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Monday 8 December 2008

Lundi 8 décembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 December 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 décembre 2008

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm very honoured and privileged to have my fourth page in my time as an MPP—my page is Jason Fernandes—and I'm pleased to introduce his family here today: his mom, Michelle Fernandes; his dad, Allan Fernandes; and his sister, Stephanie Fernandes. They are sitting in the public gallery. Please welcome them.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: It is indeed my pleasure today to welcome Cindy Leithead here with her daughter and her husband, Iain and Tara Holovac. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to acknowledge Kush Thaker, his uncle Dave Hemant and cousin Dave Vrajesh. They are here today. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Sarah Ratzlaff, we'd like to welcome to the galleries today her mother, Carol Ratzlaff; her father, Brad Ratzlaff, and her brother, Sam Ratzlaff. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Last Friday, Stats Canada announced that in November alone, Ontario lost 66,000 jobs, raising the unemployment rate by over half a per cent to 7.1% and making Ontario's unemployment rate almost a full percentage higher than the national average. In Quebec, a manufacturing economy like ours, they broke even. Everywhere in Confederation losses were mild, but under your watch, Ontario was plunged into a severe employment crisis. You have four days left before the long break. Minister, what immediate action will you take to make Ontario competitive again?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The federal finance minister, I think, referred to those numbers as devastating. I agree. Those unemployment numbers are very, very tough on the families affected, especially at this time of the year.

For those families who have either faced layoffs or fear layoffs, it's a very, very difficult time.

We do have, as the member alluded to, a situation where Quebec and Ontario are sharing the same unemployment level. In part, that's a function of the fact that the industries that dominate in Ontario and Quebec have been particularly hard hit by the global economic crisis. This is the case not only in Ontario, but with respect to the manufacturing industry in China, Southeast Asia and around the world. But, obviously, these numbers are nothing but—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's too bad that there's no sense of urgency on this government to act. Yes, we understand the problem. The minister understands the problem, but he defends the failed policies of his predecessor and I don't understand why. This minister has been in place now for some period of time. Is he too timid to introduce his own changes?

Let's talk about one failed jobs program in particular, the much-touted Next Generation of Jobs Fund, which invests taxpayers' money into individual businesses—a reckless strategy that is consistently called unwise by economic experts. Nonetheless, you have slated \$1.5 billion for this program. So after one year how is it working out? You have spent \$27 million of that total \$1.5 billion, or .03%. You have created an estimated 167 jobs with three companies. Minister, is this the McGuinty economic plan?

Hon. Michael Bryant: We had a very interesting concession by the member who, to be fair, is admitting his view and the view of his party and the official opposition, which is that they oppose governments investing dollars in companies or in industries in order to leverage greater investment and in order to leverage greater jobs. That's why when we brought in the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, the Conservatives voted against it.

On this side of the House, we believe in these investments as being, in fact, the way in which we are going to grow our economy, particularly during this troubled time. I say to the member, as I stood at the opening of the plant for Toyota last Thursday there were literally thousands of people cheering for the investments that this government had made to create—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, you have invested money in the auto industry and the auto industry has continuously laid off programs. Small business is the

core of this province's job creation, and you have invested nothing with small business in Ontario—nothing. That's where a lot of your problems are coming from. This House is set to rise and not return for two months or more with thousands more jobs set to disappear during that time. Minister, you need to make decisions now and it's about your wants and needs. Ontario needs some decisions right now, not your wants—that you want to continue to spend money recklessly. Now is the time you have to start leading by example. No more fancy hotels, no more expensive conference rooms, no more waste, period. When you save, you save taxpayers, and it's just that simple. We outlined last week, in question after question, the waste this government has gone through. Will you cut back your luxurious spending and use that money for a new jobs plan? Will you try to help our unemployed and vulnerable—

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: On the one hand, the member says that we should be, in fact, cutting public spending and then taking that money and putting it into the jobs plans—the jobs plans that, in the previous question, he said he's against. This is the approach of the Conservatives. They want to cut and they want to spend; they want to cut and they want to spend. What we are going to do on this side of the House is, in fact, take—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Honourable member, you just asked the question. I'd ask that you listen to the response, please.

Hon. Michael Bryant: We are going to take the hard-earned tax dollars of the people of Ontario and we are going to make sure that every single dollar that's invested is a positive investment. But we will invest it in order to create millions of dollars of additional investment and thousands of jobs. That has been our plan, that is our plan and that will be our plan in the future, and that will mean more jobs for the province of Ontario.

1040

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Finance. We have heard that the federal government intends to introduce its budget shortly after its return to Parliament on January 26. I'm asking you, Minister, will you commit to the people in this province that you will bring in your own budget within two weeks of the federal budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, there is a question as to whether or not that federal budget would even pass. What I can assure the member is this: We won't conduct ourselves the way the Harper government did. We will focus on stimulus. I will be wrapping up my pre-budget consultations this week. Unfortunately, we had to pass a motion to compel them to get out and do their pre-budget consultations. We will bring in a budget with the appropriate stimulus package, in addition to what we're doing

in this budget—the infrastructure investments which the member opposite voted against. Let me assure the member, we will not—I repeat, not—conduct ourselves the way the Harper government's conducted itself in these matters.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This is not a time for partisan politics. People in this province are concerned about their jobs. They are concerned about their pensions. As Murray Campbell said in the Globe and Mail today, it makes you wonder whether this government and its leader are in fact sleepwalking through this crisis. I certainly hope not.

This House is set to rise in four days. It could be nine weeks or longer before we come back to work. Minister, the pre-budget consultations are going to be done earlier. Why will you not commit to bring the House back early and bring in a budget two weeks after the federal budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a number of consultations set up for next week, including the final large public pre-budget consultation in my home community of Windsor. I will be in the member's community meeting with some business leaders and labour leaders and others.

Again, I want to assure the House that we will not conduct ourselves the way the Harper government has conducted itself on the economy. We saw a federal fall statement in which the principal commitment was to reduce party funding. I can assure the member we're not looking at that. We are looking at making the investments in infrastructure. I remind the member that the federal government does not give Ontario its equal share. We are going to do more on that. We will continue with targeted tax cuts to assist businesses and individuals to move forward. I urge the member to support the measures that we will be bringing forward. We will bring forward a budget at an appropriate time and it will be an appropriate response to the situation in Ontario's economy today.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This province is bleeding jobs at a rate of 66,000 a month, and yet this minister is prepared to stand in this House and go two months without an action plan in place. Last week, our leader wrote to the Premier suggesting that we set up three select committees during those 10 weeks to look at specific economic issues and consult. You haven't responded. Minister, we are dealing with an unprecedented crisis. Don't continue to sleepwalk through the crisis. Why are you not prepared to agree to those select committees and give them serious consideration?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that this government had to time-allocate a motion to force them to go out and consult with the committees that exist. I can assure the member that we will bring forward a budget at the appropriate time that builds on the stimulus package we have already introduced and she voted against. She and her party and her leader, wherever he is, voted against more money for infrastructure. She, her party and her leader voted against targeted tax cuts to put money in the hands of manufacturers. She, her party and her leader voted against money for research and innovation that will help Ontario through these tough times.

What we need now is a federal partner, regardless of which party forms the government or whether it's a coalition, that will treat Ontario fairly, unlike the Harper Conservative Tory government in Ottawa.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Acting Premier. General Motors Canada and Chrysler Canada have requested emergency loans from the Ontario and federal governments. They are asking for \$2.4 billion by January 1; in other words, one month from now. Without these emergency loans, they believe Ontario may lose as many as 400,000 jobs. That would make the current difficult recession even more painful.

My question is this: Now that the McGuinty government knows what these automakers are asking for, when will the McGuinty government put forward its plan?

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: The companies submitted their plans in response to the request from the federal and provincial governments that the companies provide for both governments information with respect to the sustainability of the industry and the financials of each of the companies.

The information that was released to the government is not the same as the information that was released to the public, and I think the industry has to make the case to the public as well as to the government. The information that was released on Friday was not quite as transparent as it could have been, in terms of the information that ought to go to the public. I'm encouraging the industry to provide some more information to the public. If they don't, then, working with them, I will do it for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The question was, where is the McGuinty government's plan? A week ago, the McGuinty government was saying it wanted to wait on Washington. Well, the US Congress have indicated what they're prepared to do, and they have indicated some of the things that they're prepared to put in place.

We see the situation getting worse virtually every day, we see the massive job loss that is happening already, so the question becomes, once again: When is the McGuinty government going to stop saying, "Well, we have to wait for Washington, we have to wait for Ottawa"? When is the McGuinty government going to take action and present its plan?

Hon. Michael Bryant: It's interesting: The leader of the third party was against our providing assistance to the auto industry, was against the entire auto strategy, whereby assistance was provided to the auto industry. Now the argument is that, in fact, we should be providing assistance to the auto industry. Those were significant investments made in the past that led to significant investments by the industry, and jobs. We now have a situation where we have to assess the financials and the sustainability of the industry. We also have to keep in

mind what's going on in the United States. The member would be incorrect to say that the United States Congress has indicated what it's going to do. They have not indicated what they're going to do. They are looking at what they are going to do, and there is no consensus as to how they're going to act.

Obviously, Canada has to ensure that when the United States acts, Canada is in a position to make a decision so that we can act in the public interest. We're very confident that we're going to be in that position.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think the McGuinty government should know that the auto sector is very important to Ontario's economy, it is vital to southern Ontario's economy, yet I hear the McGuinty government once again referring to, "Well, we have to wait on Washington, we have to wait on Ottawa."

I can read the papers. This is what the US Congress is considering: an oversight board to ensure that companies are held accountable for the public's multi-billion-dollar investment; equity stakes; limits on executive pay; a ban on dividends; and an approval process for large business transactions. These are the kinds of conditions New Democrats have been advocating for over a year now, something the McGuinty government has failed to do.

I ask again: What you've done so far—simply throwing money with no job guarantees, no product guarantees—hasn't worked, so when is the McGuinty government going to present its plan?

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Hon. Michael Bryant: That's quite a "New" Democratic Party, a party that suddenly embraces investments in auto and sounds a lot more like Hank Paulson and Bob Rubin than Howard Hampton.

What is taking place in the United States is to consider the bridge loan and then consider the longer-term loan once the President-elect takes office. In Canada, the options are either to provide financing—or not—with respect to the industry directly to the Canadian subsidiaries, or to participate with the United States government with respect to the bridge loan that's provided. Those are the choices. We're obviously working closely with the federal government, and the federal government and the embassy are working with the United States government. We're going to make sure that tax dollars, if they are spent, are spent wisely. We have to make decisions about the sustainability and financials of this industry, and that's exactly what we're doing.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Acting Premier: It's very interesting that, once again, the McGuinty government talks a lot, but as jobs are disappearing, the McGuinty government is nowhere to be seen. And it's not just the auto sector. Friday's Stats Canada report showed 71,000 jobs lost across Canada, 66,000 of them in Ontario; in other words, hardly any job loss elsewhere in

the country, but in Ontario, a disaster. Economists are warning that unless the McGuinty government takes dramatic action right away, things may spiral even more out of control.

I ask again: I hear the McGuinty government speeches; when is the McGuinty government going to present a jobs plan for Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government has great empathy and strong policies for any family that suffers loss of a job or loss of employment. I remind the member opposite that what is occurring in the world economy today, particularly in the US economy, does have a direct bearing on Ontario. Let me quote the governor of the Bank of Canada: “We are going to go through a period of slowdown, the U.S. is in recession and (there’s a) global recession...”

“He said governments should be investing now in measures to boost the Ontario and Canadian economies.”

He cited infrastructure—\$9.9 billion; the latest instalment, \$1.1 billion two weeks ago. That member and his party voted against it. The governor of the Bank of Canada talked about investing in innovation, and we are doing that. That member and his party voted—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again, it’s so interesting to listen to the McGuinty government’s line. They refer to, “Well, you know, there’s trouble in Europe and there’s trouble in the United States.” Did British Columbia lose 66,000 jobs last month? Did Quebec lose 66,000 jobs last month? Did Manitoba lose 66,000 jobs last month? No. The job loss was all in Ontario. Why? Because you have a McGuinty government that talks a good line on the forest sector, they talk a good line on the auto sector, they talk the same old line about infrastructure, but they’ve done next to nothing to present Ontario with a jobs strategy. We are in a crisis. This is getting worse every day. Same old, same old from the McGuinty government isn’t working. When are we going to see a jobs plan from the McGuinty government: after we lose another 100,000 jobs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Every province in Canada will feel what Ontario is feeling now. I think that average Ontarians understand what’s going on. They see the news. They understand that, as a manufacturing jurisdiction that exports to the United States, the situation in the US economy is absolutely impacting us very directly in a way that it’s not yet impacting other provinces.

We laid out a plan. Today there are thousands of people working on infrastructure projects that we put in as part of our fall statement last year—part of our budget. That member voted against it. There is no easy way out of these challenging times. It’s not sufficient for anybody in this House to simply say, “We can fix it.” The five-point plan we laid out is the right plan; it’s creating jobs. We will continue to build on that—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government continues to talk about the same old, same old. You talk about your five-point plan as 60,000 jobs a month are literally disappearing. Hello? Most people would say, “There’s something wrong here,” but the McGuinty government continues to talk as if everything is operating tickety-boo.

Let me give you examples of some of the things that are being considered in the United States. In addition to aid to the auto sector, a real activist government would speed up infrastructure projects, not the same old, same old; it would actually be investing more in infrastructure. A real activist government would implement a large-scale energy retrofit program through the public sector. Do we see that in Ontario under the McGuinty government? No. A real activist government would put money in the hands of the lowest-income people and raise the minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour today. When are we going to see a jobs strategy from the McGuinty government other than referring to somewhere else when—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me respond point by point. In terms of the auto sector, between the AMIS fund and the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, we’ve leveraged \$7-billion investment in the auto sector. That member and his party voted against it.

In terms of infrastructure, Ontario has an unprecedented amount of infrastructure going on right now. Most recently, two weeks ago, we gave our municipal partners \$1.1 billion for projects that are ready to go today. That member and his party voted against it.

In terms of energy retrofits, a year and a half ago, we introduced a program that is helping families do that today. That member and his party voted against it.

In terms of assistance to the lowest-income, this government has raised welfare rates. It has raised the minimum wage time and again over the last four years. We have a plan. It’s the right plan for the times. We have more to do, and we will continue to build on that success. We only hope that his votes—

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

LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, you’re aware that the 112 community literacy agencies in Ontario have not received increases in base funding since your government came to office. They also have not received any of the \$311 million your ministry has received this past April from the federal government under the labour market agreement.

The volunteers in these agencies volunteer 220,000 hours each year, helping our most vulnerable citizens learn basic reading and writing skills; for example, how to write a resumé. With tens of thousands of Ontarians losing their jobs, the number of people requiring basic

reading and writing skills is rising at a rapid rate. Minister, what is your plan to inject resources into the 112 literacy and basic skills agencies in our province?

Hon. John Milloy: I would like to acknowledge the network of literacy providers throughout the province. This year alone, our government has spent \$75 million in terms of literacy programs, which are offered by a variety of providers. The honourable member is correct that there has been federal money that has come to help job supports, and we've always acknowledged that. In the March budget, we outlined a \$2-billion skills-to-jobs action plan, which contained with it a number of programs and enhancements to services that allow people to access this important literacy work.

In terms of these literacy providers, I've had the pleasure of meeting with many of them, and my ministry will continue to meet with them as we develop further services for those who need this important service.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, it's amazing that volunteers contribute 220,000 hours of work each year towards basic literacy. It's at least a value of \$4 million, and at the same time, you're wasting \$4 million to advertise the new Second Career program. Can you explain to the folks administering the literacy and basic skills programs across our province why you have neglected the important work they do at this critical period, while at the same time giving millions of dollars to ad agencies to advertise the Second Career program, a program that is clearly failing at this point?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very pleased, if the honourable member wants to talk about the Second Career program, to report to this House that, as of last Friday, we have about 2,300 people who have come forward for Second Career. Second Career, as the honourable member knows, is 20,000 people over three years, and we recently made adjustments to allow more people to come forward. We're anticipating a greater increase, especially as we head to January and people come forward with plans to go forward to a community college or private career college.

In terms of literacy, we recognize literacy as an important part of Employment Ontario's range of services. We invest \$75 million a year in the program, and we continue to work with providers to make sure that they have the resources they need to move forward. We will be consulting with them over the coming months as we prepare next year's plan.

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POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last week, the government launched its so-called poverty reduction strategy. The Ontario Coalition for Social Justice is correct to point out the many holes in this scheme, not the least of which is a living minimum wage. Why won't this government lift thousands of minimum-wage earners out of poverty by

raising Ontario's minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour immediately?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You're quite right. Last week we did release the poverty reduction strategy. I do want to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about it. It's about breaking the cycle of poverty. We're focusing on kids first because that's the right place to start.

This is a strategy that has received endorsements from a wide range of people. Let me start with Pat Capponi from Voices from the Street. She says, "Today, Ontario is turning a corner on poverty. We are closing a chapter on the days where government believed it could make political gains on the backs of the poor. This is the kind of foundation on which we can build real progress against poverty and achieve a better society for all Ontarians."

Michael Mendelson from the Caledon Institute of Social Policy says, "This is truly a historic day for this province. For the first time in Canadian history, a government is setting a target to reduce poverty based on a"—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The vast majority of the money in this plan is contingent on federal financial support in a robust economy. We need a real provincial anti-poverty reduction strategy that includes a \$10.25 minimum wage now, the creation of 7,000 affordable housing units every year, a full child benefit of \$1,100 per month now, an increased shelter component to reflect real rental costs and a child care plan that will get 23,000 children off the waiting list now.

Why won't this government provide Ontario's poor with a provincial plan, one that doesn't rely on other levels of government to attack poverty right here?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We make no apologies for inviting the federal government to the table on this. Ontario's poor children are Canada's poor children.

Let me tell you what Frances Lankin, president and CEO United Way Toronto and former member of the Legislature, said today: "I'm prepared to say congratulations and thank you to the Premier and the cabinet committee and their commitment. Many others would have walked away given the difficult times we're in. This government didn't and they deserve credit."

Rabbi Arthur Bielfeld from the June Callwood Campaign against Child Poverty says, "With this announcement Ontario is turning the corner on poverty. In these challenging times, the Premier has affirmed that we are all in this together. That we will overcome the challenges ahead and do all that we can to ensure that no child will be left behind. We applaud the plan ... June Callwood must be smiling today."

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. On November 18, the McGuinty government introduced legislation that, if passed, will protect Ontario's families by making Ontario's roads even safer. Included in this proposed legislation is extending the

graduated licensing program from two years to three years, introducing zero blood-alcohol concentration for all drivers aged 21 and under and bringing the fines and penalties for more serious Highway Traffic Act offences in line with other jurisdictions. Road safety is important to every resident of Ontario, and that is why I support all the proposals as listed.

However, one proposed initiative has raised many concerns, and that is the proposed extension on passenger restrictions for those in the G2 stage. I would like to ask the minister if that is a concern he has been hearing as well, and—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: That is an excellent question. Our roads are always declared to be the safest in North America. There's much more we have to do, however, and that's why we introduced the legislation that, if passed, will help make them even safer. As the member stated, we propose to extend the G-licensing system to three years, so young and novice drivers have a greater opportunity to acquire the safe driving skills that serve them throughout a lifetime.

Our proposed legislation was to extend the current passenger restriction that exists now to all day for teen-aged drivers, and, as the member has pointed out, there have been concerns raised by members of this House, members of the government caucus, members reflecting what they're hearing in their communities and particularly members who are from rural and northern areas of the province. I invited this kind of dialogue to take place and these concerns to be expressed, and—

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I have received a number of letters, e-mails and phone calls on this particular issue, and I'm not the only MPP who has been receiving that type of feedback. There are those who support passenger restrictions, but there are many who have raised concerns about the proposed change, citing a variety of reasons.

I have heard from the youth in my riding who are very concerned about how this proposed legislation will affect their ability to carpool to school, sporting events and social gatherings.

I am asking the Minister of Transportation to please share with this House what he has been hearing from Ontarians and the next steps on dealing with concerns that have been raised.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can assure the member that there has been some very significant support for the bill as a whole. People seem to like—and the opposition members and my own government members have said this—a zero blood-alcohol provision, extending graduated licensing to three years, and getting tougher on suspended drivers; in other words, a number of very comprehensive parts of it that they think are very useful.

I can say, however, that if there's one area of the bill where there has been concern expressed by virtually all members of the House, particularly those of the northern

areas and the rural areas, it is the area of extending the restriction to more than the time between 12 and 5 and more than one person. I do want to assure the member that we have listened to those representations and that in fact that provision will be withdrawn from the bill.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order.

The member from Thornhill.

