreeing with me, from Oak Ridges–Markham. He's agreeing that—

Mr. Frank Klees: Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Newmarket–Aurora. That's right; you didn't move yet. Anyway, they're all agreeing with me.

I think that this party—what we're asking for is to open the doors and let in the light. Let's do the audit, find out exactly where we stand, and let the people of Ontario and us as their representatives in this Legislature also know.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, all the members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILD PASSENGERS
ON MOTORCYCLES), 2008
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(ENFANTS PASSAGERS
SUR DES MOTOCYCLETTES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 61, standing in the name of Ms. Jaczek. Ms. Jaczek has moved second reading of Bill 117, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the driving and operation of motorcycles with child passengers.

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. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Jaczek, would you like to refer this bill to committee?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to refer it to the justice policy committee.

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

MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTION SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with private member's ballot item number 62. Mrs. Elliott has moved private members' notice of motion number 65.

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

Motion agreed to.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE BOARD

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 63. Mr. Bailey has moved private members' notice of motion number 70.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1619 to 1624.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby

Elliott, Christine
Hudak, Tim

Klees, Frank
Shurman, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Best, Margaret
Brotten, Laurel C.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit

McNeely, Phil
Moridi, Reza
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 6; the nays are 30.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I now call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**CHILD PORNOGRAPHY
REPORTING ACT, 2008**

**LOI DE 2008 SUR LE DEVOIR
DE SIGNALER LES CAS
DE PORNOGRAPHIE JUVÉNILE**

Ms. Brotten moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to protect Ontario's children / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille afin de protéger les enfants de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Brotten: Ask any parent, and they will tell you there is nothing more important than the protection of their children. Bill 37, which we're debating on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon, recognizes our collective responsibility as legislators to protect, prevent further harm and be a strong voice for those children whose voices are often silenced.

If this bill is passed, it would require all Ontarians to report images of child abuse and sexual exploitation. Child pornography is a permanent evidentiary record of child abuse, and it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure

that if we come across one of these images, we report it. Under Bill 37, if passed, failure to do so will be an offence.

If you saw a child being abused on the street or suspected abuse in their home or in your neighbourhood, you would have an obligation to report that information. If this bill is passed and you see a child being abused, but the image comes to you through a computer screen, you still have an obligation to report it, because the abuse that that child is suffering, whether on the street or through the computer screen, is no less real, no less harmful and no less tragic. It is all those things, because it is an image of child abuse, clear and simple.

There is no form of child pornography that is not, in and of itself, illegal to hold, illegal to trade and absolutely a crime to commit. Child pornography is evidence of a crime against a child. If you receive that information, you must report it. You need to report it to allow those who work every single day across our province, across our country and around the world to protect our children. The image will be vile, shocking and horrific, but we cannot turn away. Do not stand by. We cannot be complicit in the crime we are witnessing.

The mandatory obligation to report, which would be imposed, takes away any confusion, provides clarity and leaves no question as to what our obligation and responsibility is to the children of this province. Whether you're a computer repair technician or someone who runs a network in a business, whether you're a neighbour, a babysitter or someone who is using another's home computer, it is not your responsibility to determine whether what you have observed is or is not child pornography, whether it is an image that is or is not illegal. If you believe it to be, your obligation, your responsibility is to report that information to agencies, be it law enforcement or child protection, such as cybertip.ca, who may be able to make sure that the child is protected and take the information and help to protect other children from around the world.

1630

I want to take a minute from the floor of the Legislature today to acknowledge those who have worked every single day across our province, across our country, to better protect children in Ontario. Paul Gillespie, who's the president of Kids' Internet Safety Alliance and a former Toronto police officer, has seen more horrific images than anyone can ever imagine, and Paul continues to be an important advocate on behalf of children. The Canadian Centre for Child Protection and their executive director, Lianna McDonald, have been very supportive of the proposed legislation and have helped bring it to fruition; the Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness in Ontario, John Muise, the director of public safety, and Ellen Campbell, their president; Beyond Borders, Rosalind Prober and the great work that that organization is doing; the Gatehouse child abuse advocacy centre; the Ontario Provincial Police; the Toronto Police Service; the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and in particular, their president, Chief Bill Blair.

Today, as we stand on the floor of the Legislature to debate this bill, we can know that Ontarians are with us in the importance placed by them on the protection of children. A Sun Media/Nanos Research poll from May 2008 found that 94% of Ontarians support the reporting of child pornography.

Aujourd'hui, laissez-nous travailler ensemble pour protéger les enfants de notre province. Par la mise en place d'un signalement obligatoire, ça va aider ceux qui travaillent pour protéger nos enfants chaque jour. Ils vont avoir l'information dont ils ont besoin pour pouvoir mettre en effet et vérifier le fait que les enfants sont le domaine le plus important de notre futur.

Today, in a strong and united voice, it is my hope this those on the floor of this Legislature will stand and take a step forward to protect Ontario's kids and kids around the world, to protect them from harm and abuse, because there is nothing more fundamental, there is no more fundamental responsibility of any society than to protect its children.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: We're voting for the bill, of course, and we agreed that this would be one of those bills of private members' public business that, at the end of a session prior to a recess, would be accelerated through the process as one of four that are going to be dealt with this afternoon.

This is in so many ways trite, because what person who stumbles across evidence of so heinous a crime wouldn't call the police? Having said that—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's faint praise.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Come on, Ms. Wynne. You know exactly what I'm talking about. This is the equivalent of the legislation that required emergency hospital room people to report gun wounds when the fact is that there wasn't a single incident reported to the committee that examined that of admission of a person who had a gun wound where the nursing staff or the medical staff didn't report it.

So here we are. The proposition reinforces and underscores our sense of repugnance around child pornography, around abuse and exploitation of children, but at the end of the day, with respect, the bill is going to do little to protect children. People who witness these crimes, I'm convinced, do report them. People who witness them and don't report them—how are the police going to know? Because they weren't reported. Do you see the Catch-22 there, Ms. Gélinas? If they don't disclose, if they don't report, then the police are never going to find out. So in that respect, there's some dilemma around the enforceability or the efficacy of the legislation.

Having said that, we commend Ms. Broten for her efforts in this. We see this, as I say, as a collective expression of repugnance around abuse of children and a call by this Legislature upon all Ontarians to play a role in protecting children.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to rise today in support of this bill, a bill that protects the children of Ontario. Child protection is a very serious matter; it is serious to everybody in this House and it is serious to everybody in this province. It's probably serious to everybody in this country and all over the world. It is horrific that one can find images on the Internet and elsewhere of children being abused.

In my previous work, I've had the opportunity to work with families and children who have been abused. I've seen the devastation to those children's and families' lives. I've also worked with the abusers, to try to turn their lives around. It makes for a lot of misery and a lot of hardship. Anything that will work toward preventing those horrific crimes from happening is something that I will support.

This bill is looking at ways to stop the abuse that is coming from the Internet. It is a bill that can proactively prevent children from being abused, and I don't think there's anybody in this room who does not understand that this is a bill worth supporting.

Il me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de parler en faveur du projet de loi 37, la loi pour protéger les enfants. J'ai eu l'expérience dans ma vie antérieure de travailler avec des enfants et des familles qui ont vécu la violence et qui ont vécu l'abus, et les effets terribles que cela a eu sur ces familles-là et sur ces enfants-là. J'ai également eu l'expérience de travailler avec les « abuseurs ». Puis ça non plus, ce n'était pas plus gai.

C'est le genre de projet de loi qui était mis de l'avant par le membre de Etobicoke-Lakeshore et qui parle de la promotion de la prévention de ces actes, surtout lorsqu'ils sont distribués sur Internet. C'est le genre de loi proactive qui va protéger les enfants et qui demande l'appui de tous les membres de cette Chambre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, Ms. Broten has moved third reading of Bill 37.

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

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to call the remaining orders in the following order: M124, M111, M98.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we have unanimous consent to call the orders in that order? Agreed.

The honourable minister.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I call M124, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act with respect to cigarillos.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Deputy Clerk reminds me that the unanimous consent was to do M111, M124 and M98 in that order. So, would you like to call M111, Minister of Education?

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: With respect, if it hasn't already been sought and obtained, consent to varying the order as indicated in the earlier motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Okay. Do I have unanimous consent to vary the order? Agreed.

The honourable minister has called—oh, whatever you want.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to call M124, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act with respect to cigarillos.

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO
AMENDMENT ACT (CIGARILLOS), 2008
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI FAVORISANT
UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE
(CIGARILLOS)

M^{me} Gélinas, on behalf of Mr. Levac, moved third 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.

1640

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is an honour to rise before this House today to speak on Bill 124, which will ban the sale of flavoured and individually sold cigarillos that are targeted at children. I'm ecstatic, as an MPP, that MPPs from all sides of this Legislature have come together in support of my very first private member's bill.

Applause.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you. It is a bill that will help to protect the health of our children.

I send a special thank you to Dave Levac, the member from Brant, who has co-sponsored this bill with me. I also want to thank the many groups who have supported this bill. They include the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, the Ontario Lung Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Ontario Medical Association, the Non-Smokers' Rights Association, and the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario.

I came to Queen's Park to make a difference in the lives and the health of Ontarians. After being here for over a year now, I feel that I have been able to create some positive change, and this is something that means a lot to me and certainly brings me a great sense of fulfillment.