UNIVERSITY LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, my constant questions in this House about the York University strike address my wish for a speedy resolution. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has said that I have no exclusivity on concern for the academic year of 50,000 students. He has further stated that universities are autonomous and that York and CUPE 3903 should sit down and work things out. Apparently, that is easier said than done. I'm speaking because I have a voice and others do not. Leaving this situation unresolved in our last week here means no legislated end to this strike before at least late February. Mediation efforts have not been successful. I believe the Minister of Labour has to address this right now, don't you?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I can only reiterate that all members in this Legislature are concerned about the situation at York University and the fact that students aren't able to return to the classroom. We call on both sides to come back to the table and reach an agreement as quickly as possible.

The member is right: Universities are autonomous institutions. They're governed by rules surrounded by collective bargaining. The province, through the Ministry of Labour, has a mediator on-site who is working with both sides, and we continue to urge them to sit down for the best interests of the students at York.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Obviously, this minister and I are on the same page: We're all concerned. But we're talking about doing something here. I'm being insistent and vocal because someone has to speak out on the York situation.

Thornhill, my riding, is home to many York students and staff, now in their fifth week without classes, without any chance of settlement or resumption of school, and Christmas break is around the corner.

I am asking the minister to stand in his place today and tell this House, the student body of York University and the people of Ontario that back-to-work legislation will be presented and passed this week in this Legislature.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, everyone in this Legislature is concerned about the situation at York, and we continue to call on both sides to resume talks as soon as

possible through the Ministry of Labour. We have a mediator who is helping those negotiations. We want to see an agreement passed as quickly as possible that's in the best interests of the students.

At the same time, we recognize the autonomy of York University and the collective bargaining system which governs their negotiations.

We encourage both sides to come to the table as quickly as possible so that we can allow students to get back to class.

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NUCLEAR SAFETY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, Canadian Press reported on a Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission document indicating that research on the safety of storing radioactive waste in limestone near Kincardine, which is the McGuinty government's only nuclear waste plan, is full of holes.

My question is this: Why is the McGuinty government launching a nuclear mega-scheme when the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission says that you don't even know where to put the radioactive waste from your existing nuclear power plants?

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate the honourable member's question. Indeed, the CNSC and others are an important part of the mix with respect to the provision of nuclear power in any jurisdiction. The matter at hand that the honourable member raises is, of course, one of the particular challenges associated with the utilization of that form of fuel for the purpose of electrical generation. I think it's important that on this matter we continue to work diligently on a solution that for the very long term can be a successful one.

As an interim step, we have completed substantial investment of storage capacity at the Darlington site, which holds us in very, very good regard for the moment. We'll continue to work diligently towards the long-term solution that's much desired.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Well, this is bizarre. The McGuinty government says that everything is fine and dandy with nuclear power, yet Canada's independent nuclear safety commission says that the McGuinty government's plan for nuclear waste storage is totally untested, unproven, and full of holes.

David Suzuki, who this government used to like to cite, says that building or refurbishing nuclear plants in Ontario, which is the McGuinty government's plan, is simply not necessary; that we can meet our needs through renewable power, energy conservation, and energy efficiency.

My question is this: Rather than put future generations at risk, why won't the McGuinty government at least put a moratorium on building or refurbishing nuclear plants until it has a safe plan for storage?

Hon. George Smitherman: I don't think it's right that the honourable member should leave the impression

that our government is not still citing Dr. David Suzuki, for just in my presence last week—and in front of hundreds, including at least a researcher from the NDP caucus—David Suzuki said that the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government has been great for the environment.

We're still quoting Dr. Suzuki, and we appreciate very much his strong encouragement that here in Ontario we take a faster, more vigorous and aggressive approach with respect to the bringing to life of renewable energy in the province. On that point as well, we abide the good advice that he has to offer.

As I said in my earlier answer, the matter at hand that the honourable member raises is a serious one. It requires serious attention and serious work, and that's what it's getting. I think that over time, the honourable member will see that this is a balanced approach to energy supply in the province of Ontario.

POVERTY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question today is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The first poverty reduction round table was held in my riding of Peterborough. My community, especially the Mayor's Action Committee on Poverty Reduction, is on the leading end of the fight against poverty in Ontario. We had community leaders, advocates and people living in poverty attend the round table to provide their advice for a provincial strategy. They spoke of challenges we face, but also of the power of communities and the innovative solutions they develop. The poverty reduction strategy, which was released last week, called for everyone to be part of the solution and for everyone to do their part. Can the minister please outline how the strategy recognizes a vital role of communities and the impact they can make?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Peterborough is one of the communities that's taking a real leadership role, and I thank the member for ensuring that they were able to contribute to our strategy.

We heard loud and clear, and saw first-hand, that communities have the capacity to respond to local issues with innovative solutions. Just as we know that strong kids need good schools and strong parents, strong parents and families need the support of engaged, dynamic and thriving communities to be their best. That's why we'll invest \$5 million annually in the communities opportunity fund to encourage neighbourhood revitalization through partnerships between local business, governments, volunteers, community agencies, and, most importantly, local residents.

We also heard that the location of services in the community is key. That's why we'll invest \$7 million annually in the development of a community hub program. The program will focus on using schools as hubs that respond to community needs related to poverty reduction and student achievement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm glad to hear that the government has recognized the power of communities and is acting to

support them in making an important contribution to the fight against poverty.

While there are many things that communities such as my own are doing to help people achieve their full potential, there is also a need for action on the provincial level. Child care is one such example. I am aware that our government has made investments to improve access to affordable child care and there's more to do. Especially for single parents, child care can be crucial to getting or keeping a job. Could the minister explain this morning what the government is doing to improve access to vital child care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member is absolutely right: Child care is important. That's why, in our first mandate, we created 22,000 new licensed child care spaces and over 20,000 additional child care subsidies. This year we're investing another \$23 million—all provincial money—to provide 3,000 more subsidies to families who need help with the cost of child care.

Our next step is the implementation of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. Extensive research shows that kids in high-quality full-day learning programs do better in school and that excellent early learning programs reduce inequalities among children. Full-day learning will also free up child care spaces for thousands of families. In order to implement full-day learning in the best way possible, the Premier appointed Dr. Charles Pascal as Ontario's early learning adviser. His report is expected in the spring.

Part of the first phase of implementation will be focused on low-income neighbourhoods, because we need these kids to be their—

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

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. There's a story in the *Globe and Mail* today regarding Greg Troy, who has a rare disease called Pompe. Although there is now a drug to treat this often fatal disease, your ministry has rejected his application, which was submitted by his doctor, the lead neurologist at London University Hospital. Just as Dr. Venance asked for coverage of this drug on compassionate grounds, on behalf of Greg, who is watching today, I am asking you to do so.

Hon. David Caplan: Certainly, I know that Ontarians and their family members with rare diseases face enormous challenges.

As the member is well aware and as the story in the *Globe and Mail* highlights, Canada is one of the few nations which does not have a national program for drugs for rare diseases. In fact, it has been health ministers from across the country who have gathered together to press the national government for such a program. In the absence of that, Ontario has moved on its own to formulate a strategy and a method by which individuals requesting these life-saving medications can have some evaluation and possibility of approval.

We are committed to improving access to therapies that are proven medically beneficial; namely, that have clear clinical outcomes to support the findings. We are working toward that on a case-by-case basis. These are determined not by, as the member well knows—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Despite the commitment to move forward more quickly and give approval in funding, unfortunately, it hasn't happened since the announcement in 2006.

In the *Globe and Mail* today, your Ministry of Health spokesperson says it's going to take months to determine if funding for this rare disease will be approved. Minister, I have seen Greg. He wasn't able to meet with me. He wasn't able to get out of his car; I had to go and talk to him in his car. He doesn't have months to live without this drug. His condition is deteriorating and he struggles to take each breath each day.

Will you commit today, on compassionate grounds, to provide bridge funding for this drug until a national orphan drug policy is put in place?

Hon. David Caplan: I have been pressing, certainly, the previous national Minister of Health to move forward on a national program for rare diseases and I have written to Minister Aglukkaq and urged her to do the same.

The member well knows that we are working on a new approach where each case is evaluated on an individual basis. The committee to evaluate drugs and the executive officer recognize the challenges of producing clinical evidence and favourable cost-effectiveness data for drugs for rare diseases. It's simply that there are not enough trials or enough cases to be able to meet the unusual standard and thresholds. That is why we have moved to put in place a framework and a decision-making and evaluative ability which is unique to Ontario. We are working in concert with other provinces. I know the Atlantic provinces have asked to join with us in a similar kind of framework. Our hearts go out to all—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Nickel Belt.

1120

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Last week, I asked the minister about the strep A outbreak in Thunder Bay. The minister responded, and I quote, "The strep A outbreak is confined to a particular population and has not spread." Daniel MacMaster, a talented Ontario musician, a healthy man in his 30s, a husband and a father of two children, contracted strep A in Thunder Bay and tragically passed away from the infection. Mr. MacMaster could not have been considered as part of the particular population or as an at-risk individual.

Ontario needs guidelines and standards to guide medical officers of health in making decisions concerning communications to the public. Why won't the minister do it?

Hon. David Caplan: I cannot speak to the individual case, but I certainly want to express my condolences to all who have been impacted certainly by strep A but by any infectious disease outbreak. The risk of spread of infectious disease and the like does call upon us all as leaders within our health care system for a heightened level of vigilance.

I've been assured that local health officials have been communicating throughout the investigation with the medical community and with outreach workers for the at-risk groups. I expect that our medical officers of health will determine when it is appropriate to issue public notices about outbreaks and continue to provide clarity around public notifications.

I know that Ontario's chief medical officer of health has had the chance to connect with the member opposite, has in fact chatted with the member and answered her questions related to the protocols between medical officers of health, public health units and when the public is notified. I'm satisfied that—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mr. MacMaster did not know about the outbreak. The 1,500 people who participated in Operation Trillium Response who came to Thunder Bay did not know about the outbreak. There is a risk to public health. Public health needs to be taken seriously, and that includes clear communication guidelines and standards to guide medical officers of health in making decisions to inform the general public about outbreaks. Why won't the government commit to doing this today?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, there are very clear guidelines for medical officers of health in relation to communication with public health units. The member knows this full well.

In fact, in the case of Thunder Bay and the public health unit, they did request the ministry and they advised the health unit to alert physicians in the area of the increased invasive group A streptococcal bacterial outbreak cases to encourage early identification and treatment and to advise physicians on the current guidelines for management.

The ministry also responded by facilitating deployment of two federal field epidemiologists to the Thunder Bay District Health Unit in early June to assist with their investigation. It is up to the local medical officer of health to determine when it is appropriate to notify the public, and I can tell you that I believe they have taken the appropriate actions to have containment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. With the current economic conditions, tenants in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore are telling me that they are concerned about being able to afford their rent. With the rising cost of

living and uncertain futures, they want to know that they'll be protected, as do many other tenants across the city of Toronto. In the past, the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal was known by many as an eviction machine that had no concern for tenants. How are we going to help tenants in my riding guard against rising rents and potential evictions in the challenging times that lie ahead?

Hon. Jim Watson: I want to thank the honourable member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the good work she does in representing tenants in her community. The Residential Tenancies Act, which has been in effect for over a year now, brings more balance back to the relationship between tenants and landlords. I'm pleased to report that there's no longer a backlog of cases. That's been cleaned up, and every tenant facing an eviction is now afforded the benefit of a hearing. At the same time, landlords can fast-track problem tenants because they are disrupting the enjoyment of the rest of the tenants. Tenants in buildings with serious maintenance problems may apply for a freeze on rent increases. Landlords are not allowed to charge a rent increase until a serious maintenance problem is fixed and municipalities have now been given the power to license landlords. We're proud of the Residential Tenancies Act, the work that it has done, and we look forward to working with tenants' groups across the province to ensure that their rights are protected.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: While these changes will no doubt be of benefit to tenants in my riding, the reality is that most tenants and landlords don't go to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Most tenants pay their rent and most landlords care for their properties.

My concern, Minister, is that rent continues to go up. I talk to young families and students who live on tight budgets, and they rely on predictable expenses year over year. With the price of gas and home heating fuels on the rise, many tenants are paying special attention to their bottom line.

The NDP wants to cap rent for two years to ensure that rent remains affordable. I want to know what the RTA does to ensure rent remains affordable and whether such a rent cap is the best way to ensure that we continue to have affordable rental accommodations in the city of Toronto and the province.

Hon. Jim Watson: A rent cap, in fact, would have a negative impact on the supply of rental properties in the province and the NDP plan would move landlord-and-tenant relations back to a divisive area that we don't want to repeat.

We have a more balanced approach, working with both tenants and landlords, and the annual rent increase is now tied to the Ontario consumer price index. The 2009 guideline, for instance, is set at 1.8%. It protects tenants from rent increases above the rate of inflation, while allowing landlords to recover increasing costs.

Let's just take a look for a moment at the rent increases of the three parties who have had the honour of forming government in this province. Rent increases under our government have averaged 2.05%, under the

Conservatives they've averaged 2.9%, and under the NDP the average was 4.82%. So we will continue a balanced, practical approach to landlord-tenant relations and we certainly do not take any lessons from the NDP—

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

MINISTRY SPENDING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Government Services. He's had a few days now to collect himself and review his ministry's public accounts for 2008. May I ask again: Why did his hotel and conference budget increase by 78% during a recession and, as importantly, how could he as minister lose track of his ministry's runaway spending, particularly during this tough economic recession?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: For the record, I just want to say to the honourable member that there has never been a day I stayed at the Royal York Hotel with either Queen Elizabeth or former President Bill Clinton, as she alleged the other day.

The other thing I want to say is that we support the Ontario public service, particularly the Ontario public service's need for training and professional development with respect to successful service benchmarks. We had two events at the aforementioned hotel. Both were training events. We sought quotes from other venues, and that was the most competitive venue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister admitted in the House last week that he was in the dark about his hotel and conference budget and how it ballooned during a recession. There are only two conclusions that we can, on this side, draw from this. He either doesn't care or he's not able to lead his own department. The public accounts are clear. The minister authorized half a million dollars in hotel and conference spending, up 78% from last year, even though there are lots of conference and meeting spaces in this facility alone. How could the minister not know that? Spending the money is one thing; not knowing about it and not keeping track of it is another. This is embarrassing.

Will this minister tell this House how he could lose track of his skyrocketing hotel budget when everyday Ontarians are tightening their belts?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I just want to say for the record that I'm never in the dark when it comes to my hotel accommodations. That's first and foremost. I want to also say that aside from being mischievous, I could stand in my place and talk about the training events that we've never questioned that were incurred when the member from Leeds-Grenville was with the former Ministry of Public Safety and Security. I could talk about the \$159,000 spent at the Delta Hotels or the \$261,000 spent on staff training at the Holiday Inn, but I wouldn't want to do that. Instead, I'd much rather talk about how our government works very, very hard to ensure that our procurement is handled in a responsible and fair way and always in the best interests of Ontarians.

1130

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. The widow and son of Ontario firefighter Gene Morand would like to know—in fact, firefighters across Ontario would like to know—how is it that a man who spends 40 years fighting fires for the Tecumseh Fire Department and succumbs to a fatal occupational disease is not covered by WSIB when this government promised that all firefighters would be covered by presumptive legislation if they are killed by their jobs? When will this minister correct this injustice?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the opportunity to say that our Premier and our government understand and recognize the hazards and the life-threatening work that firefighters go through. We have taken steps to ensure that firefighters and their families are treated with dignity and compassion. We've lifted the burden of proof from the backs of our hard-working firefighters and their families.

With the legislation or presumptive legislation, I can tell you that we've done a lot for our firefighters. We continue to work hand in hand with them. They protect our families. They go into our businesses, into our homes. When everybody is running out, they're running in to protect us.

We want to make sure that we address their safety concerns. We want to continue to work in lockstep with our firefighters. We've done so. We've brought forward presumptive legislation which is—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess the minister is not familiar with the case. The minister's response is cold comfort to Mary Ellen and Larry Morand, who lost Gene to kidney cancer two years ago. Gene Morand fought fires in Tecumseh for 40 years straight. As a volunteer, he often fought all of them.

The McGuinty government promised all firefighters—full-time, part-time and volunteers—would be covered by presumptive legislation. We know that long-awaited regulation to make this happen is drafted, not on the board yet. What is the timetable for approving the legislation to ensure that Gene Morand and all volunteer and part-time firefighters in Ontario can be compensated for occupational diseases?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First, I could speak for this entire House. We're all saddened by the passing away of the individual firefighter. We know that our firefighters do some very dangerous, high-risk work. As I said, our firefighters are out there on the front lines. They make sure that we are all protected—protecting our homes, protecting our businesses. They put their lives in danger's way and that's why our government has worked in partnership with our firefighters bringing forward presumptive legislation, understanding the dangers that they are under. We will continue to work with our firefighters. A regulation that we brought forward on compensation to full-time firefighters who suffer fire-related illnesses ad-

dresses many things: brain cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, leukemia.

What I can assure the member—

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

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, I think all of us in this House would agree that the workplace is changing. Many different types of employment arrangements are now the norm and the rise in temporary help agencies testifies to that fact. In the past, employment through these agencies was mostly short-term, clerical jobs that lasted a few days or a few weeks. Today, agencies supply workers in a wide range of occupations and the employee of an agency might be assigned to a single client business for several months or even years. This has raised questions in my riding about whether temporary agency workers are being treated fairly compared to permanent or regular employees. I know this issue of fairness has been brought to the attention of your ministry. Would the minister tell us what he plans to do about the challenges faced by temporary workers in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First off, I'd like to thank the member for Brampton–Springdale for bringing forward this very important concern to all of us here in this House. Our government is committed to ensuring that employees working through temporary help agencies are properly protected under the law. Temporary employees and agencies that employ them are an important part of our workforce today in Ontario. Over 700,000 people in the province have temporary jobs, and it has been some time since the employment standards have been reviewed with a focus on temporary work. We believe that the time has come to review the legislation to determine whether it offers fair protections to and for our temporary employees. For that reason, I say to the member we've moved forward with the consultation on temporary help agency employment earlier this year. That was an extensive consultation. We've gotten a great deal of input and we are now reviewing that to look at our employment—

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

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2008 annual report of the Auditor General.

The time for question period having expired, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: Last year, I attended the annual injured workers' rally outside the Ministry of Labour. I had

hoped it would be the last, that there would be significant progress on the four major issues of experience rating, cost-of-living adjustments, deeming, and 100% WSIB coverage in Ontario. The question I asked the Minister of Labour was, would he eliminate deeming and determining, eliminate experience rating, guarantee coverage for all workers, and provide full permanent cost of living for people receiving benefits? I also asked when the Liberal government would provide the support to help injured workers through their most difficult times and the appropriate assessment and retraining to help injured workers re-enter the workforce.

Sadly, last Thursday, injured workers had to hold yet another rally in the faint hope that this government would finally listen to their concerns and do something to get a start on these four major issues; not a study, not a temporary measure, but real, immediate action that will positively address these issues.

Particularly in these economic times, the Liberal government should do everything in its power to support Ontario workers who are injured on the job and face a bleak future because of the failings of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

I encourage the government to start with a senior-level shakeup at the WSIB and then begin a return to workers' compensation, not this failed and punitive insurance system.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise today to speak about a matter of importance to some of the residents in my riding of York South–Weston.

Late last week, I met with some residents of Weston village who have expressed concerns about a proposal for an air-rail link from Pearson airport to Union Station and expressed their hopes as to how this service can be delivered in the short term and long term.

If there's going to be an air-rail link through this community, residents would like public access to such service, with fares that are in keeping with current public transit options. In addition, residents would like the air-rail link to be below grade throughout Weston, to avoid closing streets such as Church, King, John, and Denison Avenue. Below grade would not only reduce the noise and vibrations of an air-rail link service, but also has the potential to do the same for GO trains and even Via Rail trains.

I am told by local residents that they would also like to see stops along the air-rail link route, including, for example, within the historical centre of Weston.

Finally, because we are now moving into the technology age of considering the transition from diesel to electric, every consideration should be made to make the train electric, as part of the initiatives of Metrolinx and GO Transit to look at electric conversion.

I continue to bring forward the concerns and ideas of residents as they relate to the air-rail link proposal.

I am proud to represent Weston in the Legislature and to work for the best transit for the people of York South-Weston and of Ontario.

HOCKEY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Mr. Speaker, on November 19, I had the opportunity to attend an event with you to unveil Gary McLaughlin's new painting Blue Sky-White Snow. Blue Sky-White Snow is a painting to celebrate the 2007 80th anniversary of the Toronto Maple Leafs. This amazing painting is six feet by 12 feet and contains 763 individual portraits of past and present Maple Leafs, along with the Leafs' founder.

Since July 2006, Mr. McLaughlin has spent over 3,500 hours researching, drawing and painting all the players who had the opportunity to don the Maple Leafs' jersey. Each player had to be sketched and painted. The largest brush he used was a quarter of an inch in width.