I know that private members' bills very rarely become law in Ontario, but the passage of Bill 124 today in the Legislature I guess shows that with hard work and perseverance, this kind of job can be done. I look forward to working with the Ministry of Health Promotion to ensure that Bill 124 is implemented because, as I tried to do in committee this morning but wasn't quite successful—the government did not agree to a proclamation date, which

was in the bill, as is usually the case, especially the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which came with dates on it. Rest assured, I will continue to hold the ministry's feet to the fire and make sure that we do get a proclamation.

That said, for me, today is a day of celebration. Together, we are calling for immediate action on cigarillos and sending a clear message that new regulations must close the gap in Ontario anti-smoking policies. Together, today, we will help prevent a new generation of young people from becoming smokers, a new generation of young people that could have filled up the ranks of the 60,000 Ontarians a year who die because they became addicted to tobacco products. We are protecting the health of children, and this is something we should all be proud of and celebrate. For that, I'm really proud and I thank everybody.

J'aimerais remercier les gens qui ont parlé en appui et qui nous ont aidé à mettre de l'avant le projet de loi 124, un projet de loi qui va empêcher la vente de cigarillos à l'unité et les différentes saveurs.

C'est mon premier projet de loi et il me fait extrêmement plaisir qu'il va aller de l'avant pour devenir loi. J'aimerais remercier tous ceux qui y ont travaillé.

Thank you. Merci.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I have to start with a thank you to the member from Nickel Belt, not only for her determination to see this bill through and her first introduction of a private member's bill, but also to her and her staff for their co-operation, their goodwill and their trust. Far too often in this place we have lost that capacity to look each other in the eye and say, "We're going to make this work." So it was an honour to work with her, and the other organizations, on the importance of this particular piece of legislation.

We need to point out that this was all based on a loophole. Just because there was a loophole in our first attempt to make us smoke-free, somebody found that loophole and they went from selling 50,000 units in Canada in 2001 to selling 80 million units in 2006. You cannot tell me that this wasn't about getting kids hooked. So I want to thank the member. I appreciate her passion and I want to tell her that the government understands the importance of this bill. The government has said, with all of the things they've done, under the circumstances we face today, we are committed to getting the bill proclaimed, and let me give you just a small example of why.

It has indicated its willingness to move on the bill once the provincial offences have been completed—and properly trained and the preparations for the transition have been made. So we needed to find ourselves some room in order for us to proclaim it. It has something to do with the fact that the federal government has indicated that it wants to do something. But there are amendments in that bill that allow us to proceed once that portion is done, and then we can change the regulations. Because of the amendments that you accepted, when the feds get

their act together, we can coordinate that. So the reality of this particular piece of legislation is that's the indication.

I want to also thank very clearly the Ontario Lung Association; the Canadian Cancer Society; the Heart and Stroke Foundation; Smoke-Free Ontario; Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco; the University of Waterloo smoking survey, which gave us the inside information that some people are professing doesn't exist; the doctors for Smoke-Free Ontario; the Brant County Health Unit; smoke-free Brant. I've got to tell you, there are enough people lined up to say that it is about time for us to do this.

I want to compliment the member, and I want to compliment the members who have joined us in the gallery today from the those organizations for their determination to keep our kids healthy. Thank you very much. We've taken another step in smoke-free Ontario, and there's more to do. Thank you very much, Minister.

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

Hon. Margaret R. Best: As the Minister of Health Promotion, I am proud to support Bill 124. I take this opportunity to congratulate the MPP for Nickel Belt and my colleague the MPP for Brant for the work they have done on Bill 124. If passed, this bill will go a long way to help protect our children and youth from the dangers associated with tobacco use.

I also want to thank all the stakeholders and supporters. We have come a long way since the Smoke-Free Ontario Act became law on May 31, 2006. This is indeed another step that has been taken to protect the future of Ontario: our children, our youth.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I tell you that we in the NDP are so very proud of our member from Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, not just for this piece of legislation, which is a very important one—and I'll explain why in just a minute—but for her tenacious commitment to healthy Ontarians and to adequate levels of health care. She has in short order, but a year and change since her election here, established a formidable presence at Queen's Park and across the province as the NDP health critic.

These cigarillos that we're talking about aren't Old Port cigarillos that many of the folks who are my age would imagine. I don't get ruffled too often, but these things actually shocked and horrified me. They were very tiny tobacco cigarillo products, candy-flavoured, in candy-coloured containers, small in diameter, for little kids to smoke. It was incredible—Ms. Gélinas gives them to me. It's just shocking that the purveyors of death who manufacture these and then market them—again, it's clear this is marketed toward little kids, in the same way that soda pop, liquor—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd ask the honourable member to take his seat for a moment. I'd just remind the honourable member that you can't use props in the House. I'd ask you to put it away, please.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Perhaps the Sergeant at Arms can seize these from me, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Can you just put it away? Thank you.

The honourable member from Welland has the floor.