Mr. McLaughlin's painting also showcases the evolution of the Toronto Maple Leafs. He has two large rectangle portraits: one of the original Leaf, Carl Voss; and one of Mats Sundin. These two large portraits inside the painting showcase the development of hockey equipment over the past 80 years, from 1927 to 2007.

Also, Mr. McLaughlin expands on the history of the Leafs by showing the different locations the Leafs have played in the past 80 years.

Blue Sky-White Snow is currently being showcased right here at Queen's Park. It is located on the fourth floor, at the entrance to the east visitors' gallery. If you have not seen the painting, I would recommend you take a look.

Currently Mr. McLaughlin is working on a similar painting for the 100th anniversary of the Montreal Canadiens. This painting will contain at least 850 faces to feature the same detail as Blue Sky-White Snow. Gary and his wife, Pat Crocker, are the owners of Riversong Gallery, located in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound in the town of Neustadt.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The 2008 annual report of the Auditor General reveals, once again, that in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, you still pay more and you still get less. Since the McGuinty Liberals came to office more than five years ago, government spending has increased by more than \$22 billion. As the auditor tells us today, despite that hefty price tag, the government has nothing—absolutely nothing—to show for it. In fact, when it comes to protecting the health and safety of Ontarians, this government is backsliding.

Let's look at the facts: Safety inspection rates of commercial vehicles have dropped 34%, and only three out of every 1,000 trucks are being inspected; more than 100,000 criminal cases have been waiting more than eight months to be heard; and the government ignores warning signs when it comes to food safety inspections.

If there was ever a time that this government needed to wake up, it's now.

It's time to put the health and safety of Ontarians front and centre to make sure we're getting results for the money we spend, not simply writing cheques with no strings attached. I think that's shameful and, of course, the official opposition will be here each and every day throughout the rest of this session holding that government accountable, to make sure that every single dollar spent, that is taken in from taxpayers in this province, is spent wisely and they're held accountable.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm glad to stand in my place today to update people on the status of my private member's bill, Bill 131. This Thursday, we get second reading debate in the House and I look forward to that. I look forward to the participation of all the members of the House. Many people have shown support, and I look forward to that debate.

I will have it referred to one of our committees, and certainly, through more research and working with companies and the industry association, I see new ideas and ways—and I've talked to John Yakabuski, the energy critic for the official opposition—that we can work together and make this bill better. I look forward to having the opportunity where we could work together through the committee process and work with all parties making amendments to make this better and for the point of protecting our consumer.

I know many of the members in this House share the very sad and tragic stories that I've encountered in my riding, where the most vulnerable people have been taken advantage of by some very unscrupulous salespeople at the door, signing people up into energy contracts that are worth far, far more than they could purchase electricity or natural gas from their distributor. What we want is transparency. We want to clean this up once and for all. I think we can do that, and I look forward to working with all the members of the House in doing that in the next coming months.

TAXATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This government is leakier than a sieve. If it's not leaking billions in new spending each year, it's leaky and lax in ensuring results. Yet, despite this government's ever growing desire to spend more money, it's totally lax when it comes to collecting taxes from certain areas.

Take tobacco taxes: The government lets \$500 million go uncollected every year and the auditor confirms it. But it's not just tobacco taxes, it's other taxes and fines, as well—\$200 million worth to be exact, an increase from last year, including \$92.4 million in retail sales tax, \$59.8 million in corporate tax and \$7.3 million in Criminal Code fines, up an unbelievable 7,200% over last year.

But it's pretty simple. You reduce your spending, you make sure your taxes are smart, and you collect the taxes

you are supposed to collect. When it comes to fiscal management, this government gets an F.

EID AL-ADHA

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today is Eid al-Adha, a holiday celebrated by Muslims around the world. This morning, Minister Gerry Phillips and I had the privilege of joining thousands of Muslims for prayers at the CNE to celebrate this important day.

Eid, also known as the Festival of Sacrifice, commemorates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to God. At the moment when Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, God intervened and provided a lamb instead.

1310

Eid al-Adha presents an opportunity to bring families, friends and the less fortunate together as they share food and gifts in celebration. Muslims are urged to distribute the qurbani meat equally amongst themselves, their friends and the poor. I would encourage the Muslim community throughout the province of Ontario to help the poor by dropping off food for charitable agencies.

On the occasion of Eid al-Adha, I would like to wish all Muslims of Ontario a very happy Eid and Eid Mubarak.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Ms. Laurie Scott: If memory serves me correctly, today is the third anniversary of the motion passed by this Legislature calling on the Dalton McGuinty Liberals to produce a comprehensive jobs plan to deal with the looming crisis in the manufacturing sector in Ontario. Well, it was looming at that time, three years ago; now we're in the thick of it. For three years, the McGuinty Liberals have failed to act on that motion, despite the fact that members sitting on this side of the House voted in favour of it.

At that time, McGuinty claimed it was a bit of a contraction. He claimed it would pass. He bobbled and weaved and ducked and dithered and delayed and denied, and then he announced that the government is going to put all its eggs in the retraining basket.

But today we learned, when we opened the 2008 Auditor General's report, the retraining programs and the apprenticeship programs the government spent so much on are failing: no strategy to increase enrolment in high-demand skilled trades, the Auditor General says; 50% of the people who enrol in the government's retraining programs drop out; of those who complete the program, the government has no idea if they stay in the field.

This is the old Dalton McGuinty approach: blow money out the door; no accountability. The people of Ontario are looking for a new approach, a new plan. We should have seen it three years ago, but today is the second-best time to deliver it. I hope we see that plan before Christmas.

DEMETRIOS DIPLAROS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I rise today to join with all members of this House and all Ontarians in expressing my deep condolences to the Diplaros family. Private Demetrios Diplaros, a proud Canadian soldier serving with the first battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, lost his life this past Friday in Afghanistan. He was only 24 years old and was serving our country as part of the Operational Mentor and Liaison Team embedded within the Afghan National Army.

I am told that Private Diplaros wanted to become a soldier from a very young age to be just like his father. He lived his dream and became that soldier. He was known for his smile. I hope his family—his father, Anargyros, his mother, Martha, and his brothers Nick and Peter—will remember that smile, and it will help them through their grief.

Today, Demetrios is coming home. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people will line the Highway of Heroes to pay their respect to Demetrios and his fellow officers, tragically killed. I know that bridge in Scarborough will be lined with Scarborough residents mourning the loss of a Canadian son, the son of one of our families. I want the Diplaros family to know that we will never forget their son's sacrifice and the sacrifice of his colleagues.

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Jeff Leal: Today, Peterborough's Corporal Mark McLaren, aged 23, Toronto's Private Demetrios Diplaros, aged 25, and Keswick's Warrant Officer Robert John Wilson, aged 27, will return home, but it won't be for Christmas to visit their families and friends as they planned.

These three young soldiers' bodies will be driven along the Highway of Heroes today, after losing their lives in a roadside bombing attack in Afghanistan late last week. Representatives from my community will be making the trip down to the Highway of Heroes to join with thousands of mourners who will stand on the overpasses to pay their respects to these young soldiers, their families and their friends.

Corporal Mark McLaren was raised in the Peterborough area, and his family lives in Peterborough today. He was on his second tour of duty in Afghanistan, returning to active duty after being injured during the first tour. These three young men became the 98th, 99th and 100th Canadians to have made the supreme sacrifice while stationed in Afghanistan.

I'm always impressed by the commitment of these young men and women. They volunteer to serve as soldiers of the Canadian Forces knowing full well the dangers they will face, yet they take the roles without hesitation or personal regard. With so much attention being given to the current economic and political state of affairs, the death of these three young men is a sobering reminder of the challenges our soldiers face every day. Everyone needs to take some time to remember the

members of our Canadian Armed Forces, their families and friends, and to say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent so we could rise for a moment of silence for these three young soldiers who were killed last week.

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

I ask all members and our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence for the three individuals who were killed in Afghanistan.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise with a petition to the House:

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

“Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000, and the current population is now 170,000”—and growing very rapidly;

“Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by ‘Places to Grow,’ an act of the Ontario Legislature”—passed by the Liberal government—“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 pleased to add my name to this petition and pass it to my page, Sara.

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 affix my name to it, and Sahara will deliver it.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has been sent to me by Saveourchildren.ca, and it’s addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Attorney General. It reads:

“Whereas the Canadian Judicial Council has been asked by Ontario’s Attorney General to probe the judicial behaviour of judges;

“Whereas judges are human beings and have been known to make serious mistakes in the judicial system, leading to devastating consequences and unfair justice for Canadian citizens;

“Whereas some judges have been observed making biased, disrespectful comments and abusing their judicial powers;

“Whereas Canadian families need to be protected from these judges who are unable to change their habits, unable to follow the rule of proper conduct, unable to exercise recommendations set by the Court of Appeal, and consequently commit grave injustices;

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens, are strongly requesting the following changes in our judicial system:

“(1) That a ‘judicial demerit point system’ be applied to ensure that judges are accountable for their judgments rendered;

“(2) That a yearly review of their performance be established.”

I’m glad to sign this petition and I thank you for your attention.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. John O’Toole: It is my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

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

“Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000, and the current population is now 170,000; 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 by 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

“Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled 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 pleased to present this to Courtney, one of the pages, during her last week here before Christmas.

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TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here from Jim Kirkland on Briar Hill Avenue in Toronto, whose father fought in World War I with Tom Longboat. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the 48 Sluse Road, Holland Landing, East Gwillimbury Sluse Road location is on the short list for the province's proposed northern York region peaking plant; and

"Whereas this proposed site is only 500 metres from Park Avenue Public School; and

"Whereas this proposed plant represents significant health and safety risks to the children and staff at Park Avenue Public School;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to reject the proposed Sluse Road Holland Landing peaking plant project."

I've affixed my signature and have given this to page Jenna.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it was sent to me by, among others, Purva Dave of Prestonwood Crescent in Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"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'm very pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Brittney to carry it for me.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with Bill 126, and it reads:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's Bill 126, Road Safety Act, 2008, unfairly targets and discriminates against teen drivers; and

"Whereas laws are already in place that punish drivers of all ages who speed and drink and drive; and

"Whereas this bill discourages carpooling and punishes teens who live in areas that don't have public transportation; and

"Whereas all citizens should be treated the same under the law;

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

"That the provincial government revoke Bill 126 and enforce the laws that are already in place to deal with speeders and impaired drivers of all ages."

I support this petition.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Dave Levac: This is a petition to recognize June 4 as Tom Longboat Day. Tom Longboat was born in my riding on Six Nations territory.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I sign this petition with grief and for Bradyn to bring it to your attention.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

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

“Whereas the 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 the timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital.”

I agree with the petition and affix my signature, and I pass it to my page, Sara M.

BATHURST HEIGHTS ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has to do with English as a second language. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the city of Toronto and the Toronto District School Board.

“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, making it accessible for students across the city; and

“Whereas newcomers in Toronto, and in the Lawrence Heights area, need the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre so they can succeed in their career opportunities; and

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that any revitalization of Lawrence Heights include a newcomer

centre and ensure that the Bathurst Heights centre continues to exist in the present location.”

Since I agree with this petition, I’m delighted to support it.

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: A petition for gas tax fairness to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas residents of rural communities in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

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

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

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls. 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.”

I’m pleased, on behalf of the member for Niagara Falls, to sign this petition, to send it down with my page from Mississauga–Streetsville, Jason Fernandes, and also

to welcome, in the members' gallery, his family: his mom and dad, Allan and Michelle, and his sister Stephanie.

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EMERGENCY DISPATCH SERVICES

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired. Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 4, 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Further debate? There being—pretty close.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I just was anticipating with interest. I'm pleased to speak on Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts. I was here during question period this morning when the minister rose in response to a backbencher's question and announced that he would not be proceeding with the multiple passengers in legislation. Obviously that is something that those of us in the

opposition have been raising for a number of weeks. We've received many e-mails. A good example that I raised was one where there was a university professor from Guelph who also happens to coach a rowing team. He makes mention of the fact that many of his participants in the rowing team of course have to get to the lake using vehicles, because there is no public transportation at that time of the day. He said this legislation would have serious repercussions for many of his athletes and others who participate in extracurricular activities, both at the high school and college and university levels—so we are obviously pleased that that is proceeding.

I think what Bill 126 has shown us more than anything else is the need for public consultation on this piece of legislation. There are so many young people who, while they have been, how shall we say, unimpressed with the legislative process to date, have finally seen something that makes them concerned, makes them write, makes them phone. It is a wonderful opportunity for the government and all legislators to allow them to participate in a very pro-active and specific manner if we open up the public hearings for Bill 126 to encourage that participation. It would be a shame if we finally have an opportunity where young people want to be engaged in the political process and see an opportunity to be engaged in the political process, and yet we ignore it and just proceed and say, “Well, we've looked after the one section with multiple passengers in the vehicle, so let's move on, and we don't need to talk about Bill 126 any further.” I think it would be a shame.

As one of the members in this chamber who happen to be on the younger end of the scale, I'm sure that I am not the only individual who has been trying to find ways to engage our young people in the political process, explaining to them how it's important, how they can actually make a difference in our political process. Bill 126 could be that opening, could be that opportunity to show young people and individuals who are interested in learning more about the political process that this is what happens: We debate; hopefully, we open up Bill 126 for public consultation and we allow some of the very helpful suggestions that have been coming forward.

The other aspect of Bill 126 that I have some concerns about is the age restriction as opposed to novice driver. There's no doubt that all of us are concerned about keeping our roads safe, ensuring that the people who have the ability and the desire to drive on Ontario roads do so in a safe manner. Our history in the Progressive Conservative caucus shows that we have been concerned about this and, as a government, we of course introduced graduated licences and have been supportive of many of those safety initiatives that have been brought forward from all levels and all parties in the House.

But when we specifically say if you are under 21, I think a better way to review and make an amendment to Bill 126 would be to reference it as a novice or new driver. Instead of highlighting what looks like, when reading it, age discrimination, we should talk about novice drivers. So if you have just acquired the skill of

driving a vehicle, whether you are 16 or 35, you are under those same kinds of restrictions that a novice driver would have. I would support an amendment to Bill 126 that would allow that.

There is much excellent legislation and many excellent reviews in effect right now with the licensing and the graduated licensing system. My challenge with Bill 126 as it is written is that we are painting all young people with the same brush: If you are under 21, if you are a new driver, then, ergo, you must be a poor driver; you must be an irresponsible driver. I, for one, would hope that that is not the intent of what the Minister of Transportation was trying to bring forward. If we could change the wording “under 21” and instead use the comment “novice,” I think that would be a big improvement to the legislation as it is written.

The opportunity we are being given here with Bill 126 is to actually open up the process to allow young people the opportunity to participate in what is really the only part of the legislative process where they can get engaged and involved, and that is at the public hearings stage. I think it would be a grave injustice for us to ignore that opportunity.

I will be urging the House leader and the minister to move forward and have some very substantial public hearings on Bill 126.

I don't think it's any surprise when you represent a riding like Dufferin–Caledon, which is of course primarily rural in nature and has very little public transportation. We happen to only have one bus system in one community in the riding of Dufferin–Caledon, so the opportunity to use public transit that urban students and urban job seekers would have is not available in Dufferin–Caledon. The reality is, at age 18, if individuals so choose, they can get a job, they can go to post-secondary institutions, and if they happen to live in Dufferin–Caledon they are going to be doing that via their own wheels or via the benefits of individuals they carpool with.

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With that view in mind, looking at it from a rural or semi-rural community perspective, we have to really look at how Bill 126 is going to limit individuals' ability to participate either in post-secondary education or the very basic jobs and recreation aspect of it.

At that point, I guess—not to harp on the same issue—if we could call for and have very active public hearings, then that would be a good opportunity for us, as legislators, to move forward with 126.

On that note, I will close.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's a pleasure to stand up and respond to the hard-working member from Dufferin–Caledon, who has spent many years working diligently in that riding.

She's absolutely right: This is a bill that talks about young drivers versus new drivers, and that discriminates against one sector of our population. Any legislation that

passes through the legislative body of Ontario should never, under any circumstances that I can think of, discriminate against one sector of our society. If there was an amendment that read that for the first three years of a driver's licence, drivers should have some restrictions placed on them, I would agree with that; but to designate that as a specific age bracket within our community is irresponsible, I think, on the part of this government.

It's also interesting that this important piece of legislation has a lot of consequences attached to it for the people of Ontario, yet as important as this is, there are no government speakers to this important piece of legislation. Is the government actually devoid of any comment on this piece of legislation?

They're changing it on the go. They're running down and changing it in question period, inappropriately, in my mind. That needs to be done during ministerial statements, not during question period. It certainly doesn't meet the purpose of the rules or the element of the rules, but it does meet the rules.

I wonder what the government's commitment to this bill is. I think, in the end, if the House were to prorogue this month, we might not see this bill again—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my colleague and what she had to say in terms of this bill. What she is asking for, I think, is really quite reasonable. She is asking that there be some really strong and prolonged hearings on the bill, so that people can come forward and comment on various aspects of the bill, and she remains troubled by a few of them. She has made a very good point in terms of new drivers versus young drivers and I think that we all need to look at that.

I understand—I was not here this morning—that the minister did rise in his place and talk about withdrawing the most egregious portion of the bill, which has probably assuaged a great many fears and shown young people across this entire province that getting your face on Facebook and passing your comments along, in a fashion which we have not seen to any great extent on bills, actually bore some fruit.

I would put to the government that the obligation, of course, rests with the government members and with the minister—whether or not they wish to proceed in a manner that would involve great public consultations. There are still things in this bill that the public would want to comment on, and I think the one that comes most readily to my mind is the whole question of the penalties that are involved and whether the penalties for young drivers will remain more severe than for those who have been driving for a long time. We now know that the young drivers will be able to put their friends in the vehicle, but at the same time, should they make a mistake on the road, the penalty to them will be much more severe than for drivers who have been on the road a long time. I think that's something that needs to be talked through in committee and I welcome the opportunity, should the government decide to send this to committee,

to hear from young drivers and new drivers as to exactly what they think.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I really want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to respond to the member from Dufferin–Caledon's comments. For a point of clarification, there is a commitment to go forward with hearings. We from this side of the House have demonstrated at every step our commitment to not only listening to the public, but acting upon that. That clearly was demonstrated today in the question to the Minister of Transportation.

From the riding of Huron–Bruce, I heard a number of concerns with regard to the graduated licence program. There were a number of concerns specifically for that portion, but I have heard strong support for the rest of the legislation. The minister has made it very clear that that has been removed. We know, going forward, that there will be hearings. We look forward to hearing from the public once again, but it really has given all of us the ability to focus in on the bulk of the legislation now, and taking that part out that there were so many concerns about.

I do want to thank the young people from my riding of Huron–Bruce. I heard from a number of them. It's not often that we do hear from our young people in the riding, but I can tell you that I think it's absolutely wonderful that they took the time to write letters, make calls and send e-mails. I certainly hope that they continue to be engaged in the politics that affect their day-to-day lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak to this very important bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I want to bring some information to light in the House, when you're talking about this bill. Certainly, the members know about the numbers in vehicles. However, I took a different perspective when I did some research on the bill. I called the breath technicians. Those are the individuals who do the Breathalyzer tests in the police forces. I asked exactly how this would impact or how it could be unfolded. I'm not sure the government has taken into consideration a number of factors that may be very significant. For example, if an individual who is under 21 takes Benylin—the number one component in Benylin is alcohol—they will then have a content of alcohol in their system at that time and be driving illegally; if they use something such as mouthwash or vanilla—the largest component of vanilla, 35%, is alcohol—it is not taken into consideration.

One of the other aspects that I don't know if the government has taken into consideration is those individuals who participate in the United Church and take the sacraments on Sunday. When they take their sip of wine, that will put them over on the Breathalyzer test and make them illegal for driving.

Currently, we have the law as 19 in the province of Ontario; however, the provision here takes zero toler-

ance, which should mean zero alcohol content. So for any individual, 21 and under, who has cough syrup of any kind—Benylin is the one that I checked the research on—it will have an impact. Individuals who have vanilla or mouthwash—I just talked to the breath technicians, the actual ones who do the enforcement on this, and you'll find there's a significant concern that has been brought forward that will make it very hard to enforce in the eyes of the courts, with the individuals doing the law. I would certainly hope that the government takes this into consideration when they're looking at finalizing the bill and how it's going to come out in its final form.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Dufferin–Caledon, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues. I guess I would just reiterate that I would hate to see the Liberals not use this opportunity to have extensive public hearings on Bill 126. We've been given an opportunity with a piece of proposed legislation that actually is of critical interest to the youth of our province. If the Libs do not use the opportunity to hold extensive public hearings, then once again the youth will believe that their opinions are not valid, and they will become more jaded about the political process.

In fact, if I could put a word of warning to what happens if we don't continue to listen to the youth and talk to them about legislation that is proposed, it will come back to haunt the Liberals when we have our next election and then, once again, the youth of Ontario will get involved, but it might not be in the way that the current government would like.

So I urge extensive public hearings and hope that they are listening to all aspects of what is raised with Bill 126 and not just the passenger restriction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I remember very, very well when I was a newly ordained minister and sent—the United Church can be like the army sometimes—to my first pastoral charge, which was Brucefield-Kippen, in Huron-Perth. Within the first year of being settled there, which is the term they use, we got the call at 3 in the morning, and it was from just outside my own charge. It was a car full of teenagers who had died drinking and driving in the wee hours coming back from a high school party.

I remember particularly the young minister whose unfortunate task it was to perform the burials for those young people. She was also in her first year of being settled out there. One of the salient details that really comes home to me as I remember that sad day and series of days and the numbers of families—there were five children involved, five families involved—was the fact that she and I had offered some of the same kids the opportunity to phone us. We said, "Don't hesitate, phone us. We'll come pick you up. We won't tell your parents. We'll drive you home. We just want to make sure that you get home alive." Obviously it didn't work. I know

that as I speak there are many communities, particularly rural communities, where driving is one of the only ways of getting around that will face this.

I certainly, as we all do in the New Democratic Party, support the bill in its current, amended form. We were not ready to vote on it prior to the announcement this morning.

I want to also send kudos out to the 141,000 young people who, in an incredible outpouring of democracy and exercise in democracy, actually decided to open a Facebook account and speak at the government and try to encourage and influence the government to do what was right. Kudos to them. Kudos to the 14,000 posts that went out around what the government eventually amended, which was this aspect of the bill condemning carrying of friends. It made no sense. Young people spoke out, and I'm so glad they did and that they had an influence. There's no question about it.

However, we in the New Democratic Party still have some issues with the way, for example, driver education is delivered in this province. I remember last year an Auditor General's report, then James McCarter, found that 55% of first-time drivers enrolled in the program had crashed their cars—about 62% more often. What this said is that if kids took most driver education programs, they became worse drivers than if they hadn't taken them. This is a pretty frightening statistic. Certainly the Auditor General didn't understand it, and his quote at the time was that they had done very little work—talking about the government—at all to see why this is happening. Our question to the ministry is—this is pretty significant—surely you should have investigated this and determined why this is happening so you can take appropriate action. We contrast that, for example, with the Manitoba government, which actually delivers driver education in schools for a mere \$50. You, as a high school student, get driver ed as part of your high school education. This, to New Democrats, makes sense, instead of the \$1,000 or more that it costs Ontario parents or Ontario young people to get driver education which, we hear, makes them worse drivers than if they hadn't taken it.

So there's obviously some work to do in driver education that won't be addressed by Bill 126, and it's something that should be addressed. I certainly applaud the member from Dufferin-Caledon, because I think that if we did have extensive committee work and hearings, the government would hear about this and the lack of adequate driver education in this province. That's something we certainly would call for.

Of course, we hear from this year's Auditor General's report that there are still problems with this government and its attempts at education. Certainly the government retraining programs, with their 50% dropout rate, are not working. Certainly the government's educational attempts where special-needs children are concerned—where the government has put in 54% more funding and only 5% more special-needs children are actually getting the services delivered to them—is a problem in training. Of course there are the other problems. Thank goodness

for the Auditor General, who pointed out that the Brampton hospital costs more with private funding than it would have—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Parkdale-High Park, take your seat, please. We're discussing Bill 126, which is amendments to the Highway Traffic Act.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I was segueing, based on the inadequacy of training and the inadequacy of government oversight of training.

To get back to the point on young drivers, we in the New Democratic Party plan on supporting the bill, but certainly would want to see that experiment in young democracy in this province, where you had 141,000 posting their objections to aspects of this act, get some recompense, and that would be in hearing those same voices speaking out at a committee as this bill is looked at. Certainly we would want to encourage young people to let their voices be heard and to speak up, because they can clearly see that when you do that, you do have an impact. You can influence public policy. This is grassroots campaigning at its best.

I hope the government does not squelch it. I hope they send this bill to committee. I hope they have extensive hearings. I hope they actually get to meet some of those 141,000 young people who managed to change the government's mind on this particular bill. I also hope—and I speak for all the New Democratic Party in this—that they look at the whole issue of driver education in this province and do something about it, because clearly it's absolutely inadequate as it stands.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I spent about a year and a half as PA to the Minister of Transportation, and I was always very proud of the fact that Ontario has the safest roads of any province or state in North America. One of the reasons we have that honour is that we're always looking for ways we can improve road safety. The excellent engineers—it's mainly engineers who look after safety; the roads are designed very, very safely, and they understand the whole concept of safety.

The issues that have been brought forward in this bill are all additional items that our government has been working on. The safeguards against street racing were very important; they were brought in by this government. There have been many, many other issues on that.

I am very pleased to see that we're still working in the same direction of making safer roads. It's so important, and the whole discussion with the young drivers on the first year of their G2 is going to be a good discussion, because I think there will be education issues that come out of that. That got home to those kids; it got home to the schools.

All these changes we're about to make are going to just make our roads safer, and that's what we're out there to do. We haven't got the opportunity of backtracking our government, our civil service, our engineers who design these roads and come up with these special designs

that do protect people. This is just part of it. This is just going to take us further down the road to make our roads safer, and we'll stay number one in North America, and that is what we want to do.

1400

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always a pleasure. I think all members will agree on one thing. Certainly I know that our side, with Frank Klees as our critic, agrees with doing all that is necessary to make our roads safer.

Mr. McNeely and others who have spoken on this have finally taken action. Some of it is not exactly the right thing to do. In fact, one of the other bills—I'm surprised, first of all, that they didn't merge the two transportation bills; one is already before committee now. Then they latterly have introduced this other bill, Bill 126, which has two or three mistakes in it.

The public can tell the minister, Mr. Bradley, that they're not accepting of it. In fact, it's almost like it is a slam against young people. That is clear, from everything I've heard.

In fact, I could read a note here; I've got permission from most people to—this is from Russell Weeks. He was saying that the new driver against young people—yes, he admits that young drivers have a higher number of incidents, but restricting the number of passengers will hurt students and car pooling and indeed our environment. That's what I'm hearing universally.

Some of the initiatives in the bill are sound and well-intended. In fact, they were probably brought forward by Frank Klees at some point in time when he was Minister of Transportation, or Laurie Scott on the speed limiters, or myself on the whole idea of technology in the driver's space.

Doing the right thing, often—it's important that the minister is listening. If we're looking at not just the age 21 and the potential age discrimination part of it, we want to make the roads safer and we want to pass the bill, but he has to expunge a couple of references in the current drafting of the bill. I would say it was hastily drafted, poorly consulted on. In fact, he could have easily integrated it into the other Highway Traffic Act bill that is before committee.

We are listening closely to what concessions the government is prepared to make while at the same time keeping our roads the safest in the world.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently again to the member from Parkdale–High Park, and she raised a very interesting point: that people who go to driver education schools actually have higher rates of accidents and higher rates of faults and demerits in the system than those who do not. That is very troubling, as she said. I'm not sure what the government should be doing; I know it's not contained within the body of this bill. But she makes a very good point.

The Auditor General made another very troubling point in his report: Those people who are driving instructors, who instruct young drivers on how to drive, are

more likely than average Ontarians to accumulate demerit points. He went on to say that about 360 instructors, 6.5% of them, collected demerit points for speeding, not wearing a seatbelt and disobeying a traffic light. I think that the government ought to be looking at this as well. When there is a potential to fault young people, for a bill of this nature to come forward—which has now, thankfully, been amended—to put a special onus on young people, then there should be that same onus to put some kind of safeguards around those who instruct.

I do remember, all the years ago when I was learning to drive, I went through the Toronto board of education. The Toronto Board of Education had a driver's education course. I am very thankful to this day for the course that they ran; the instructor who was provided, who met the board standards; and for that instructor's ability to impart to me and my colleagues in that class all of that which was necessary for us to become safe drivers. That kind of thing should be emulated across the province instead of the privatized scheme we have now, where driving instructors are oftentimes a very bad example to their students.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciated the comments from the member from Parkdale–High Park. I too have had up-close-and-personal encounters with drinking and driving, and fatalities therefrom. In my past life, I was a funeral director and had, unfortunately, some of the same experiences she recounts.

I wanted to talk a little bit about driving schools, however, because that seems to be an issue, and seeing as we are providing a discount in the time that you need to get a licence if you do go to an accredited driving school, I think it is actually an issue. You would know that on September 1, 2007, the province of Ontario began regulating all driving schools. Compliance with provincial standards is now being monitored and strongly enforced. In the last year we have removed 30 schools that offered beginner driving education from our ministry-approved list because they weren't up to standard. We have audited all ministry-approved beginner driving education schools in Ontario. We are assessing the results and are taking corrective action when necessary to ensure that our standards are upheld. We have tightened standards for licensing driving instructors to ensure better-qualified driving instructors. We will not license a new driving instructor if they have a single demerit point or a Criminal Code conviction. A new, rigorous monitoring and audit process for beginning driver's certification and school licensing, which includes mystery shoppers, will ensure that our standards are being followed.

I want to quickly respond to the member from Oshawa, who talked about the zero blood alcohol. This is done in 50 American states and other Canadian jurisdictions. I can assure the member that zero does take into account some blood-alcohol content which might come from mouthwash or something.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parkdale–High Park, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to all the members for their questions and comments after I spoke. Certainly anything that makes our children safer is a good thing. I also didn't give kudos to the organization that I think is ever present in our minds as we discuss driving and alcohol, period, and that's MADD. So thank you, definitely, to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, because without them we would be living in a very different province.

Again I come back to driver education. I listened with interest to the comments that the government is tightening up on what passes as a school, what passes as a driver educator. But still the problem is access as well. Where you're paying over \$1,000 to have a young person trained, you clearly aren't admitting a great many young people to driver education. So I certainly would want to encourage the government to look at the Manitoba example where, with public auto insurance and public control, you can also deliver public education for young drivers in the schools themselves for only \$50, which is exactly where driver education should be and exactly what it should cost, if anything. I would encourage that, and encourage that they continue the exercise in democracy started by the young people in this province, and listen to them, actually meet some of those 141,000 young people who spoke up and changed the government's mind; get to know them, because these are the leaders of the future, and that means hearings and openness and transparency and that means committee time.

Again, we support it in its amended version and hope this helps.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I do have prepared notes to speak to today with this debate. But in addition to some prepared notes, I have some from constituents from my riding. But before I do that, I would like to add a little context to the debate. I'll start with a reference to the Minister of Transportation this morning, who of course said, "Our roads are always declared to be the safest in North America. There's much more we have to do, however, and that's why we introduced the legislation that, if passed, will help make them ... safer." I think we do have the safest roads. Nobody is denying that. But we want to make them safer. Just how safe do we want to make them? And remember, whenever there is an action there is also a reaction. The only way, it appears, that this government wants to make our roads safer is by diminishing the number of people on the roads; restricting and preventing people from driving.

1410

I represent a rural riding, a riding where a personal automobile is the only form of transportation. We do not have access to GO trains, we do not have access to subways, we do not have access to public transportation. Personal automobiles and motorcycles are our form of transportation. I do recognize that the minister has men-

tioned some amendments to this bill. I hope that he didn't look on Facebook, because we all know that's banned for MPPs and civil servants. I hope he didn't sneak a couple of peeks at Facebook to see the opposition building to this bill. But we have safe roads. The only means of practical transportation in rural Ontario is under threat with Bill 126.

Mr. Jim Brownell: It is not.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It is under threat.

Mr. Jim Brownell: It's not under threat at all.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, the honourable member from Stormont–Dundas would like to interject. I guess he does have the TTC up in Stormont–Dundas, but not the last time I was there, though.

I agree with comments from our other colleagues that it has been hastily drafted, poorly consulted. And I will have to also mention, in the leadup here, that the member from Huron–Bruce said they are demonstrating their commitment to public hearings and openness and transparency. Of course, there has been no debate from the other side on this bill. I guess that's what they mean by demonstrating their public commitment.

Another Liberal priority has come before this House, and it's clear to me and to everybody in my riding what the true Liberal agenda is. The Liberal agenda is not our hundreds of thousands of lost jobs, nor is it the long wait times and our doctor shortages. It is not about securing quality education and it's not about providing a safe, secure and just society. No, the Liberal agenda is, as Milton once said, a vain wisdom and false philosophy, and it is an agenda that demands people surrender our freedoms and subject ourselves to this monster of inefficiency and incompetence—the Liberal nanny state.

There is a role for us. There are important and significant roles for government: to create a responsible society, not to diminish individual responsibility; to ensure we have economic opportunities for prosperity and that our children have opportunities to receive quality education; and that everyone has access to timely medical care. These are but a few of our—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm sure the member is going to get to commenting on Bill 126, amendments to the Highway Traffic Act?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes. Instead, the Liberals bring closure to the debate, to all those fundamental obligations. I do understand the Minister of Transportation has back-pedalled on Bill 126 somewhat, but Bill 126 is a piece of legislation that will enshrine discrimination of age in statute and make discrimination lawful. Bill 126 does not stop there; it also empowers the police to be both judge and jury for drivers under the age of 22.

Interruption.

Interjection: Turn your BlackBerry off.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Sorry about that.

It appears to me that this government's prerogative is to limit judgment, deny responsibility, restrict freedoms, and break our long-held traditions of common law and respect for those under the age of 22.

I've come to know in the last year, and as a representative of Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and as a legislator in this House, that you can never be sure what will come out of the mouths from the other side. One day it's against discrimination; the next day it's in favour. One day their hand is writing about law, order and justice, and at the same time the other hand is crafting up legislation to seize private property.

I would like to just talk a little bit about the comments I've been receiving about Bill 126 and let everybody in this House know what the people in my riding think of this Liberal nanny state legislation.

I'll start with a fellow named Austin Kirsh. I can't repeat what he prefaces his quote with, but "a piece of legislation that disenfranchises someone else is introduced by an entity such as MADD. Charities are for giving assistance to others, not preventing law-abiding citizens from sharing the same freedoms as other law-abiding citizens." He went on to say that "honourable is not eliminating the freedoms of many to accommodate the extreme ideology of a few." That is from a constituent named Austin Kirsh. I believe he's about 20 years of age.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Smart, though.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Smart fellow, articulate, and even he, our youth, can see through this.

I remember listening to Mike Huckabee earlier last year, and I think this would be an important one for the minister and all members of this House to remember. Mike Huckabee said, "I don't need a poll to figure out what I believe." Neither do I. I don't need a poll to understand what's right and what's wrong. These ought to be intuitive to every member in this House. If it is not intuitive, what is right and what is wrong, then you're in the wrong House.

I'll go on to speak about what Dana Dennis from Carleton Place said, that "the proposed changes are draconian and will have no impact on the safety of roads" in Ontario, and, "I only hope my provincial government has better things to do than enact such foolish legislation."

We can all see that government does have better things to do. I talked about it briefly in my notes. We have real priorities in this province. We have people out of work, we have infrastructure falling about, and here we are going to debate Bill 126, which allows that if you're under the age of 22 and you get caught speeding, you can have your car taken away.

I would hazard a guess that every individual in this House who has a driver's licence has sped beyond the speed limit at one time or another. However, only if you're under 22 are you subject to these new and terrible regulations.

Here is what Tom Morrow from Carleton Place said: "I am disgusted that our government would take such actions against our youth. Clamp down on speeders, drinkers, but if someone passes all the hurdles to get their licence, then treat them as equals." Treat them as equals: Isn't that a novel concept? Treat people as equals once they have demonstrated their competencies.

This is from Allan Niittymaa in Perth: "while I sympathize with those who have suffered a loss, this limitation is too restrictive for the majority of responsible youths."

I'm glad this one amendment has been proposed by the Minister of Transportation; otherwise, we would not be having RIDE programs on the roads but birth certificate inspections. I'm glad they have seen the light from their public opinion polls.

1420

Here's one from Pat Campbell: "Too often, laws are made for the people in the city. Rural Ontario is affected way more than our politicians realize." Let's get out of the House from time to time and actually see what the consequences are, see the harm that is being done. Bear in mind, again, that our tradition of common law recognizes the inherent and innate responsibility of people.

Common law is a little bit different than most other laws. Common law doesn't tell you what you can do; it tells you what you can't do. It doesn't prescribe a process; it rejects illegitimate actions. That's our tradition in this province, in this House—common law. From piece after piece of regulation, we see that that concept is foreign and absent to members of this Liberal government.

Here's one from Frank Pinder, from Inverary: "Government is stepping too far into governing the lives of young people and families with some of these rules."

Here's one from Kerry Ferguson: "This is nanny state legislation which will severely curtail the activities of all young people, and their families, because of the careless actions of a few." This is a good one, but it was written before this morning's announcement: "It will result in teenagers still carrying multiple passengers to and from events and activities, but now they will be hidden down on the backseat floor with no seat belts on. Don't laugh; it will happen. You will read about it when the first tragic accident happens." Thankfully the minister recognized that we ought not to be encouraging our youth to be hiding in the backseat without seat belts.

Here's one from Chuck Andary: "All I am asking here is that this generational discrimination ends." I think that's a pretty fair comment, a pretty sensible comment, one that we all ought to be able to agree with.

We have so many. Here's one from Eddie Doran, that this is "a great imposition on the personal freedoms and civil liberties of Canadians and visitors to this country alike"—an imposition on personal freedoms and liberties for ourselves and for our visitors. Everybody can see that there ought to be, and there are, significant priorities that we ought to be dealing with. But this Liberal government just keeps churning out—they've got a mill that operates on a 24-hour nanny mentality; it just keeps churning them out day after day. It never stops.

Here's one from Katie-Marie McNeill: "This is complete and utter discrimination against a group of people based on age."

What are we doing in here? What are we doing on the other side of this House bringing in legislation that is

discriminatory, bringing in legislation that breaks with our traditions? Is there any time to reflect and think about what you on the other side are doing, or are you just too busy going to photo ops and handing out cardboard cheques? I don't know. There ought to be some time to think about what we're doing.

This from Pat Campbell: "We live in the country. Everything involves travel." Everything. Speaker, it is clear to everyone that this bill is a distraction from the important concerns and priorities of the people of this province, but it doesn't fool anybody. You're not going to dupe anybody. You're still going to have to step up to the plate someday and address the real concerns and the real priorities of the people in this province. You can keep that nanny state red-tape mill working all the time; it doesn't fix anything. Step up to the plate. You've been elected by the people of this province to stand up and hit them a home run, not just to knock out foul balls all the time. Stand up and do your job. Let's respect people, respect their freedoms and respect justice even if they're under the age of 22. Let's respect them all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to comment on the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—I hope I got them all in the right order—and what he had to say. I think what was important in his comments was the fact that he has actually consulted with his constituents and his constituents with him. He has taken the time, and they have taken the time to write to him about their feelings on this proposed bill, and obviously there were more than a few who were unhappy, particularly with the provision that was withdrawn today. I think that brings to mind what most of the rest of us have been hearing from people, young and old, across this province: that although we appreciate making tougher laws against drunk driving and although we want more safety on the roads, we are unwilling and unable, and we should always be unwilling and unable, to target young people.

There is no evidence, to my mind, to prove that they are any more likely than other drivers to get into accidents as a result simply of their age. I would grant that they may get into accidents more likely because of the fact that they have not been driving for as long a period of time, and perhaps with youthful exuberance things happen. But, quite frankly, I believe that young people can be as safe a driver as anyone else. So I commend the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for what he had to say and for bringing the views of his constituents home to the Legislature. I didn't find anything he said today all that outrageous.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the comments from the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington: sometimes a bit fanciful but always entertaining.

I just want to say to the member that I'm not exactly sure, from his presentation, what particular parts of this

bill he is not in favour of. If he's not in favour of the zero blood-alcohol content restriction for drivers 21 and under, then he probably does not know that those 19, 20 and 21 have the highest rates of involvement in both fatal collisions and collisions overall. The involvement rate in fatal and injury collisions is 28% higher than for drivers aged 22 and 24. He probably does not know that all 50 states in the United States of America have the same blood-alcohol rule and that that has significantly, in those jurisdictions, lowered the number of young people killed in collisions. He probably does not know, or hasn't researched carefully enough—and I'm just here to help—and I'm sure the public hearings will give the public some more opportunity, that, overall, drinking and driving still account for 25% of the fatalities on our roads today. I represent a rural constituency and I would suggest to him that his looks absolutely urban compared to mine.

I want to say that I've heard some concerns. The minister has acted on those concerns today, with the number of young people in a car at one time in the G2 part of their licensing. But I want to assure him that people who have their G licence—in other words, who have gone through the licensing—with very little difference other than those under 21 for blood-alcohol content, are able to—

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I'd like to take a few minutes here to comment on the issues of Bill 126 and congratulate the member who spoke from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—that's a big, long name—and many of the things he said are so true.