Mr. Peter Kormos: They are a very insidious product. They're the parallel of the candy-flavoured liquors and so on that are designed to lure young kids into drinking.

I have the highest regard for advocates, for zealots, like Ms. Gélinas, who is zealous in her campaign against smoking.

1650

I say that this assembly has this challenge to meet: When will this assembly make the Queen's Park precinct a tobacco-free zone? Notwithstanding all of the education, notwithstanding all of the purported leadership, when you walk in the east entrance or when you walk in the west entrance, you walk through a cloud of tobacco smoke. And you walk through the rubbish, the detritus of, quite frankly, slovenly smokers. If there's anything worse than a smoker who subjects other people to their smoking—I'm an ex-smoker—it's smokers who are pathetically piggish in leaving their garbage behind.

When will this assembly accept the challenge to make this Queen's Park island a smoke-free, tobacco-free zone? That is the next challenge. That would be leadership.

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

Seeing none, Ms. Gélinas has moved third reading of Bill 124. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

EMANCIPATION DAY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ÉMANCIPATION

Mrs. Van Bommel moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to proclaim Emancipation Day /
Projet de loi 111, Loi proclamant le Jour de l'émancipation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'm very pleased to be able to speak today to Bill 111, which, if passed, will proclaim August 1 of every year as Emancipation Day. I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Health Promotion, who also wants to have an opportunity to speak to this bill.

But I'm especially honoured to have co-sponsored this private member's bill with the member for Wellington-Halton Hills, Ted Arnott. It's a great testament to a provincial Legislature that enables two members from opposing parties to reach across the aisles and introduce the first-ever co-sponsored bill in this legislative history.

Mr. Arnott and I understand that this bill is a poignant reminder of an unfortunate past, but it is also a celebration of hardships and the people who overcame them as they tried to work their way out of slavery and risked their lives in order to overcome oppression.

I want to speak today in particular about two communities in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex where this history is particularly significant. Just outside the town of Dresden, in the former township of Dawn, stands Uncle Tom's Cabin. The museum is built on the site of the black settlement that Reverend Josiah Henson established in 1841. That museum recounts the history of the Underground Railroad and the role played by Reverend Henson in bringing other enslaved African-Americans to freedom in Canada. Reverend Henson and his wife, Nancy, lived there, raised their children and did their outreach from this house. Reverend Henson escaped slavery by fleeing northwards with his wife and four children from Maryland in the United States, eventually crossing the Niagara River into Upper Canada on October 28, 1830.

Upper Canada had become a haven for black refugees like Reverend Henson after Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe had passed An Act to prevent further introduction of Slaves and to limit the terms of contracts for servitude within this Province in 1793. Although the legislation didn't free slaves living in Canada, it prohibited the importation of slaves into the province. This meant that refugees from slavery were free as soon as they set foot in Ontario.

Today, thousands of people make pilgrimages to the Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site to discover more about a part of our history that I feel is relatively unknown to most of us. Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site takes its name from Harriet Beecher Stowe's successful anti-slavery novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, featuring a character that is based on Josiah Henson's life; the character's name was Tom. Reverend Henson actually was very proud and in his autobiography speaks about the fact that he was proud to be known as Uncle Tom.

The second community I want to speak about is Wilberforce. It is also in my riding, or was at one time. Wilberforce was located in close proximity to the community of Lucan, north of the city of London. The community was established by a group of African-Americans fleeing the violence of Cincinnati, Ohio, and was named in honour of William Wilberforce, known as "The Liberator" for his nearly two-decade effort to end slavery in the British empire. Just three days before Wilberforce died, the British House of Commons finally passed the British Emancipation Act, on August 1, 1833. He lived long enough to know that the first organized all-black settlement had been named for him and that his abolitionist efforts had succeeded. Although the settlement of Wilberforce lasted only 10 years, it still became a symbol and inspiration for antislavery and abolitionist causes.

While there is little to mark their passing, the story of the early black settlers deserves to be told and remembered. African-American refugees came to Ontario with

hopes and dreams. Today, Ontario residents can take pride in the fact that their province has often been the refuge to those who sought a better life for themselves and their descendants. It is time this province establishes a day to pay tribute to the history of Ontario's black community and their struggle for emancipation. This day will give opportunity for all Ontarians to reflect on an important time and part of our history—a day to remember people like Reverend Henson, Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe and William Wilberforce, and a day to remember all those who were impacted by the oppression of slavery. I encourage my colleagues on all sides of the House to join with the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, and myself in having Emancipation Day proclaimed in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The co-sponsor of the bill, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was honoured to move second reading of Bill 111 this morning, and I should begin my remarks this afternoon by complimenting my colleague the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Maria Van Bommel, for her willingness to work with me on this bill, the very first co-sponsored bill to be introduced in the history of the Ontario Legislature. I know that without her involvement this bill would not have been called for third reading today. I should also express my sincere appreciation to all of the members of this House because without their support this bill cannot pass into law today.