I also, though, would like to thank the minister for taking the most offensive part of this bill out. I think this shows that actually sometimes the House works. I know a lot of the times it doesn't, but this is one time that I believe that the government has listened to the rural members of all three parties here and the northern members, because this bill was offensive to rural and northern Ontario. We don't have the TTC running down the road and a lot of our people do not have another way of getting to events. This bill, the way it was first written, would have been really offensive, as I said, and so I'm pleased that the minister listened, but I think it was an effort on all parts. I'm sure the members from the governing party, the rural members and the northern members, spoke to him, and he also listened to us on this side. That is nice to see happening, especially when we're coming to Christmas and we'll soon be adjourning, to see that in some cases the House works.

I'm disappointed in other things; there are other things in the bill that we are concerned about. This bill partly is due to a horrific, terrible accident that happened in Grey county not very long ago, and there were a number of teenagers who were killed. I know this is part of the bill and the people who were involved there worked very hard towards this. But when we came to that one thing

that was in the bill that was really upsetting—lots of letters, lots of e-mails came into my office concerned about it, and this will help us go a long way to solving that. So I'm looking, when it goes out to comment, to getting some more ideas to help make the bill better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I certainly listened with intent to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. We couldn't be farther apart politically and in many ways, but I do hear his concern for ageism in this particular piece of legislation. As New Democrats, we're concerned about it too. Very simply, if zero per cent alcohol level is good news for those 21 and under, then it's good news for everybody. I think those who are obviously involved in this, from MADD, would agree that we need stricter levels around alcohol consumption for all folks in Canada and in Ontario, not just for those 21 and under. I hear that and I think it's valid.

I would point out—it came out of the Auditor General's report today—that we also need to look proactively at what we're going to do about those who continue to drink and drive. For example, the AG today pointed out that 90% of those with addiction issues are not helped in this province. There's no program for them, there's no provincial addiction strategy to deal with them, so that's something they should be looking at along with this.

Again, if they're being open and transparent about the process and listening to the voices of those 141,000 young people, perhaps they will hear—some have suggestions about what to do about the growing rate of alcoholism and addiction among the young in this province—and do something about it. So that's the kind of action that we need.

Certainly, I heard the sense of frustration with a government that passes bills that are kind of motherhood and apple pie when we need some real action around the outrageous job loss, the outrageous poverty rates of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the members from Beaches–East York, Parkdale–High Park, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and, of course, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. It was interesting when I heard him trying to justify the merit of discrimination—why we should discriminate. Well, all his justification and rhetoric about why discrimination is acceptable is still not acceptable to this representative here.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound mentioned that the odd time the House does work. He was congratulating the Liberals on that, and that's very true. Unfortunately, it is the exception, not the rule, and we ought to be elevating our expectations here in this House that it does work all the time, and the days that it doesn't work would be the exception. Wouldn't that be an interesting thing?

I'm going to end off by putting one more quote here in Hansard, because I think it puts things in the proper perspective: “The public good is in nothing more essentially interested, than in the protection of every individual's private rights.” That was written by Blackstone, if the member from Algoma–Manitoulin hadn't read about that. That's what it is: equal private rights, not justifying discrimination of age under any other dubious distraction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I anticipate that I am likely to be the last speaker or the last debater from the New Democratic Party on this particular bill. Perhaps the reason I am going to be the last one is that the minister stood in his place today and withdrew the most egregious portion of the bill, having, I think, succumbed to the 150,000 or so people who submitted their names and their comments on Facebook, and come to the firm understanding that the bill simply, in this one regard, had gone too far.

Because that has happened, I believe it is now incumbent upon all of us to support the provision of the bill and to see that it goes to committee, where we can hammer out what is left in it. There are still some things that I feel need to be tweaked and some things that need to be changed. But certainly, inasmuch as the provision that disallows people under the age of 21 from riding in cars with their friends, from carpooling and doing the like has been withdrawn, there are not the serious concerns that many of us had at the outset.

Having said that, a couple of points I think need to go to committee and need to be determined. I listened with interest to the member from Oshawa and the whole issue of blood alcohol. I also heard what the member from Algoma–Manitoulin had to say about that. But, although I doubt very much that a sip of sacramental wine will give you a blood alcohol limit that can be read or that mouthwash will do the same, I'm not quite so convinced about the impairment that follows taking more than two or three spoonfuls—although I don't think you should do that—of Benadryl. I know, having taken that myself, the—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: With a couple of glasses of wine?

Mr. Michael Prue: No, not even with a full glass of wine, just all by itself. I know quite well how that can momentarily cause you some considerable angst in your ability to walk and to drive.

I would like to hear some expert opinion on that, and I'm hoping if it goes to committee someone can explain and assuage the fears that he has and that others may have that taking something like a cough medicine will not impair people to that point that they will find themselves in breach of the law and at risk of losing their driver's licence. I just need to hear that.

The second thing that I think we need to talk about is the whole issue of driver testing. I had an opportunity, as I'm sure many members did over the weekend, to read the Toronto Star, about the driver testing provisions. We

know the auditor has already commented on the driver education, and I'm happy that the government has taken some small steps towards resolving that difficulty, but now we have the whole problem of driver testing. And it seems to me patently unfair that one can take all the same courses, do all the same things and have a 46% failure rate or 48% failure rate in and around the city of Toronto and in Brampton, and then other locations like Sault Ste. Marie and Kapuskasing would have a 10% failure rate. It seems to me that there's no empirical proof that the drivers in and around Toronto or the GTA are any worse drivers than those from Sault Ste. Marie or Kapuskasing. They probably have access to the same kinds of people teaching them, the same kinds of parents who care and everything else. But it seems that the testing mechanism is not a fair one and that people are going out on to the road having been tested less than they ought to. I am not sure that a failure rate of 48% is justified, but I am absolutely convinced that a success rate of 90% is not justified either and that we need to take a really strong, hard look at whether or not people are getting licences who ought not to be getting them in some of these locations.

1440

I think we also have to look, when this goes to committee, at the whole issue of insurance and insurance as it's related to traffic tickets, particularly. We know that young people pay huge rates of insurance in this province. We know that if they apply for and obtain a licence, their insurance rates are likely to be two or three or four times higher, through no fault of their own, than if they were older than 25. This is particularly true of young men. I do not have any children, but if one has a son or daughter who is of driving age and is added to the insurance, every single member in this place will know what happens to the family insurance rates at that time.

I want to compound that with the whole issue of traffic tickets, which is still part of the legislation. It's contained within the body of the act and not the regulation that was withdrawn today. That is, it will be possible for young people with a G2 licence who are convicted of an infraction and get a ticket to lose their licence.

If I go 10 kilometres over the limit in this province, what happens is I'm going to get a ticket probably in the range of \$25. I'm more than likely going to court to fight it, but I'm still going to get a ticket of only \$25. If it happens to a young person, they won't get a ticket for \$25; they will get a suspension of their licence—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: No.

Mr. Michael Prue: No? They're going to get a ticket for \$25, that's all? Has that been withdrawn, too, my friend?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: No. I'll help you in a minute.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, but the severity is there.

Once they get a suspension, what happens to the insurance rate? That's the point I'm trying to make, what happens, because the penalty that is let upon them is much, much higher than it is to the rest of the driving population. They have an infraction, and indeed it is not

impossible. The roads are very complex; we all know that. People inadvertently do things. You may not think you're going too fast.

I can speak from experience. One of my friends and my colleagues got a ticket a few weeks ago for going 50 kilometres along a road in Toronto. It is posted at 50 kilometres, save and except that there is a sign that when the school is in session, it goes down to 30. There's a school on the street. She was unaware at that point or was not thinking about the time of the day, was actually going 40 and got a ticket for going 10 kilometres over the limit whereas the street when the school is not in session is a 50-kilometre limit. These are the kinds of inadvertent things that happen to people. I think there was no intent there of speeding and there was no intent of being unsafe.

I am worried that a young driver in a circumstance like that, a young driver who misses something they should have seen on the road, a sign that the speed limit went suddenly from 80 kilometres down to 50 kilometres as you are entering a village, and didn't see the sign, will find themselves in some very serious consequence, not only with the possibility of losing their licence but also with insurance rates that are jacked up.

That long sort of diatribe and scenario goes down to the point that I also hope that when the government sends this to committee, we can have representatives of the insurance industry. I think we need to know what is going to happen in view of this legislation and how it is going to impact the insurance industry in Ontario, and whether young drivers who through no fault of their own, maybe through inadvertence or inexperience, find themselves having broken one of the myriad of laws in this province relating to traffic will not have their licence suspended and will not have their insurance rates jacked up to the point that it is no longer economically feasible for them to be on the road.

I hope all of those things will happen, and as I said, I will be supporting the bill now that the egregious portion has been withdrawn. But I am hoping at committee that the rest of the fears that have been expressed both by the members of the official opposition and by us in the third party can be assuaged and that the government can assure young drivers that they will not be treated in a way that is different from others. There is a point to be made that inexperienced drivers need to be dealt with in a way that is very careful for the long term, but it cannot be something that is simply a matter of age. Having said that, I will yield the floor to others.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'd like to thank my colleague from Beaches—East York for his thoughtful comments and just assist him a bit. He was talking about licence suspension, I believe. Just to clear this up, convictions for Highway Traffic Act offences that attract demerit points, including speeding above 15 kilometres over the limit, and court-ordered driving licence suspensions under the Highway Traffic Act are the kinds of things that would attract these penalties. For the first one,

you would receive a 30-day licence suspension; for the second, a 90-day licence suspension; and the third one would see a cancelled licence and you would go back to G1 and start the whole process over again. This is for G1 and G2 drivers, not for people with G licences, and it applies to people of all ages who are novice drivers. I'm trying to be helpful with that.

The government is very much looking forward to public hearings on this bill. We would hope that thoughtful people will bring forward thoughtful representations that need to be considered. I suspect that if there are reasons to alter another part of the act, the government would be very interested in doing that. We want to continue to be open to all good suggestions to improving the act and making sure that our roads continue to be the safest in North America.

Mr. John O'Toole: I always listen to the member from Beaches–East York. In his leadership role, I'm sure he'll bring civility to his comments, and that's important. I wish him luck in his leadership pursuits. I'm not sure if he is part of the coalition, but that's for another debate.

What I do think is important, though, is the age of 21. I want to compliment the minister for having the sense—the common sense, technically—to remove that part of the number of young people. I think the young people have spoken, and it is important to recognize that they have been heard. That's what communication is about: There is a transmitter and a receiver.

There is one part here that I think the parliamentary assistant, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, would perhaps like to know. As I said before, I think there are a couple of bills on Highway Traffic Act amendment, some of which deal with the technology piece, and this has to deal with the blood-alcohol piece.

I'm not responding to the Toronto Star, although I recognize fully that the Toronto Star is the briefing notes for the Liberal caucus or cabinet, and that's fine. It's a respected paper from the left side of the spectrum. But what is important there is the driver education component—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: You should listen to this. I've said to the minister, repeatedly and respectfully, that they could enhance and improve driver education. The roads today, with the expectations of the impatient driver and road rage etc.—it's very important to bump up driver education. I would encourage the minister, under positive advice, good advice, to strengthen driver education. Show them the accident statistics for young drivers, for the impaired-driver argument. These are important education tools to strengthen the driver education course. The member from Beaches–East York mentioned that. I think it's important, and I support his comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: One concern that is overlooked in all this—I think the member from Parkdale–High Park mentioned it—is that there is a very stark reality that is too often faced by families and friends where young people are caught in these horrific accidents.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know some members are laughing across the way, and I find that really unfortunate. But there are many young people who sometimes think they are invincible, who sometimes drive cars that are almost too tempting. I always ask myself, why do we allow cars with 350 horsepower on our roads when the speed limit is only 100 kilometres? And the Conservatives, again, don't agree with this type of tough new measure. We need to send a strong message to young people because they need our advice in terms of taking their driving responsibility very seriously. When we are young, we sometimes don't stop and reflect on the fact that driving is not only something we should take seriously but that impacts not only on our lives but all the innocent people on the roads, and all the pedestrians.

1450

That's the message we have to get out, and I think that's what the minister is trying to do. He's trying to say that this type of activity, especially related to alcohol, is extremely volatile, extremely dangerous to everyone, not only to the drivers themselves. That's why 50 states have incorporated the zero tolerance for alcohol in young people. When they've done that, the number of accidents and fatalities has decreased dramatically. That's why we have to look at this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Whitby–Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to just lend a few remarks to the comments made by the member from Beaches–East York, which in my view are quite sensible and very thoughtful and certainly reflect a lot of what I have been hearing in my riding with respect to Bill 126. As it happens, in addition to having three teenaged sons in my household, and I've heard a lot from them about it, I've also had the opportunity to speak at several high schools in the last few weeks, and this is something I have heard loud and clear from young people about their views with respect to this legislation. I really don't think we're giving young people enough credit here. I know there are situations where there are some youth who are not responsible, but there are certainly lots of adults who are not responsible as well. When speaking to our local chief of police, as I have over the last few days, he tells me that the number of charges for drinking and driving has actually gone up, instead of down, over the last couple of years, which is a real shame. I know we need to do something about it. But it's not just young people; a lot of that is people my age and older, getting to be more senior people.

I think we need to bear that in mind, as we're debating this legislation, and take a look at it for what it's really meant to deal with. Certainly the young people I listened to spoke loud and clear about their issues with respect to not having more than one person who is not related to them in the vehicle with them. I'm very glad to hear that the minister has stepped down from that. But in all honestly, is this the way to create public policy: to throw

something out there without proper consultation and then see how many Facebook hits you get on it, and then say, “Well, maybe that’s not a good idea”? So I think we really need this government to commit to full public consultation on this before we go through, to make sure that we are going to end up with the kind of legislation we really want to see in this province that balances the interests of the state with the interests of individuals.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to thank the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Durham, Eglinton–Lawrence and Whitby–Oshawa for their comments. Time will only permit a response to two of them. I thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. Yes, I did talk about 10 kilometres, and of course you are right at 15, but it still does not take away the statement I was trying to make. Even in inadvertence, 15 kilometres can have very disastrous consequences to someone who is a young driver, having their licence suspended, and certainly far more than the consequence that would accrue to me and to drivers who have been out there for a long time. I think we need to weigh that and weigh the penalty of the law as well as the consequences and how that reflects on insurance. So I am looking forward to that kind of public debate during the committee process.

I also would like to thank the member from Whitby–Oshawa for her comments. In fact, she is absolutely right about people who are drinking and driving, and young people and how they are looking upon this because, you know, in fact it is not young people who are the majority of those who are drinking and driving. It is not young people at all. In fact, the statistics will tell you and the industry will tell you and the police will tell you that those who are caught drinking and driving tend to be males between the ages of 25 and 30. Then it goes down, and then there is a spike back up in males between the ages of 43 and 50. And for women, it’s women in their late 30s, although it is not nearly so high as the number of males who are caught drinking and driving.

But that is where the problem lies. It is not with those who are between the ages of 18 or 16 and 21 who are out driving in their cars. Although they can, of course—anyone can drink—it is not they who are breaking the law. And I think we have to remember that in everything we do. Although we have to have a zero alcohol limit for new drivers, it is not the young people who are to blame.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to challenge many of the assumptions made by the Minister of Transportation in Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act.

I am well aware that this past summer, as has tragically been the case in prior years, we have witnessed the deaths of far too many young people in car accidents, many of them involving speed and alcohol or both. The reaction, however, by the McGuinty government is to tar all young people with the same brush, and that is patently

unfair. Also known as the Road Safety Act, 2008, Bill 126 will drastically change the laws for young drivers in Ontario. We can all agree that the lives of young people are precious, and we should do what we can to help prevent further tragedies on our roads. However, it’s clear from the government’s last-minute repeal of the passenger restrictions for young drivers that they have not done their homework, and because there has been absolutely no formal consultation, the minister did not make any further changes which should be made to this bill.

If they had bothered to actually consult with the youth of Ontario, and also their parents, they would have realized that this legislation was not ready to be rammed down the throats of Ontarians. My caucus colleagues and I were appalled by the lack of consultation in the initial stages of the policy amendment preparation.

I believe one of the reasons is that it is a reaction. It’s a reaction to the overwhelming grief of a father for his son. I, like most Ontarians, regret tragedies like the one that befell the Mulcahy family. This situation strikes a nerve with all parents. However, it’s our job as legislators to create policy for the greater good that is proactive, not reactionary. Bill 126 is classic Mr. McGuinty policy, where the left hand professes to support the youth while the right hand creates reactionary legislation that presumes guilt and is highly punitive.

Back in November, when this bill was announced, my office received a call. It was from a concerned teenager who has already jumped through every hoop the government placed before him to prove that he is worthy of a driver’s licence. He was turning 18 that weekend and wanted to know if his friends were going to be able to carpool to his birthday party or if he needed to make alternate arrangements for them. I was so impressed by the conscientious nature of this young man. He wanted to know if the government was going to pass this legislation before his birthday, and find out what actions he needed to take to operate within the law. Clearly, the youth of today are actively engaged on this issue and have been totally ignored by this government. Does this sound like an irresponsible young person to you?

I want to congratulate all young people who have e-mailed their MPPs—and I know from the lists that I get that you’ve all received the same e-mails—and signed up on Facebook to protest Bill 126. You are a part of this new generation that is creating change through the Internet. You have quantified your disappointment in Bill 126, and it clearly had an impact on this government, as they have removed the passenger restrictions on young drivers.

I don’t think that anyone could have imagined the impact that the Internet was going to have on our country, but it is certainly engaging a group of citizens whose voices we have rarely heard before. This is democracy in motion, and I am pleased to see this level of engagement on an issue this important.

1500

My young caller was not the only one. I have received hundreds of e-mails from students and parents alike who

are justifiably upset with Bill 126. I was particularly struck by the eloquence and thoughtful arguments of a young lady who wrote the following:

"I can see where the ideas for this legislation are coming from, as I too have looked at both sides of the argument. However, I still believe that it is targeting the wrong people and I believe it can be an unfair stereotype.

"While I don't condone drinking and driving, I think the focus is in the wrong place.

"I'm not stating that we shouldn't have laws because people don't follow them, but I believe it will be a few years before introducing zero tolerance would be effective.

"Implementing harsher penalties on the laws that already exist would be a good first step.

"You may or may not have noticed the fact that I never spoke of young people or of teenagers. However, I believe that, if passed, it's only fair to apply these laws to everyone.

"Some young people are irresponsible drivers, but some older people are irresponsible drivers; it's a fact of life.

"You can't honestly, with facts, back up the statement and tell me that a young person with a blood-alcohol level of 0.001 will be more likely to be involved in a collision than an older person with a blood-alcohol level of 0.08.

"Or say a 21-year-old is driving at 105 kilometres per hour on a highway but someone who is 22 is going 140 kilometres per hour on the highway. Who is more likely to create the most damage?

"Yes, the older person may have more experience driving, but at the same time, they may not. Many people don't get their licence as soon as they turn 16.

"I myself am 19 years old. I've had my G licence since I was 17 and I am as cautious of a driver as any person in their 20s, maybe in their 50s, and maybe more responsible than some of them. I have never been involved in a collision and never received tickets or been issued traffic fines.

"I don't think that my driving privileges should be taken away on account of doing nothing wrong, other than being a young person. I believe that would be unfair to myself and all other responsible drivers of my generation.

"If you're going to put new restrictions on drivers' licences, please apply them to everyone. I know that a lot of young people tend to speed, but so does everyone else. For example, turn on the news around the rush hour. There is almost always a collision on one of the 400-series highways and it normally involves adults on their way to or from work."

Well, bravo to young Amanda. She has clearly illustrated why this government needs to hear from more people, more young people, more people in general. They are currently operating on assumptions and stereotypes, and we have made it very clear that the McGuinty government needs to take this issue to the people, the people who are being pigeonholed for their perspective.

Why single out young drivers when the real issue is inexperienced drivers? This legislation is discriminatory and presumes wrongdoing on the basis of age.

I have dozens of e-mails that I could be sharing, but this next one clearly illustrates my caucus colleagues' and my frustration with Bill 126:

"These new laws go much, much deeper than just affecting when, where and how a person under 21 years of age can drive.

"These laws, coupled with our province of Ontario's rather high insurance premiums (especially for young drivers) have already and will continue to deny today's youth from gaining much-needed life skills and experience.

"Many will not be able to afford to drive, nor be permitted to drive if they make even one tiny mistake.

"Many may grimly say, 'rough. They will learn from their mistakes.' These people are not taking into consideration the seriousness of the effects these laws will have on a young person's life.

"With these new laws (which are overly and unrealistically strict) a young driver who commits a minor traffic offence will be subject to very stiff fines, court costs, lawyer fees, poor driving and/or criminal records etc.

"The fact that these laws discriminate and allow no lenience towards a simple, minor, victimless mistake, resulting in loss of licence and ensuing unpayable insurance premiums for young drivers is really hard to fathom for citizens (of all ages) of Ontario....

"Which brings to question how these laws were passed so quickly, despite the strong opposition against them.

"This country prides itself on being a democracy, however lately (as seen by the thoughtless and seemingly undebated and rushed passing of discriminatory legislation) our government has been teetering more and more towards being viewed as a mockery.

"My confidence and respect for my own government has been violently shaken."

"It should be made clear to Mr. McGuinty that this is not the type of attention he wants in order to get Ontario's youth to become actively engaged in their government. The fact that this new legislation was passed gingerly 'through the ropes and over the hurdles' with such little discussion shows the utter weakness and incompetence of our government in the present form. This needs to change!"

I can understand his passion, and we can all appreciate that the undemocratic way in which this legislation has been developed is incendiary.

Most young drivers take the privilege very seriously. They complete their driver education and improvement courses and do their part to be responsible and safe young citizens.

At this point, the bill is in its early stages, and therefore, it is a good time to get input from these very people who are confused about which stage the bill is in.

I want the record to note that the members from the other side are mocking and laughing.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: We're mocking because you're not paying attention to what's going on.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I read from an e-mail from a constituent. Please don't mock my constituents.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm not mocking—

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The bill is in its early stages, and therefore, it is a good time to get input from people, young and old, rural and urban.

Over 110,000 young people have already provided their input by joining the Facebook page on the Internet. I welcome you to join that movement. This is grassroots democracy in action, and it is very exciting to see young people so engaged in an issue that clearly matters to them.

Given the interest shown in this policy change, my colleagues and I are demanding that the Premier and the Minister of Transportation must provide a full slate of hearings for public input so that Ontarians can continue to be included. Those in rural communities can have their say and those in urban communities. All interested parties deserve to have their case heard on this issue.

In order to best serve Ontarians, we have to make sure that the legislation is sensible, reasonable and enforceable while taking into account the practicalities of everyday life. Our party is not supporting this bill unless appropriate amendments can be made to it with regard to several things, including the reference to age 21 and also the speeding provisions. Given the concern expressed by the public, we are calling upon the government to send this bill for a province-wide consultation, a very public consultation that will give it transparency and accountability.

We are also making this request as this is a very important piece of legislation, and until amendments can be made to the age provision and the 30-day suspension for the first speeding ticket, I cannot support it.

With regard to the zero tolerance for driver's blood alcohol under 22 years of age, this legislation presents the potential for discrimination challenges because it targets drivers of a certain age, with everything else being equal. Therefore, we're recommending that the bill be amended to have this restriction apply to novice drivers and that the term be defined to include drivers perhaps in their first five years of being licensed. Focusing on the experience level of new drivers, rather than age, in applying special restrictions already has precedent given the nature of our graduated licensing system.

There are a lot of issues still with this bill. Even though the minister made the announcement today in a very peculiar way in an answer to a question rather than in a ministerial statement—that he was going to make changes to this bill—that is a good first step, but public consultation is imperative. It is being demanded by people in Ontario who have great interest to this. I suggest that that would be the next change the minister announces.

1510

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I think the member from Burlington certainly made some reasonable remarks this afternoon. I know that in my community I didn't need Facebook. I was in the small community of Warsaw, some 500 people, and chatted with many of the young people down there about this bill. And I was in Norwood, a small community of about 1,700 people—it's kind of the heartland of rural east-central Ontario—and had an opportunity to chat with them about this particular bill. Through the information we have all received—many of my caucus colleagues—this morning in question period the transportation minister, upon getting the question from my colleague from Huron-Bruce, withdrew part of the legislation that was certainly deemed by many people in the rural part of my riding to be unacceptable. He did do that.

When I talk to Mike Johnston, the detachment commander of the OPP in Peterborough, and Murray Rodd, the police chief for the city of Peterborough, one of the things they constantly talk about is the need to improve road safety. The worst position they find themselves in, as an OPP or city police officer, is when they have to knock on a door to tell a parent that there has been a death or a severe accident involving a young person. They all dread having to do that kind of thing. So when you talk to the detachment commander and the police chief in Peterborough, they welcome this kind of legislation, which they believe will significantly improve road safety in Ontario.

As I said, this bill will go to committee. There will be the opportunity to hear from presenters. There will be a dialogue between the three parties; perhaps the independent member will be represented too. There will be an opportunity to make some more amendments to this important bill. The bottom line is that it will improve road safety.

I hope the opposition enjoys their dinner this evening at Bigliardi's.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Our good colleague from Peterborough often attempts humour; he never really quite follows through, just like this government.

Bill 126 is quite an interesting bill. Obviously we know that constituents, particularly those in high schools across this province, have opposed this piece of legislation. We know that because over 100,000 young people joined a Facebook group opposing this bill, and of course today, during question period, the Minister of Transportation backed away, I might add.

For the first time in the last couple of weeks, we actually have the gallery filled with teenage drivers. I think it is really important that they are part of this discussion, because this bill only impacts kids your age. That is why it is really important that you're here, to know that this bill needs to actually go to you, the people who are between the ages of 16 and 21, and this government hasn't done that yet. This Liberal government put forward a bill based purely on emotion, and tried to run it through here.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: That's not fair, Mr. Speaker, absolutely not fair.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But I'll tell you what is fair. This Friday, there were rumours and speculation that we would prorogue and this bill may cease to exist after that day. We may not go into consultation. That is what's really sad here. If you are going to put forward a piece of legislation that's going to impact an entire segment of the population and not consult them, then I'm not sure there is anything rational about this bill.

My colleague Frank Klees, our transportation critic—I think he is one of the better critics in this Legislature; I think he is a fine member of provincial Parliament—has done due diligence on this piece of legislation and has serious concerns. So I ask that members opposite make sure our views are heard.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Burlington. I've had the privilege of knowing the member from Burlington for a great many years, when we sat on municipal councils and did things together. She speaks from the heart, and she spoke with some considerable degree of knowledge about how this is impacting young people and how, in her dealings with young people, they feel singled out and that they have not been heard. I want to commend her because that has been my experience as well in going into high schools and going into community colleges to talk to young people. Even within our party, the Ontario New Democratic Youth, they felt that the bill was discriminatory and wanted to know how members of our party were going to deal with it.

She was right to raise that, but I am somewhat puzzled. I know we're supposed to be speaking about the statements made by the debater, but the comment made by my colleague Ms. MacLeod just a moment ago about the prorogation of the House I find somewhat strange. I'm not sure that the member from Burlington intends to raise this issue, but it certainly was raised by a member of her party. The prorogation of the House would kill the bill, so I don't understand how that would necessarily take away from the committee hearing. It would also take away from the bill itself.

I'd like to assure my friend from Burlington that her comments were spot on. I'm not sure that the other comments related it to it were, but we need to do everything we can within this Legislature to make sure that our bills are not discriminatory, that young people have the same access and the same opportunity and are required to follow the same laws as everyone else, and that the penalty ought not to be more severe because you are 18 or 19 years of age than if you are 65.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? There being none, the member for Burlington, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I would like to thank the members from Peterborough, from Nepean–Carleton and from Beaches–East York. I am here representing the constituents in the riding of Burlington, and given everything

I've experienced in the House for the two years I've been here, this is the issue on which I have received the most e-mails. It has really raised the attention of a lot of people. Both young drivers and their parents are concerned about how this is all coming down.

Our party has always been a staunch supporter of making Ontario roads safer. There's no question that none of us would disagree with that. However, I really don't believe that by supporting this bill in the way it has been written, we would be doing that. It has been written in language that is discriminatory, and I feel that it's setting a very bad precedent if the bill passes in its current state. It has had an enormous reaction, and I think that the only due justice this bill could have would be to take it for formal—formal—public hearings and allow the youth of this province and their parents to speak to it.

As the member from Newmarket–Aurora said, the bill would result in some unintended consequences to many young people, and I don't think that's what the intention of it was. The focus of the legislation should be to ensure that young drivers understand there are serious consequences behind a steering wheel, but that should be so for older drivers.

In the case of alcohol, why discriminate? Why is it okay for somebody older to drive with a higher level of alcohol content, just because they've been drinking for many more years or their tolerance level may be up? There's nothing in science to prove that. I think what's good for one here is good for all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts. I will give the government credit: They've certainly managed to get the youth of our province engaged in issues happening here at Queen's Park like I've never seen before.

I'd like to use a bit of my time today to get some of the e-mails and comments that I've received from young people, particularly from the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, on the record because I think the youth of this province have recognized that they are being targeted, really being discriminated against with this particular bill, and they've spoken up loud and clear. Some 122,892 Facebook users have joined the group Young Drivers Against New Ontario Laws. We've certainly never seen participation and interest from young people in a bill passing through the Legislature like this, I think it's safe to say. Of course, the part of the bill that has most aroused interest has been the restrictions on the number of passengers that a young driver can carry with them. I'm pleased that the Minister of Transportation today, in question period, has committed to removing that section of the bill. Now we'll just have to make sure that he, in fact, comes through and does remove that section of the bill.

1520

I would like to get some of the e-mails that I've received on the record. Many have come in to me and

they've been excellent comments, very thoughtful. Many are to do with that section that has now been removed, but let me quote this long, thoughtful e-mail from Kayla Rhiness, who wrote to me. She says:

"I am 18 years old, and will have had my G2 for 10 months as of December 7, 2008. I have never had an accident, or a ticket.

"I am writing to you today in hopes that you would be able to use this in the fight against these laws being enforced, or to somehow see how unjust these laws are. I am not your general complaining teenager, and because of the position I am in, these laws are going to greatly affect not only me, but the people I am involved with. I am a youth leader for the junior youth group at my church, Bethel Pentecostal Tabernacle in Huntsville.... It is not only my responsibility, but my duty to drive my youth to special events and conventions. These children range from being in grade 6 to grade 8. All parents have signed a waiver at the beginning of the year, granting their permission to drive their children when necessary.

"Now, what right does the government have to step in and lay down laws such as these, when there are plenty of people in responsible positions like mine? If this law was passed, then our youth group of about 10 to 15 people would really be at a loss. There is only my pastor, another leader, who is 19 years of age, and myself. That is just enough seats to transport all of our kids to whatever event we are going to (considering the fact that not all our youth can generally go—it normally ranges from about 11 or 14 that can). Now, take away the four available seats in my car, and the four available seats in the other leader's car. That leaves six seats available in the pastor's van, and two would be taken up for both of us leaders (because we have to go due to our 'plan to protect' policy, and for extra supervision). That leaves four seats available to approximately 14 children. Do you think that it is fair for 10 children that want to go to events having to miss out on the opportunity to grow in their faith just because the government felt it was necessary to implement these laws?

"I don't think so.

"Although I will have had had my G2 for a year as of February 7, 2009, there are still going to be events between now and then that I am going to need to drive my youth to. If this law is passed, for those two months we are going to need to find parents that are able to drive not just the youth but the youth leaders to events, which is ridiculous because we have been put in our positions as youth leaders for a reason—to assist the pastor, to help provide transportation, and to be there for our youth. May I mention that it is actually very hard to find parents whose schedules work with our youth timings?

"I am also a member of the local air cadet squadron, 844 Norseman, and every now and then I pick up or drive my cadets home if they don't have a ride. So if this law is put in place, a lot of my cadets will be put in a position to either pay for a taxi home or walk."

Another young person from my riding writes:

"My name is Katie O'Hearn and I am turning 16 in less than two months.... The one rule that I do not appreciate

is the one with limited people in the car. [The] reality is teenagers drink. At parties people have what we call a DD, a designated driver—a person that does not drink and is safely transporting their friends home after the party. I think there could possibly be a higher fatality rate ... people will think they can just drive themselves home."

A young driver from Muskoka writes:

"I'm e-mailing you in regards to the proposed legislation by Premier McGuinty for young drivers aged 21 and younger.

"Initially I wasn't aware that the proposed legislation would include me—I'm 21 with a G driver's licence with no record of being in an accident.

"I live in Port Sandfield but work in Bracebridge, so I often drive my cousins to school in town. I see no reason why I shouldn't be able to drive my two young cousins at the same time. How would I choose between one or the other? Also, if I was to get a speeding ticket and lost my licence, like the proposed legislation states, how would I get to work, or even get groceries for that matter? I really think that this could negatively impact the lifestyle of people living in rural areas across Parry Sound—Muskoka."

Another e-mail, from Patsy Beynon, a parent living in Gravenhurst:

"I am writing this to let you know how upset I am with the new young drivers law. We, as many others in this province, have chosen to live in an area where there is no public transportation. Because of this our children need to use their, or their parents', vehicles for employment, education, sports etc.

"Many young adults carpool to Georgian College in Barrie, Orillia, Bracebridge or Nipissing or Lakehead University. Carpooling has enabled many to attend post-secondary education. It is difficult enough for many to attend and this new law would make it even more so.

"As Canadians, our ancestors fought for many freedoms which we seem to be willing to sit back and allow our politicians to take away.

"We have discussed this new law in my family and a number of my children are concerned about how it will affect them. We believe that it is discrimination. Does our constitution not state that we cannot be discriminated against because of age?

"A number of other issues that have been raised:

"It will affect drinking and driving as a number of these people have a designated driver, and now that person will only be able to have one other person with them.

"It will affect the employment that is available to these young adults.

"It will make it more difficult on families whose children participate in sports or whose children need a vehicle to get to post-secondary education.

"There will then be more vehicles on the road, which in turn means more gas, which affects the environment in a negative way."

Another parent writes:

"Hello Norm, I am a constituent from Gravenhurst. After reading the proposed rule changes for young

drivers, I wish to make my opinions on it heard. I disagree with limiting the number of drivers under the age of 19. This would mean that my 19-year-old son who is a very competent driver who has passed two government road tests to get his full G licence would not be able to drive to Orillia or Bracebridge to the movies with two of his friends. We don't have the luxury of public transport and our children rely on being able to drive with friends to get where they need to go. It isn't just movies but also after-school activities. We have taught our kids to carpool and limit their gas consumption. This throws that teaching out the window."

There are, of course, other provisions of the bill. Many of them are a cause for concern as well. They deal with fines, suspension and zero tolerance for alcohol. I would like to give you a chance to hear from some other families that write on those issues.

A constituent wrote:

"Good evening,

"I am not in favour of the proposed legislation to increase restrictions on young drivers. My two sons, 19 and 21, are both G class drivers who are responsible behind the wheel. The oldest has been driving for five years and has had his G for two of those. Both boys are away at an Ontario university and will now no longer be able to carpool home for holidays etc. as a result of this knee-jerk legislation."

Another e-mail from a young Bracebridge resident:

"Mr. Miller, I am distressed to hear about this new young driver legislation. This being a rural community, there is not a lot to do. So me and my friends like to go to Orillia and go to the movies. My friends are responsible drivers and have never been in an accident. Bracebridge doesn't have a lot to do on Fridays and weekends, so if you take this away, us kids will have nothing to do."

He goes on to comment on the provision for speeding:

"Does this happen to adults who get away with speeding? No! If making adults pay doesn't work, how will robbing us of our licences teach us anything?"

"Increasing the G1 probation time will not change anything—a good driver at eight months who took drivers' education will be just as good two months later. A not-so-good driver that is bad at eight months obviously isn't very good and two extra months, in most cases, won't make a difference.

"I'm sorry to say that these new rules only will make us young people lose faith and interest in our government. I'm sorry to inform you that a lot of us are extremely angry with this and will fight this. It is in the government's best interest to not put this into effect."

Another thoughtful young person from my riding writes:

"I am a young driver in Muskoka and will soon be going for my appointment to hopefully get my G2 licence. I wanted to take the time to discuss my opinions on the new laws that are trying to be passed. A guy I know of made a pretty good point. He stated that his car insurance is already sky high without having an accident or tickets, and now people are telling him how many

people he is allowed in his car. He has not had an accident yet and is doing whatever he can in order to save enough money to keep his car on the road. He doesn't even know if it's worth it anymore. I know of quite a few people that feel that way too, as I do. We, as young teenagers, have to own up to what we do and make responsible choices. There will always be those few that make the wrong choices and they should definitely get penalized for it, but that doesn't mean we all should.

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"One more thing I think is unfair about this is the fact that the age was set at 19. I know most of these laws all go by statistics, but many adults have accidents from careless or drunk driving. How come they don't have the same restrictions as younger drivers? I know many people that shouldn't even have their licence because of their lack of road and safety knowledge, or they are just plain careless while driving. I think this law was overgeneralized and should be reconsidered.

"Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts and opinions. I am one of those young teenagers that is fighting to live my own life. I, along with a lot of other people I know, have been brought up and taught the safety of the roads and how to be responsible. These days, it seems that each way for us to become more of an individual and take on personal responsibility just gets taken away from us. Yes, there are tragedies, but let's take the time to deal with them individually instead of punishing all. Don't get me wrong; I understand where these thoughts of the law changing and reasoning is coming from, but I think things got taken a bit to the extreme in this situation. I hope you will think about some of the points I have brought up and realize what young teenagers think and feel about this as well."

Another young person writes regarding the new zero alcohol for drivers under the age of 21, and the one-passenger restriction:

"The current laws are good enough.

"This law is in response to the three youths who died this summer at Lake Joseph after consuming huge amounts of liquor and then travelling at high speed in their expensive and fast automobile. This is not indicative of how most youths drive!

"If someone can enlist and then die for our country at age 18, but at age 20 is considered a criminal for having one beer with dinner and then driving, then I am totally ashamed of this disgusting province and country. Can you can spell police state?"

I think the point is worth making that we already have laws—good laws—that, if enforced, deal with drivers of all ages equally and fairly.

This bill, I believe, has been very quickly put together, and the minister has indicated today in question period that he's willing to make a change to the one section to do with the number of passengers that can be carried in a vehicle. But certainly, speaking as a parent with four kids, I don't think it's necessary to have higher fines for young people and specifically targeting them out. I know with my own four children, all of whom drive, I've said

to them very clearly when they've started driving, "If you get a speeding ticket, that will be the end of your driving days, because I won't be able to afford to pay for the insurance at that point. Or if you get in an accident, that will be the end of your driving days, so you'd better be very careful about how you drive." So far, things have gone quite well in terms of their driving.

One of the things this bill does is to bring in a zero-alcohol restriction for people 21 and under. I would just wonder why we're making this age-specific. Does it not make more sense to just define what a novice driver is and make it apply to novice drivers, versus age-specific drivers?

I wonder whether extending the graduated licence—I believe it extends it from two years to three—is really going to make any difference. I'm a supporter of the graduated licence. All of our kids went through that process and took driver training, and I think it works very well.

As I've said, I think the extra penalties and suspensions for speeding are unnecessary because, as a young person, the penalty you pay in terms of increased insurance is very significant right now. I don't think it's necessary that we have these other changes.

There are some changes in the bill to do with the impoundment of vehicles, giving police the ability to immediately impound a vehicle for seven days, I believe it is, if a driver is driving under suspension. I support that. I think that makes a lot of sense.

I think this bill was obviously brought in very quickly. There's been one change that's been hinted at by the minister now. Hopefully, what will happen is that we'll get some significant input now, especially from the young people who are being targeted in this bill, and we'll have lots of public consultations around the province where they can further come out and voice their opinion. Obviously, based on the quality and the number of e-mails I've received from young people around the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, they have, in the short time since this bill has been introduced, become very aware of Bill 126 and are generally very much opposed to many aspects of the bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the time this afternoon to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I do appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 126 and to make comments to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I also just want to throw in, for good measure, response to the comments made by the member from Burlington.

I don't know whether or not they are just being a little bit devilish today by their comments. They know full well; they were in the House. They heard the minister say that we are listening to the public and have decided to remove that provision from our road safety package. Now, they know what that provision is. They were in the House. They get copies of Hansard. They know full well what happened in the House today. So I don't know if they're being misleading intentionally—I withdraw that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I don't know why they feel the need to do that. When I hear the comments about public consultation and going to committee, of course it's going to committee, and they full well know that. So I say to the members from across the way, we will continue with the committees as we have in the past. We stand on our record. We stand on our consultation.

But I'll tell you this: We do more than listen; we act on what people say. The comments that are made today in this House—that's not what I am hearing. So I say, don't be mischievous; we know what's happening, and the big guy up there is watching, too, who is being naughty or nice. Let's keep that in mind too. I encourage you to take the time, read the Hansard; you were in the House today.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Burlington, get at it. Let's get going forward with the committee hearings. You didn't do that when you were in government, and it's just too bad you didn't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham with questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: We're actually responding to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, not the member from Huron–Bruce. I think she's been given a lot of notes to read; we'll leave it at that.