I know that my colleague the member for Welland, Peter Kormos, strongly supports Bill 111, and I thank him for that. I wish to acknowledge Michael Wood of legislative counsel, who helped us with the drafting of Bill 111; Helen Chong of the legislative library, who assisted us with background research; and our friend Alvin Curling, the former Speaker of this Legislature, who was very helpful in expressing his support. My legislative assistant, Stephen Yantzi, has worked hard on this issue along with me, and Dr. Alex Roman, who works with Frank Klees, has provided us with encouragement and outstanding advice since the day this bill was introduced.

My involvement in this issue began last summer, on August 2, when I attended a particularly meaningful and moving ceremony in the community of Glen Allan in Mapleton township in Wellington county. On that day, I joined former Lieutenant Governor Lincoln Alexander to help unveil an Ontario Heritage Trust plaque to commemorate the Queen's Bush settlement. The best way to tell the story is to share the eloquent words that are written on that plaque. The plaque says this:

"In the early 19th century, the vast unsettled area between Waterloo county and Lake Huron was known as the 'Queen's Bush.' More than 1,500 free and formerly enslaved blacks pioneered scattered farms throughout the Queen's Bush, starting in about 1820. Many settled along the Peel and Wellesley township border with Glen Allan, Hawkesville and Wallenstein as important centres. Working together, these industrious and self-reliant settlers

built churches, schools, and a strong and vibrant community life. American missionaries taught local black children at the Mount Hope and Mount Pleasant schools. In the 1840s the government ordered the district surveyed and many of the settlers could not afford to purchase the land that they had laboured so hard to clear. By 1850, migration out of the Queen's Bush had begun. Today African-Canadians whose ancestors pioneered the Queen's Bush are represented in communities across Ontario."

Just as I was leaving the ceremony that day, a man I didn't know approached me to say that August 1 should be recognized as Emancipation Day in Ontario. While driving home, I couldn't stop thinking about what he'd said. I decided to look into it further, and I asked legislative counsel to draft the legislation.

1700

When our standing orders were changed to allow members of different parties to co-sponsor bills, I thought this idea was perfect for this new opportunity we have, as members, to work together across party lines.

I was very pleased when the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex agreed to work with me on this, because I know her support has been absolutely instrumental in getting this bill to third reading.

I was also impressed when I found out that the Ontario Black History Society has been advocating for a bill like Bill 111 for several years. It was fitting that their president, Dr. Rosemary Sadlier, was here for first reading on October 15, and I'm sure all members will join me in welcoming her here today.

Applause.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Rosemary's lifelong hard work on behalf of our African-Canadian community merits special recognition from all of us.

By supporting Bill 111 at third reading, members have a chance to participate in a historic act that celebrates one of our core Canadian values, the value of tolerance. The bill symbolizes our continued determination to eliminate discrimination in all its forms, and our continued commitment to strengthen our country, bringing all our citizens together as one.

It can also be said that Bill 111 is our Legislature's tribute to a great parliamentarian of the 19th century, William Wilberforce. As a British member of Parliament, he led the fight against slavery but, sadly, died just a few months short of seeing the scourge of slavery abolished throughout the British Empire in 1834. It was Wilberforce's student, our own John Graves Simcoe, who brought his mentor's passionate vision for a just and equal society, free of racism, to Upper Canada as our first Lieutenant Governor.

Simcoe's first priority as LG was to introduce a legislative agenda to end slavery. The Ontario Heritage Trust website tells us that Simcoe initially "proposed the outright abolition of slavery. However, the Legislative Assembly opposed this proposal because many Loyalists brought enslaved people with them to Upper Canada after the American Revolution. As a compromise, Sim-

coe passed legislation that allowed for gradual abolition: Slaves already in the province would remain enslaved until their death, no new slaves could be brought into Upper Canada, and children born to female slaves would be freed at age 25. This act was the first to limit slavery in the British Empire and remained in force until 1833, when the Emancipation Act abolished slavery throughout the British Empire, including Ontario."

Bill 111 also celebrates the many African-Canadian Loyalists who arrived here, beginning in 1793, to escape oppression in the United States.

We acknowledge the heroism of Harriet Tubman, who was one of the great conductors of the Underground Railroad. She single-handedly brought over 800 former slaves to freedom in the Dominion of Canada, despite her own failing health and without fear of threatened reprisals against her by the American government of the day.

Any discussion of Bill 111 should also include recognition of the great African-Canadian figures in contemporary times, such as the former Lieutenant Government of Ontario, the Honourable Lincoln Alexander.

In summary, Bill 111, in its recognition of Emancipation Day, celebrates the hard-won values of freedom and equality that we have achieved here. It is a clarion call to redouble our efforts to make these values felt around the globe.