My thinking is this: The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, with four children, knows of what he speaks. I think he should be listened to and responded to. I think it's important when he spoke—it's about the designated driver thing. I think there is a responsible culture in young people, and I think this is really the essence of a government on a breakthrough, a government not accountable for anything.

We recognize the repentant tone of the minister today when he stood up and withdrew a good section of the bill. It just shows that they should take the whole thing back and redraft it. I'll be speaking here shortly, and it will become much clearer that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's remarks were extremely pertinent. When he thought and talked about his riding, his constituents, the people he heard from, I'm sure that members on the government side have heard that as well. In fact, it's true. Today, it's been demonstrated by, and I think respectfully, Minister Bradley doing the right thing. The only thing that was missing: He didn't resign.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, they're outraged, but no—he is minister responsible for bringing forward legislation that's been properly consulted on. In fact, there are 105,000 young people in Ontario, some of them in my riding, who have got it right. This was discrimination based on age.

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Now they've repented, and that's the part I respect. You should listen to the comments of the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. If you haven't listened, which is probably the case, you should read them in Hansard tomorrow and say "mea culpa," because he was right

when he said to just listen to the young people. Don't always be on a negative rant with the young people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the comments from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. Obviously, he didn't hear what the Minister of Transportation said this morning regarding the number of passengers who can be carried during the first year of a G2 licence. That's what it was about. It extended what is already presently the case from midnight to 5 to all day. So, for the first year of G2, that was what was going to happen; the minister said, "From now on, that is not part of the bill. We will not be doing that."

We talk a lot about age discrimination here—and it's true: Driving is a privilege; driving is not a right. We treat drivers over 80 differently than we treat other drivers. We treat young drivers differently than other drivers in only one way, and that is that young drivers 21 and under will be required to have a blood-alcohol content of zero. That is the age discrimination here. There is no other age discrimination in this bill—none.

What we are trying to do is to keep Ontario as a jurisdiction with the safest driving roads in all of North America and probably the world. We are very proud of what we've accomplished in this province, and this is through the efforts of all three political parties. I don't think this is a terribly partisan issue. I do think that when our House leaders from all three parties—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Oh, and the independent member, my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—decide in terms of how long the public hearings will go, we have a very extensive canvassing of Ontario public opinion about a very good bill that will protect Ontarians on Ontario's roads.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I take great pride that our party pushed the Minister of Transportation to draw back from this disastrous piece of legislation, Bill 126. It wasn't until the opposition raised considerable concern over the provisions of Bill 126 that this minister saw the light. I talked to the minister before he withdrew this particular part of the bill, which is so, so bad for all of Ontario but, more importantly, rural Ontario or areas of the province which are less populated, and the minister continued to defend it until today, when he collapsed in terms of Bill 126.

I would like to congratulate our party and particularly our critic on this particular—

Interjections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: —the former minister, Mr. Klees, on his opposition to this particular bill.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. No, sit down.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will have a chance to speak to this—

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to help out the member. The critic for—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence, that's not a point of order.

Member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Mr. Colle should know that Mr. Klees is the critic for the Ministry of Transportation and a former Minister of Transportation, like myself.

I believe that my good friend Jim Bradley, who has been a veteran of this House for some 31 years, understands when he's beaten, and I congratulate him on withdrawing these particular sections of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Durham and Huron–Bruce for their comments.

The member from Huron–Bruce was talking about commitments that the government has made today. The minister said in question period, in answer to a friendly question, that he is going to remove the section to do with how many people ride in vehicles with young people. I would just say that this government has made commitments in the past that they haven't kept, like they weren't going to raise taxes in the last election, so we will be watching very carefully to make sure they actually follow through with this commitment this time. And I certainly have confidence that the Minister of Transportation will follow through after making a statement today.

I don't apologize, though, for getting on the record the record of the ideas and concerns of many, many young people from my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka who have written to me on this issue, because it's unusual for me to hear from young people. As I say, the government has been successful in engaging young people and getting them interested in this bill. So I'm pleased to get their ideas and concerns on the record.

In terms of what we would like to see going forward, we certainly want to see public hearings, extensive public hearings, not like the ones you did on Bill 119, the WSIB bill, where you had five hours at Queen's Park, but travelling around the province.

We do have some concerns about the restrictions and the discrimination on drivers under the age of 21; we think it should be novice drivers of any age. And we have problems with the automatic suspension for speeding, regardless of the speeding conviction. Those are a couple of the issues that we will want to see addressed in the bill. There are parts of it that, certainly, I do support as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'm sorry, I yield the floor to my friend from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Speaker—
Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You started to speak. I would suggest that I recognized the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills. You two can straighten it out later outside.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. I didn't understand that the member for Durham was going to rise at this time or I would have yielded to him.

I'm not only concerned about the imposition of more and more restrictions on young people of Ontario; I'm concerned about more and more restrictions on all citizens of Ontario. That seems to be the mode for this government. My philosophy of governing, quite frankly, is to protect the public when there is a significant risk at hand. I believe that this government is legislating in a lot of areas where they need not, and that the whole philosophy of this government is if there is any risk at all to the public, in any kind of decision-making capacity they have, then legislate it, legislate it, legislate it. We have seen that over and over again.

In fact, one of the funniest stories that came out was the ban on the ban with regard to clotheslines across this province, in terms of drying somebody's laundry. I'm told by people who know about the ban for municipalities making bylaws against banning clotheslines in the backyard that when this government made that ban against the municipal bylaws, there wasn't one—not one—bylaw in all of Ontario, in all of the 500-plus municipalities, against having a clothesline in your back yard. So the ban against the ban was totally bogus, and yet it was printed up in the press that they were doing this wonderful environmental thing etc.

Now, there are, of course, some condominium associations which ban this, but that wasn't what they talked about. They talked about banning municipalities from making this bylaw, which is the only thing they would have power over. So it was a bogus thing, and it was all done for politics. That's what we have, time and time again.

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I may say, with regard to licences for beginning drivers, that in the early 1990s I was very much involved in bringing forward the idea of graduated licences—we didn't have them in the early 1990s. We were in opposition at that time, and I went to our critic, David Turnbull, who later became a Minister of Transportation, and said, "There is a tremendous opportunity here for us to show leadership in the Progressive Conservative Party and put forward the whole idea of graduated licences coming to the province of Ontario." We brought forward that idea in a private member's bill in this Legislature to deal with that particular matter. But when you bring forward that kind of legislation, you have to be reasonable in the restrictions you place on people in our province, whether they be young or whether they be novice drivers, etc.

I believe that in bringing forward this kind of legislation, they have shown, particularly with them withdrawing part of the whole bill now, that they just reach out for the publicity of saying, "We're tougher on drinking laws, we're tougher on safety, we're tougher on this," and by nailing these people with unreasonable restrictions in terms of their lives, they try to prove that they're for safety, etc., instead of dealing with real problems we have in Ontario with regard to safety.

We heard from the auditor just today how dismal a record these people have with regard to commercial truck traffic and how, under their power in the last five years—this government over the last five years—truck traffic has become more dangerous in our province, where the percentage of trucks in accidents has gone up from 7% to 9% and truck inspections are down by 34% under the McGuinty government—

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, let's hire more people.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I hear a member say, "Hire more people." We don't have to hire more people. Get the people who are on the job actually doing truck inspections. We find out that under your government truck inspectors are doing one and half inspections a day—one and a half inspections—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm listening carefully to the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, and I'm sure he's going to get to Bill 126, the amendments that are before us.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I am. I'm talking about safety on our roads, and I'm trying to indicate to the government where they should go to improve safety on our roads. This ill-conceived bill will do little to prevent accidents on the roads in our province.

Mr. Bill Mauro: What's the part you don't like?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: They ask me what I don't like. I don't like the idea that this government comes out and restricts some of our population more than other parts of our population.

Interjection: Who are they?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Well, this bill is absolutely prejudicial against our young people without our young people having the right to come forward. If a young person goes 10 miles over the speed limit, his penalty is much greater than the penalty I would get. I don't agree with that. I agree that if you're going to take away a person's licence, whether they are a novice driver or an experienced driver, it should be the same. If you're going to take away a licence for 30 days because somebody went 10 miles over the speed limit, then it should be for all of us; it shouldn't just be for the young people.

This bill is unreasonable in terms of what it demands. We know that the speed limits in our province are ridiculously low. If you ever drive down the 401—which I do very frequently, back to my riding—if you went 100 kilometres per hour on the 401—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You're blown off the road.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: You get run over. I believe it's actually dangerous to go 100 kilometres on that road.

I don't think anybody goes under 120 kilometres on the 401.

Mr. Michael Prue: My God, I do.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Well, one of my friends back here says he goes less than 120. Fortunately you live in Toronto, and you have about 10 kilometres home and back. I've got 440 kilometres there and back. I've got to tell you, I don't go 100 kilometres all the way home and back. I do keep within the range where the police have accepted, in an informal way, what the speed limit is. Actually, do you know what? I don't think anybody is stopped for going up to under 130 kilometres an hour on our four-lane highway.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I got caught.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Lou says he got caught. I don't know what he got caught for. Lou, did you have your licence suspended for 30 days?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: No.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Do you expect that you're going to have your licence suspended for 30 days?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I paid my fine.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I just think this government continues on with making more laws which are unenforceable, and it has nothing to do with actually improving the safety on our roads. We saw that again in terms of this government making announcements. The Auditor General's report was a damning indictment of this government and how it runs its meat inspections, how it runs its truck inspections, its road inspections. The public accounts committee—I don't know how we're going to deal with it all over the next year, because there's so much in that report that this government should be brought to account for.

I want to thank the government for one thing with regard to Bill 126—are you listening?—because the great part of Bill 126 is that I have a lot more young people in my constituency who are interested in politics as a result of this. I want to tell you another thing: All of those young people are not going to be voting for Dalton McGuinty's government in the next election. They're not going to vote for you because they think you are unreasonable and that you are overly restricting their rights going forward.

The original bill indicates where this government is going with regard to young people. We heard again in the auditor's report what a farce it is with regard to this non-smoking campaign around which the government has sort of thrown a lot of smoke. All of their stats were blown out of the water today by the Auditor General. The fact of the matter is that more young people are smoking today than when this government came to power, and that's because all of the stats mean nothing because so many of the cigarettes are being sold illegally: \$500 million of lost tax revenue going right under the radar, and these guys are letting it happen time after time, and they even know about it.

I want to read some letters that I got from some of my constituents with regard to this bill:

“As a member of your legislative riding, I would like to voice my displeasure with the recent proposed amendments to the Road Safety Act; exclusively the ones increasing restrictions on young drivers. I believe these amendments are without merit and are based solely on two factors: public sympathy for Mr. Mulcahy's appeal to government and age discrimination. These restrictions unfairly punish those drivers between the ages of 17 and 21 who have clean records, and in my personal opinion, it is meant to appeal directly to parents, the majority of the voting base in Ontario.

“What first caught my eye about this legislation is the language being used by the Premier to explain why they believe this legislation will make a difference. Here's one example: ‘We owe it to our kids to take the kinds of measures that ensure they will grow up safe and sound and secure. If that means a modest restriction on their freedoms until they reach the age of 22, then as a dad, I am more than prepared to do that.’ That was Dalton McGuinty.

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“These kids are individuals touching up to the age of 22. They are adults, plain and simple. Parental instincts are one thing, but before you begin placing new laws on Generation Y youth, I would recommend putting yourself in those younger adults' shoes.

“Imagine being told you are going to be treated differently for the exact same indiscretion simply because of the statistics. Practically speaking, why should someone 21 who blows 0.04 be treated any differently that somebody 22? Why should someone 19 who is caught going 20 kilometres over the speeding limit be treated any differently that someone who is 50? Statistics can be a powerful tool to win an argument revolving around change. As an engineer and a lawyer, I'm sure you understand this better than most. However, they must be presented correctly and responsibly.

“The stats used by both the PC Party and the Libs mainly come from Youth and Impaired Driving in Canada: Opportunities for Progress, which is a paper by MADD which touts zero levels for those up to 21. I read this paper and the stats simply do not have the depth and modern relevance to warrant restriction amendments to the Road Safety Act. The paper goes on at length about the fact that younger adults are involved in more accidents and driving incidents, proportionally, than any other age groups. However, this does not mean we should automatically strengthen laws against them. An up-to-date analysis comparing provinces and their associated rules imposed on young drivers, such as speeding and passenger restriction, should be done before this legislation passes. Everyone in Ontario wants to see statistics showing youth driving accidents on the decline, but this legislation is not the answer. It might be music to the ears of some, but ultimately it is a shot in the dark.”

We've seen a lot of legislation like that by this government.

“Please weigh the chances of potential benefits against the restrictions of freedoms of an entire age group. If you

were 21, would you want these types of restrictions placed on you?"

That was written to me by Graham Hill, who is 24 years of age, whom this bill would not and affect and who has driven for six years. But he felt very, very strongly about it.

That's what I've been trying to say and what I've said here today. This government never seems to measure the risks against the benefits of the legislation that they bring forward. Nor do they present to the Legislature, when they bring forward legislation banning pesticides, deposit returns or whatever, studies that back up their legislative framework. If in fact we had those kinds of documents before us, then we could make reasonable decisions with regard to the risk and benefit that the legislation brings forward.

We have in the past created a lot of laws with regard to drinking and driving, and some of those very laws are causing tremendous problems with regard to our court system, again pointed out by our auditor today: Our court backlogs now are larger than they ever have been. We have to be careful, when we implement legislation, that we don't cause problems in another area of our legal system as we go forward. I believe that this legislation, while having a few good points, has had a much more negative effect than a positive effect.

I believe, again, that this Legislature, and legislators in general, should try to retain as many freedoms as we have as individuals, try to keep as much freedom for our people as possible. Only when there is a significant risk—not any risk; a significant risk—to the population in general should we step in and legislate, as we did on things like seat belts, where there was an overwhelming amount of evidence with regard to that, or where we brought in legislation to deal with smoking in the workplace and smoking in general to protect others from second-hand smoke, another matter on which I brought forward legislation as far back as 1985 in this Legislature. I believe that you can legislate in those particular areas, but this government is going on and on about restricting our right to make choices. As we go forward, I think people are going to recognize that these restrictions (1) are unreasonable and (2) cannot be enforced.

I've enjoyed speaking about this. This is a bill which has a tremendous effect, particularly on the rural areas of the area that I represent, which is the smaller portion of my riding, but they have spoken out with one single voice that Bill 126 was an unreasonable piece of legislation and was bad: bad for the environment, bad for the families and bad for the convenience of those people living in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's always a pleasure to listen to the dean of the House, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. He speaks with some eloquence and passion on his particular view in terms of legislation that he equates to a nanny state.

I am not sure that I share all of the comments that he made, but again, he has done the tried and true thing: He

has related back to what his constituents feel. He has quoted at length a young man of 24 and how that young man feels that the rights of the minority, in this case the minority being the people under the age of 21, are being treated in this province.

I did not hear the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills specifically talk about what happened today in the Legislature, with the minister withdrawing the most egregious portion of the bill, but in fact there are still some elements remaining within the bill that he spoke to. It is my fervent hope, and I hope his as well, that we are able to resolve those in the committee stage so that those portions of the bill that he actually accepts and respects and wants to see go forward can in fact become law.

But it is very fundamental, I think, for him and for me—and should be for all members of this Legislature—that in the end the bill does not discriminate against one group of people. It would be equally wrong if a bill was brought forward that discriminated against those who were senior citizens over the age of 65, and I cannot imagine this Legislature passing or bringing forward such a bill. We have to be equally concerned when a bill targets people under the age of what used to be majority, at 21, when there is no substantive evidence that the bill will have the desired effect. I commend the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, and I'll sit down with that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to offer a few comments on the 20 minutes by the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills. I want to start by thanking our Minister of Transportation, Jim Bradley, who today in the House, as many people know—perhaps those just tuning in do not know that the minister made an announcement today in the House where he withdrew the provision of Bill 126 that was causing some angst, I think it's fair to say, for a lot of people. That was the part of the legislation that was going to limit the number of passengers that someone in a certain category of their licence would not be able to transport 24/7. Currently, it already stands, I think, at the hours from 12 to 5, and it was going to be extended. The minister today made an announcement that that section would be withdrawn, and I think I should thank a number of the members of our caucus who spoke at some length on this who had issue with this as well as members of the opposition.

1610

I want to mention as well to people who are listening and have an interest in this that, while we have already expressed I think quite clearly an ability to listen and acknowledge the concerns expressed by the public, by members of the opposition and by members of our caucus, I think it's important to acknowledge that this will likely go a step further and that, at committee, those groups that tend to still have an interest individually or as members of large organizations in this particular piece of legislation are going to have an opportunity to speak to it.

I want to mention, though, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills was talking about the discriminatory

aspect of this legislation. At some point in his dissertation he talked about that, but just earlier on in his speech he had talked about how in the early 1990s he brought forward a private member's bill around graduated licensing, and I would suspect that contained within that bill there were some issues that put parameters on who could do what at certain times. What is before us today does no more than that; it's the very same thing.

I want to congratulate and thank my two sons, Dustin and Christian, who, over a large pizza and a little bit of refreshment, gave their very clear perspective on this. Both of them are driving now and have been for some time. They very clearly crystallized for me their positions on this, and I've used that in terms of coming to my conclusion as well.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm always pleased to respond to the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills in the hope that I'll get the last word. Nonetheless, he made some very good points, more specifically on the issue of bans. He was on the right track when he was saying that the current government seems to overreact or not react; in fact, sometimes they say things that they really don't mean. I think in this case here we've seen it again. With all due respect to the minister, he has done the right thing in this respect. I think Mr. Bradley is right on this, that he has backed off on the number of young people in a car. Now, that's the only good thing. I'm going to be speaking next, so you'll want to stay tuned, I suppose, but I will be commenting on the bill itself. I'll also try to relate some of the things I said to the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, because he must have seen my notes—possibly—but I'm sure as a lawyer and an engineer, and a former minister, that he has more to say on this topic, if we would only have unanimous consent for him to have more than just two minutes to respond.

He is right when he talks about the auditor's report, and I'll mention this. This report is phenomenal. It's the largest one I've seen in 15 years. There's a lot in here and there's even some on transportation. I'll be commenting on that. But I think we should all pay close attention to any attempt in legislation to discriminate. This is the lesson learned in this debate today: Do not target individuals who don't warrant your wrath. If you can prove it, stand up and prove it; otherwise treat everyone fairly. That has always been our leader, John Tory's, motive; our critic's, who by the way is Frank Klees; as well as our member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. He has been the Attorney General—I think he has. He knows, and I respect his comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I always appreciate the comments of my friend from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. The only part of this bill that has any age discrimination in it at all is the—

Interjection: The speed—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: No, I can deal with that in a second, if you want—blood alcohol at zero for people who are 21 and under. That is the only age discrimination part in this bill.

Novice drivers in G1 or G2 will be treated the same, regardless of how old they are, so it is not age discrimination. It is where you are in the licensing system.

The member made a good point, and I thought an important point, that he was in favour of graduated licensing. Most of the provisions here, if he looked at the graduated licensing regime that was put in place by the NDP government of the day, most of these prohibitions are similar. For example, if you are speeding and get demerit points—and you need to get demerit points—for the first offence you would have a 30-day suspension. That is exactly the same. For a second offence, you would receive a 90-day suspension. In the old regime it was 30 days; now it would be 90 days for your second offence. The third offence would wind you back up, starting all over in G1. These are for G1 and G2 licensees, regardless of their age. So I just want to help the member with that particular point.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I want to thank all of the members who spoke on this.

Yes, I did serve as a Minister of Transportation, and it's a tremendous ministry. They have a tremendous bureaucracy, and one of the reasons is because most of them are engineers. Engineers are good guys. You know that, Mr. Speaker.

To make the point that it's G1 and G2 people who would suffer a suspension of their licence for 30 days and that it doesn't matter how old you are when you get a G1 or G2—I would guess that 95% of the people who get a G1 or G2 are under the age of 21, and therefore it is discrimination, essentially, on the basis of age.

I often wonder whether or not someone is going to take this kind of thing to the Supreme Court in terms of a charter challenge. It's going to happen sooner or later. This government has already got slapped down on one law, as you know, and that was with regard to the adoption disclosure bill. They slapped them hard, and they had to bring in another bill, which is actually a bad piece of legislation as it now stands. This bill, I think, could possibly have a charter challenge to it, as well. Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that you can have age discrimination if it's reasonable. I don't believe, quite frankly, that this discrimination is reasonable, particularly with regard to the speeding and suspension of licences.

I thank my good friend Mr. Bradley, who was elected the same time I was, some 31 years ago, for having his sanity finally come to bear and taking out the passenger parts of Bill 126.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's finally my turn to put my thoughts on the record, on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham, and I do that with the greatest respect and privilege.