This bill, if passed, recognizes the extraordinarily positive contribution of African-Canadians in the life of our great province. Their pride is justified.

I encourage all members to support Bill 111.

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

Hon. Margaret R. Best: As the sole African-Canadian in the Ontario Legislature, and in recognition of the dreams of Dr. Martin Luther King, the Ontario Black History Society and Ms. Rosemary Sadlier, it is certainly a privilege for me to rise in this Legislature in support of Bill 111.

I look forward to the day when I can celebrate Emancipation Day on August 1 each year, and I thank my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for their work with this bill.

It is truly a great day for me to be here, and I know that I feel, just by being here, that Martin Luther King's dream is indeed a reality. Yet there is still more to be done, and we look forward to it.

Applause.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats are pleased, proud and honoured to be able to support this bill, this proposition, this oh so modest proposal. I applaud the authors of the bill, and I applaud the community that has struggled to make this legislation a reality.

One can't talk about slavery in North America without talking about racism, and one can't talk about emancipation from the slavery of chains, only then to be

enslaved by the slavery of racism. Just this morning in the *New York Times*, I read the obituary of Odetta. Those of our generation, Ms. Wynne, recall being inspired by her as one of the songstresses of the civil rights movement in the United States. The struggle of black Americans and black Canadians didn't end upon emancipation, when the latifundia economy in the United States was collapsing, capitalism in the northern United States was emerging and a civil war purported to free the slaves only to create wage slaves.

I have bragging rights too, because I come from down in the Niagara region, and that was yet another one of the rails of the Underground Railroad. I grew up with a family—there are historic black Canadian families in Welland and St. Catharines that are descendants of either enslaved blacks in Canada or escaped slaves from the United States.

Harriet Tubman preached in St. Catharines; the church is still there. I visit it often, and it's still a black-Canadian congregation which, of course, has many friends throughout the community.

William Hamilton Merritt, the entrepreneur who engineered the Welland Canal, was also one of the great and leading Canadian abolitionists. We down there, of course, take great pride in the Welland Canal, and I take even greater pride that a personality like Merritt, more importantly and more significantly than being a builder of great engineering feats, was one of the members of the vanguard of the abolitionist movement.

We can't talk about this celebration in Canada without talking about the reality of slavery in so many parts of the world today. I hope that our recognition of Emancipation Day in Canada and what it means for black Canadians and their descendants also causes us to reflect upon the imperative that we commit ourselves to addressing slavery that prevails in so many parts of the world today.

You see, slavery is not ancient history. There are still families in Canada for whom slavery is so close generationally that they can tell the stories of that family's great-great-grandparents and their struggles, just like there are families in the United States who can identify enslaved antecedents, enslaved ancestors.

That creates a very special circumstance, because a society of culture can't just declare emancipation and then relieve itself of all the responsibility for having deprived generations—because one of the things that black slavery in North America did was steal from those people their histories: their family histories, their cultural histories. It stole from those people any sense of their roots, their origins, and that perhaps is far crueller than any shackles, far crueller than any brutality that was inflicted upon them. I trust you know some of the things that were done to escapees: hobbled, Achilles tendons cut, some beaten. Of course there was great passion: Most slave owners, because slaves were property—they were chattels—would ensure that that slave remained fertile if she was to have children, not for herself, of course, but literally for a market in a marketplace. And if that slave was going to work in fields or produce value

for that slave owner, that slave was maintained the same way we might maintain a car or a draft horse. But all that does is underscore the inhumanity.

1710

We also have to reflect upon the fact that generations of good Christians defended slavery, declared it to have Biblical justification, and insisted that emancipation was in and of itself contrary to God's will. This attitude, this perspective, was supported by many.

So we reflect upon these things, not because we want to weary ourselves with that recollection, but because we want to prepare ourselves for the struggle that continues.

I'm old enough, like Ms. Wynne, although I'm a little older than her, to remember, as a young person, witnessing the great civil rights movement—not the 1960s; the 1950s. She and I watched black and white television, she and I read *Life* magazine, she and I read newspaper headlines, and saw the courage of those civil rights leaders. Oh, not Jesse Jackson, but Rosa Parks; oh, not Ralph Abernathy—we recall the images, don't we, Ms. Wynne?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We do.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The Bull Connor attacks on plain folks, hard-working folks; Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney, who were slaughtered because they came from the north to help organize those people. That wasn't that long ago at all, was it?

This isn't ancient history; it's current history, and the struggle is a current one too.

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

Seeing none, Mrs. Van Bommel has moved third reading of Bill 111. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

SIGNAGE TO PROMOTE
ONTARIO PRODUCED
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS ACT, 2008
LOI DE 2008 SUR L'AFFICHAGE
VISANT À PROMOUVOIR
LES PRODUITS AGRICOLES ONTARIENS

Mr. Hardeman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act to promote the sale of Ontario produced agricultural products by amending the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act / *Projet de loi 98, Loi visant à promouvoir la vente de produits agricoles ontariens en modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun.*

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This bill—I was going to say “if passed,” but I'm going to say “when passed”; I think

we should think of this on a positive note—allows farmers to erect signs to do what all Ontarians want them to do, which is to connect farmers with the eaters or the consumers in the province of Ontario.

I would also like to thank all the members of the Legislature who voted for this bill on second reading and who then supported the process in getting it through to be called back for third reading, which is not something that happens very often with private members' bills and which I'm happy to see. On behalf of all the farmers who will benefit from this bill, I want to thank the members of the Legislature.

I also want to thank Chuck Emre, an asparagus grower in Norfolk riding. Our colleague Toby Barrett represents that area. He had a sign and it was taken down because, under the Highway Traffic Act, it was not allowed to be where it was. It had been there for a number of years, but it was taken down because it was an infraction of the law. That's what prompted the introduction of this bill. I want to thank him for helping me design a bill that would solve his problem.

I'd like to take the time that I have to speak to this bill to point out the benefits that this bill will present to rural Ontario and to agriculture in this province by going through some of the letters of support that I received after we got second reading of the bill.

The first one is from Brenda Lammens. She is the chair of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association. The applicable part in the letter reads:

"The ability to erect a directional sign on privately owned, agriculturally zoned land makes sense for farmers and consumers. The intent is simple: to link consumers with fresh, locally produced food that might otherwise be hard to find on country side roads.

"With current government policies promoting 'Buy local' and Pick Ontario Freshness, this proposed legislation enables farmers to leverage that awareness into actual purchases at the farm gate. With those financial rewards, farmers remain viable and sustainable. This legislation is very practical, allowing farmers to do what they do best" as stewards of soil and water.

Another one, from the president of Local Food Plus: "We at Local Food Plus bring farmers and consumers to the table to share in the benefits of environmentally and socially responsible food production. We know first-hand the incredible demand for local food and the challenges consumers face, finding and purchasing Ontario-grown product.

"We also strongly support increasing the economic sustainability of Ontario farmers and we believe Bill 98 will help to accomplish just that."

We have a letter from Neil Currie. Neil Currie is the general manager of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the largest organization representing farmers in Ontario. They are, he says, very appreciative of "your efforts to reduce red tape and help farmers promote their products through appropriate highway signage.

"The bill is also an important one for our consumers, who get frustrated in not being able to locate local

producers. The demand for local food is growing, and your private members' bill will certainly help facilitate this phenomenon." That's from the largest farm organization in the province.

We have another farm organization in the province, the National Farmers Union, and its chair, or its—I don't believe he's the chair, but Grant Robertson from the Ontario farmers' union: "We would encourage all members of the Legislature to vote for passage of private members' Bill 98. For those members who are willing to stand with you and Ontario's farmers, it is a small step to say we recognize the important contribution farm families make to our economic well-being and the health of Ontarians." That's from the farmers' union.

We have one here, an interesting one from 4-H Ontario. These are the young people in Ontario who are aspiring to become food producers: "... we are seeing a great deal of investment into the awareness and support of consumers' awareness and producers' investments toward the connection of agriculture to food to health. This bill addresses on a very practical level the 'access' issue for consumers to easily find the 'local' food they are being encouraged to incorporate into their healthy diet choices, and local community economic health." Thank you very much to 4-H of Ontario for putting those comments on the record.

Another one here, from the Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association—I just want to read one line out of theirs: "Growers need to be freed from red tape and be allowed to market their crops in ways that are profitable." To that end, the Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association supports this bill.

From the Ontario Berry Growers Association: The Ontario berry growers are "pleased to see the bill entitled Signage to Promote Ontario Grown Products Act. We agree that this bill would benefit our members by allowing them to post signs adjacent to provincial highways. Our industry has a great tradition of on-farm sales and this bill would help ensure the tradition continues."

These are just some of the comments of the people who will be using this bill, and that's why I'm proud to stand here today and, on their behalf, thank this Legislature for the support thus far and hopefully ask for support for third reading of this bill so they can actually put it into practice.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me these few moments.

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I first of all want to congratulate the member from Oxford. I think for most farmers this would be a no-brainer.

I'm particularly pleased to be able to say that I again support, as I myself, enjoy farm products. As a farmer, I'm always willing to promote the farm gate sales.

I think that, as was pointed out in a number of your letters, it's important for us to be able to locate these farms as we move forward with our Foodland Ontario and our "buy local" strategies. We not only need the con-

sumers to buy them, but we need them to be able to find them, too.

So congratulations, and of course, again, I support the bill.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to, on behalf of New Democrats here at Queen's Park, support this legislation.

I tell you, Speaker, Ernie Hardeman is good. He's a good MPP. He's as strong a voice for farmers in this Legislature as anybody could ever want, and his constituents should be very proud of him and the work that he does on their behalf here.

1720

This modest proposal contained in Bill 98 has the capacity to do more to advance farmers' interests—farmers who are struggling against both federal and provincial government policies that are hostile to farmers—than any government policy of the last five years. I mean that. I think that's true.

I know all about farming. Down where I come from in Niagara region, we've got fruit farmers, we've got apple orchards, we've got vineyards, we've got cattle producers, we've got chicken producers. And we increasingly have people producing artisanal produce—small crops, many times restoring varieties of tomatoes, for instance—that is not the stuff that's designed to look uniform and ship for 15 days and spend thousands of miles on the rails and roadways as it comes up from California. Have you ever eaten some artisanal tomatoes? They're not as pretty—actually, I find them beautiful—because they're wrinkly and all different colours, not red, but they also don't taste like cardboard. We have producers reviving other forms of fruits and vegetables that would have been lost were it not for these people preserving these strains. And we have farmers who are being denied access to the supermarkets, the chains—Galen Weston. You see his ads on television for—what chain is that?

Interjection: Loblaws.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Loblaws, for Pete's sake.

You see Galen Weston prancing around, talking about Loblaws this and Loblaws that. Shame on him, because Loblaws could provide real leadership in terms of food supply by committing itself—not just paying lip service—to 100% Ontario produce in season and charging a fair enough price so that the farmer doesn't have to subsidize the consumer.

Down where I come from, and I suspect where Mr. Hardeman comes from, farmers' spouses are paying the bills—whether it's a wife who works as a teacher or as a nurse, or whether it's a husband who is still fortunate enough to have a job in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario—because the farm doesn't generate profits. The farmer can start to compensate for that at the farm gate.

Some of us remember days gone by when a Saturday afternoon or a Sunday afternoon involved travelling from farm to farm—and I'm not talking about in the most remote parts of the world; I'm talking about Niagara region, Ontario—where you went to the egg guy and you got your eggs and you knew they were fresh and you

knew they were good. How did you know? Because there was a little bit of straw and chicken manure still stuck to the outside. That's how you know, isn't it? That egg came right out from underneath that chicken. Or you travelled Highway 20 or Highway 8 down in Niagara region, and you bought tomatoes or you bought cherries or you bought rhubarb or asparagus. What could beat fresh asparagus in the springtime, in asparagus season?

This bill will enable those farmers to now provide an arrow pointing people to where they are. It will also facilitate agri-tourism. We in the NDP believe that while agri-tourism is never going to be a replacement for productive farming, agri-tourism can constitute a strong new component to the rural economy. Agri-tourism can also expose urban people to the realities of farm production.

I'm convinced that if a few more downtown Toronto types in those high-rise towers up on Hazelton Lanes got to see what farmers had to do to produce the food they eat, they'd be more prepared to support farmers, not only as consumers, but as taxpayers, in ensuring that both their provincial and federal governments develop policies that allow farmers to survive.

We support this bill enthusiastically. I look forward to the signage emerging, popping up like mushrooms, I suppose one might say, Mr. Hardeman, down in Niagara region. I, for the life of me, can't understand why it took so long. Thank goodness Mr. Hardeman had the initiative and the insight and obviously the support from farming folk down where he comes from to bring this bill forward.

This is one of those bills that was agreed upon by all three parties at the end of a session. It's a private member's bill. Private members' bills rarely see the light of day. Quite frankly, there's a little bit of horse-trading that goes on between the House leaders, and the caucuses have to nominate which of their bills are going to be prioritized. Vetoes can occur with any one of the three caucuses, and sometimes it just doesn't work out. But we worked hard this fall, this winter, because there was good stuff before the Legislature, and Ernie Hardeman's bill was one of those. That's why the New Democrats, along with the Conservatives, wanted to ensure that the bill was brought forward.

That's why there isn't the protracted debate. I wish there were, because I couldn't think of anything better that we could do than to raise consciousness of the plight of farmers in this province and to raise consciousness of the need for consumers of farm product to support their local farmers, to not buy imported product, to understand that the local farm produce is better—better for them and better for local economies. But in the course of the horse-trading that goes on, we agree to abbreviate debate, and that's why I had but seven minutes. I feel shortchanged. I feel as if I've lost something. I've lost 43 minutes of my life that I would have had, had this been a full one-hour lead. But having said that, I'm more than prepared to make that sacrifice to see this legislation become law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Hardeman has moved third

reading of Bill 98. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Be it resolved that bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: 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 8, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1727.

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	
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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
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
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	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia 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**

Chair / Présidente: Linda Jeffrey
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Oraziotti
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, 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**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, 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**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
Peter Shurman
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
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