The starting point today is that if I was in my riding, I'd be standing on the bridge, saluting and respecting the

young soldiers' bodies being repatriated down the Highway of Heroes. I might add that one of them, a 21-year-old or younger, would not have been entitled to have his friends in a vehicle with him. We're saying that young people can't have more than one occupant in the car with them, yet they can serve their country and in fact give up their lives. It's important to put this sort of discrimination in context. You can serve your country in wars to defend our peace and civility; on the other hand, you can't respectfully and responsibly drive around the province with another person in the car. With good sense and respect, the minister has relented on that and has today stated that he will not invoke that section of the bill.

There are a couple of comments that I want to make out of respect for our critic, Mr. Klees, from Newmarket–Aurora. He has alerted us, as he is very diligent in his responsibilities as critic—and the issue here, that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills mentioned as well, was the age issue of 21. There is some discrimination in that provision, as well. He said that putting forward an amendment to remove the reference to the age of 21—and the minister may do this; if not, there will be an amendment moved during hearings—and to refer to them, in a general sense, as novice drivers, new drivers, those who are drivers without experience, is a more appropriate way to reference the experience provision. Let's not assume that everyone 21 or under is irresponsible. That's the salient discussion here this afternoon.

1620

The automatic suspension for speeding is another provision that I think is arduous and troublesome for young people. They already pay some of the highest insurance rates in the world—that's been demonstrated—perhaps appropriately, but according to common laws, treating everyone equally is important. Having two sets of laws is simply not the right thing.

That really has become another focal point for many of the comments here today on Bill 126. Right now the age appropriate for drinking, which is a whole other debate, is 19. There would be those who would say this bill goes partway to addressing that issue of whether or not it's appropriate to have a drink and drive, regardless of your age. If they were really true to the principle here, I think it's inappropriate. In my own view—this is not the view of our party, particularly—one drink is one drink too many. I think most people would support zero tolerance in the novice driver group. In fact, in some of the evidence, I think even if you look at the age thing that's been mentioned here earlier, there's a whole group, perhaps the group between 40 and 45, that is the second-largest group to be stopped on these roadside RIDE programs during this time of year.

So I think we're in unanimous consent for a lot of sections of this bill, but I want to make it clear that our critic, Mr. Klees, has made it clear that there are a couple of sections we'd like to see some changes in: the reference to age 21, the novice driver and the automatic suspension.

The suspension and the impoundment are a whole other ball game. There's a section of the bill—and I'm going to refer to sections rather than just prattle on here. This is kind of an administrative bill. There's a lot of stuff in the fine print here.

Increased penalties: This is a section here, and there's a whole series of sections that change the fines. In section 106, for instance, on seat belts, which isn't directly related to the issue of drinking and youth, seat belt fines are going to go from \$60 to \$500, another Liberal tax grab. A careless driving charge, in section 130, is going to be increased from \$200 to \$1,000, to \$400 to \$2,000; and there are others. Running a red light is going to cost you—it used to be \$150; now it's \$500. These are tax increases. The Liberal solution to everything is to raise the taxes. So that's a section here that hasn't been discussed. The taxes here have risen five times, 500%. When you're targeting young people who always pay the highest insurance already—most of it is their parents paying it.

There are some very good, positive sections in the bill, too. I don't have really enough time here. If I could get unanimous consent to have an hour I could cover some of the important sections of the bill. I seek unanimous consent to have an hour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Durham has—will the member for Durham take his seat, please?

The member for Durham is seeking unanimous consent to have an hour. Agreed? I heard a no.

Member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's shameful. There are so many sections of this bill that I—now, there's one here, the miscellaneous amendments section. That section I agree with. This is on the bicycle or power-assist bicycles. I think they've gone in the right direction here on that section of the bill. They have just recently been forced—I should say, Ontario's been forced by Quebec and BC—to recognize the ZENN vehicle: zero emission, no noise. About time they got on board. I've been arguing about that, with the electric vehicles; there's no reason why they wouldn't. We can agree with that section. We're on the record as agreeing.

Section 40 of the bill provides the Minister of Transportation—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is very important, and a lot of members here wouldn't know much about it, so I'd expect to have their undivided attention. Look up if you're listening. Very good. They're not sleeping. This is good.

Reciprocal agreements are very important, and I'll tell you why. A very close relative of mine—in fact, my daughter—was in Australia for about 10 years. I hope this isn't a conflict, but she was in Australia for, I think, 10 years. Prior to going there she had a full licence, finished university, went to Australia and met someone in Australia, got married and lived there for 10 years. Now, on coming back, she had to start with the G1 licence again.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: So there's no discrimination for age.

Mr. John O'Toole: The minister on the other side there, the one who discriminates against grandparents, is—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, no, she's talking to me. But my point is, when the people came—

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'll take care of this one.

The member for Durham, please stick to Bill 126.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Community and Social Services is a fine person, and we all make mistakes.

But the point I'm trying to say here is this: When my daughter came home, she found out that someone she knew from the people they were involved with in Australia was coming here from another country. I'm not sure—it was somewhere in the Middle East. They were allowed to drive and they had never been licensed here. Here's the point: In this reciprocal agreement, people can come here from England and just turn in their English driver's licence and get an Ontario driver's licence. Someone coming from Australia comes here, even though they were licensed here, and they have to go to G1.

In my daughter's case, she had two young children, and she had to reinstate and get someone else to drive the children; it turned out to be my wife on occasion. So I would say that there's a provision here.

My advice to the minister, and I'm sure he's listening—Mr. Bradley does listen. He cancelled the section which was discriminating—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I haven't missed a word, John.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and the parliamentary assistant from Algoma-Manitoulin is here. Here's what you do. Reciprocal agreements: If they have a respected system regime of licensing and testing from whatever country, there should not be discrimination, especially countries where they speak one of our two official languages. I'm not discriminating.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Because, quite frankly, people come from other countries where we have an agreement, and as far as I'm concerned, they should be treated fairly.

Another section here is actually quite good as well. Section 134, which allows for removing vehicles or cargo or debris from a highway, is an important amendment. I agree with this section. It's called incident management. You see now some of the gridlock in the GTA and other areas; there's this lack of responsibility or avoiding liability for incident management. MTO is going to take responsibility for clearing these incidents, whether it's an accident where cargo's been spilled on the road or other reasons, not to have a total tie-up. That section I agree with.

I have looked at the bill and there's another section in here that I think is somewhat troubling, which is the

approaching of emergency vehicles. What they're trying to do here is, first of all, the definition of an ambulance or fire department vehicle and motorized snow vehicle under this section is to be amended to include emergency vehicles as well. This section here is quite interesting as well. I would say that where you have volunteers who participate in certain parts of the province who have warning lights and have flashing lights, they should be exempted, providing they're on a duly certified response to an emergency situation. I would say they should also be fully certified drivers.

I want to put on the record here a couple of things. My riding of Durham is one of the most beautiful ridings in the province of Ontario, and I would invite all members to come to my riding and listen to the constituents. The member from Oshawa and I have worked and represented that area for almost 15 years. We listen, we learn, and we represent the people to the best of our ability.

This is from Trent Angiers and I'm go to read this—zero tolerance for speeding should have a window; there should be a window on zero tolerance. You've heard this a lot.

The parliamentary assistant is here, and I appreciate the work he has done on this. I think the passengers issue has been addressed appropriately, and so I thank the hundreds of thousands of students from Ontario who have participated through us and online in MySpace or whatever other format.

This is from Colin Shafer, who is from my community as well, son of Bob. It's on Bill 126—he's opposed to this bill. This is a young person engaged in the democratic process, and I think it's about the voice of young people. Let's listen to them because they have something to say.

1630

This is quite an interesting one from Amanda Rodger. She says, "I am a college student with my G2 licence, and I am very concerned about the proposed driving law where anyone under 21 can only have one person under 19 at a time. I feel that this is not environmentally friendly because that means that more of us 'dirt poor' students will be forced to purchase cars and purchase more gas (which is way out of a lot of our budgets). The vast majority of us students are under 21 (I myself am only 18) and we rely on carpooling, it is environmentally friendly and it is a cheap way to get to school" when the tuitions are so high in the province of Ontario under Dalton McGuinty, "especially for commuters."

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: There's a bit of ad libbing there, I'll admit that. But it's true. I'm hearing it from all the students. "If you take away our carpooling rights, there will be a lot of students with no way to get to school and there will definitely be more pollution.

"I agree with the old rule where it restricts us from having more than one underage passenger past midnight because it will definitely save a lot of lives. This new law has not been thought through properly"—what a clever

student Amanda is. “A better way to solve this is to limit our passengers when it starts getting dark outside (maybe change it to 6 or 7 p.m.).”

She brings a common sense way of implementation through regulation. She makes a lot of very good sense.

This is from Tom Blake from my riding:

“I read in the Star today, and can see on Facebook, that 110,000 people share my feelings that limiting the number”—thank you very much, Tom, because they have addressed that.

“As a parent of a newborn child, I am quite upset that the province is putting into law ideals that are best taught by parents.”

This is nanny state government trying to take over the role of the duly responsible parents. Again, there are some really good, thoughtful—but what’s most impressive to me is people taking the time to engage, not about Barack Obama and what he’s doing, since that’s another country, but about what we’re doing here in this province that affects their lives directly. Thank you for participating—even if it’s critical of Dalton. I like it better when it’s critical of him, obviously.

The new transportation bill doesn’t support their children’s driving to their youth groups—this is from Mr. and Mrs. John Monster. Their children participate in Guiding and Scouting and outdoor activities, and often there are many young people in the car while they’re volunteering in their community.

This one here is a very good one from Tyler Richards: “Thank you very much for responding. I just gained a little more faith in our government that has been lost in the past few months first because of this new legislation and will obviously now because of the new coalition”—he’s talking about the coalition in Ottawa, and he’s right on that, too. That coalition is dead wrong.

Interjection.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m just trying to respond respectfully to my constituents. Let’s not have any giggling on the other side.

The other part is driver’s licence changes—and this is from Eileen Gerber. She states:

“I would like to express my concern with the possible new driver’s licensing that is being considered. The rules for new drivers should be the same not something different for teens.” This is the “being treated equal” argument. “If you are a new driver at 19 it applies but not if you are 20. If you have an immature teen or young adult their chronological age is not going to make them make better choices. If a new driver who is a young parent with, say, two young children in the back seat of the car and the children are crying and acting up, this could be just as much of a distraction as loud music and more than one teenager in a car” for that matter. “We seem to be penalizing all teens. What about the responsible teen who is going to university and college and is offsetting transportation costs by providing transportation to school or home for a fee to other students? How about a 19-year-old who is finished high school and college, is recognized by the law as an adult, has driven without incident

since they were 16, but we are going to apply this possible new licensing because the government sees them as irresponsible. I feel some parents seem to be expecting the government to take on the responsible parenting role when it comes to allowing and monitoring their teenagers when it comes to the privilege of driving.

“Possibly you could share with me the reasoning behind why this rule is important for the government to pass against teenagers.”

There’s a very responsible and mature response from Eileen Gerber in my riding.

But I think it was all said quite honestly by the most independent authority we could imagine. Here’s the book. The government has been called to account. Here’s the auditor’s report. I first of all thank him for the report. It just shows that they’re not perfect. They’re far from perfect. This is the biggest one I’ve seen in 15 years. There’s a lot of work to be done and you’ve run out of money. You’ve taxed as much as you could. You’ve spent everything you’ve received and now you’re out of money, and Bob Rae could be your leader because you could solve all problems if you had all my money, or all of anybody’s money.

Here’s the other part too. I think the Toronto Star, which I said earlier, is actually often referred to outside of the House here as the Liberals’ briefing notes—it is, actually. They probably write it and send it to them and they just print it. But this article is from Saturday the 7th and it says, “Would-be Drivers Shop for Easy Road Tests.” This tells the whole story, really; it’s right here. It starts by saying, “Ontario drivers who take their road test in Brampton fail at nearly five times the rate of drivers in Sault Ste. Marie.”

Mr. Michael A. Brown: We’re good in Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. John O’Toole: The parliamentary assistant gets it. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin gets it. They aren’t. We’re no different. We all want to be treated fairly and equally. Is Brampton being discriminated against? Are they being discriminated against? You’re encouraging the young people here to take a flight up to Algoma–Manitoulin and Sault Ste. Marie to get their driver’s tests so they can pass because it’s easier there.

But this article—I’d encourage the viewers here—lists all the places where it’s easy. So if you have a teenage child at home who is going to take a driver’s test, they should check the Toronto Star, December 7, page A2, and it will tell you where the easiest spots are, because it’s not equal.

What I’m saying here is that we should all be treated equally—young people, old people—and any attempt to discriminate based on age is simply wrong. It’s the wrong thing. It’s the wrong message. The youth are our future. Let’s treat them with a bit of respect and let’s listen to them—not just to Eileen Gerber and other students who have written to me responsibly during this provincial debate. I think it’s important, and I think it’s important that Minister Bradley actually listen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened again to the member from Durham. He is always entertaining. But the point that I liked best in his entire speech was when he started talking about the testing that's taking place here in Ontario. I referred to this in my own speech, but I think he makes a very valid point, the point being that you're five times more likely to fail your test if you take that test in Brampton or in the Toronto area than if you take it in Sault Ste. Marie. There are other places, of course, that he did not mention. Some of the other places, like Kapuskasing, have an equally lower failing rate. It's not that I'm asking that people fail, but it seems untoward to me that one can pass one's test much more easily in some places in the province than in others. It seems untoward that people are getting their licence, on the other hand, much more easily in those locations than they do in the Toronto area.

I would acknowledge that there are good drivers and bad drivers in both areas, but it would seem that, if we have a system of licensing in Ontario, then it should be an equitable system of licensing. I think he's made the point that it doesn't make much sense that you would be five times more likely to fail in one portion of the province than in another. It seems also unlikely to me that you would pass nine times out of 10 in a place like Sault Ste. Marie and only one out of two in a place like Brampton or Toronto.

So I think the government needs to look at this. The majority of people taking the test for the first time—and it's not exclusive—would be the same people who are being hit by this particular piece of legislation. They would be drivers under the age of 21, first-time drivers who are applying for the test for the first time. It's not exclusive, but they are the majority, and I think the government does need to look at that in committee. I commend the member from Durham.

1640

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the comments from the member from Durham, and I look forward to the public hearings on Bill 126. I'm hopeful that all three House leaders will meet and arrange a schedule that makes sure that the people of Ontario are heard on this bill.

The minister, of course, made an announcement this morning that sets aside the provision that during the first year of a G2 licence, you could only have one passenger, I believe, 19 or under, and then it would go up. Anyway, that has been set aside. I am sure my good friend the member from Durham will be responding to those e-mails that he has just been reading from and saying, "The government listened: The government withdrew that provision of Bill 126," and they need not be concerned because that has happened. I'm sure that the member from Durham will be doing that, as all members of this place will be contacting their constituents and saying, "This is going to be removed. You have been heard." That will happen, and I'm sure that my friend the member from

Durham will be doing that, as I'm sure he did when he received those e-mails. Some of them were inaccurate in their immediate premise, and I'm sure before he would have his constituent wax on about how bad or good a particular provision might be, that he would want to see that his constituent had the actual relevant facts. I know my good friend would do that.

So I have a question, and this is questions or comments. What I really want to know from the member from Durham—the question part is: Is he in favour of the zero blood alcohol content for people under the age of 22? That is a provision that is out there. It could be controversial, and I want his view.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I was, of course, impressed with the member from Durham, who spoke eloquently and mentioned the auditor's report. Like him, I don't think that I've seen an auditor's report that is that thick or that comprehensive in my 15 years of being here. Of course, he has made a number of recommendations on commercial vehicle safety and enforcement programs that have been, I guess—

Mr. John O'Toole: Ignored.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Ignored—sadly lacking, let's say; haven't been at the forefront of. They're not doing truck inspections. I think the member from Carleton also mentioned the inspection.

One of the things that happened—when I first got elected in 1995, we began inspecting trucks on a massive level. If you recall in those days, tires were flying off trucks at regular intervals. We started truck inspections and clamped down on the safety of these vehicles. In the first blitzes that we had, we were finding that 30% or 40% of the trucks that were pulled over were out of contention for the regulations that they had to fulfill. When we left office, safety on the roads was pretty good. But, of course, if you don't maintain that, it tends to ebb away. They tend to get a little lax. I think that's maybe what's happening out there now.

So the member brought to the attention of the House some very, very important parts of that auditor's report, especially as it deals with transportation, and that this bill essentially talks about transportation and how young people are going to be introduced to those roads. We want to make sure those roads remain as safe in Ontario as they have been in the past.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: There's no question the member from Durham provided a very erudite kind of review of Bill 126 this afternoon, getting into the details, drilling down into the very important facts. I know he had a very long and distinguished career at General Motors and the member from Durham has always been very concerned about road safety in the province of Ontario.

But I can tell you I chatted with my constituency staff this afternoon in Peterborough. The e-mails are coming in, the phone calls are coming in, and they're thanking

the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Jim Bradley, for getting rid of that provision that was becoming so problematic in the rural part of my riding of Peterborough. I want to congratulate him. He listened. Youth across Ontario, through various communications means, put forward their comments in a very forthright manner. They clearly said, "This was an offensive provision and you, Minister Bradley and Premier McGuinty, took the time, reviewed our comments, took them into consideration," and that all accumulated this morning with the withdrawal of that particular provision.

In the riding of Peterborough I always like to consult with the cousins of the member from Durham—his first cousin George O'Toole, who's my neighbour on Maniece Avenue, and his other cousin Mike O'Toole—because they're very sensible people and they provide good feedback of what's going on here in the Legislature. They had some concerns about this bill too. So I wanted to tell the member from Durham that I do consult with his family members in Peterborough and they provide very good input to what is going on here.

As I said, I want to congratulate him. He has been at the forefront for a number of issues with regard to road safety, and I know that when it comes time to vote, he will be in support of this very important piece of legislation which will make our roads much safer in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, member from Beaches–East York, who mentioned the issue of the testing, and I think it's appropriate that it was in the paper and it was brought here. I hope the minister hears that.

Of course, the critic hearing all of this, really listening intensely, is the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, the parliamentary assistant, Michael Brown. He has committed here that they will have public hearings. I take his word at that. He has always been fairly cogent in his remarks. I just hope they don't prorogue the House, you know, like in Ottawa? The Liberals always like to prorogue. Well, they'll probably prorogue.

The other thing is, I would like to thank the member from Halton: always accurate, always focused, always timely and mostly tells the truth—well, always, I guess.

The member from Peterborough, talking about drilling down: Well, there's a low point where you hit bedrock, and you know that there's no more action necessary, but he did compliment members of my sort of extended family. I should tell him that one of his constituents has moved out on him. Yes, Dan O'Toole has moved to my riding. He knows where he'll get the representation that'll stand up in the face of—but it's closer to where he works, at CTV. He is a relative and he has done the right thing, for sure.

This bill is more serious than that. It's about the government listening and acting, and this part is right, but there's still inherent discrimination in this bill. There needs to be fine-tuning. Our critic, Frank Klees, has been relentless on road safety. His voice and the voice of

Laurie Scott, who's the next speaker, are voices that should be listened to. Laurie Scott, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes, is the one who authored the speed limiter bill, and that was a compliment to her when the minister adopted her legislation. So she's next to speak, and I'll be here to listen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Applause.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Keep clapping; kill the clock. That's good.

It's a pleasure this afternoon to add more comments to Bill 126. I have spoken several times in the Legislature on this bill, not to the length that I'm about to speak this afternoon, but it's certainly been, I say, a very hot topic in all our ridings, maybe more in rural Ontario than in urban Ontario—

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's sizzling.

Ms. Laurie Scott: But it is sizzling, as they're saying from the government benches over there.

I was happy to see the Minister of Transportation today get up and reconsider the most controversial part of the legislation that we see in this bill, and that's in respect to the number of passengers in the car. So I do appreciate that the Minister of Transportation has come forward with that amendment—he'll be changing the legislation—and that our critic for the Ministry of Transportation, Frank Klees, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, stood up at that point and gave him a standing ovation. In the Legislature, we do appreciate the fact that so many young people and parents and people from our ridings did respond, with over 120,000 on Facebook so far that I know of. I have several e-mails, which I'm going to get to in a little bit. But it was incredible, the responses, especially from young people, because we all have our challenges in bringing young people into the political realm and to understand that they need to participate. It's not until they seem to be much older adults that they become more engaged. I don't know if that was the intent of this legislation—probably not to be such a lightning rod for the young people to be against—but it certainly worked and it got them involved. I certainly appreciate that, and all members of the Legislature, I'm sure, are in favour of increasing the safety on our roads, and not to have to hear of the numerous traffic fatalities and accidents that could have been prevented, especially when we get into a bit of a rougher weather scene that we're about to approach in our season.

1650

The member from Newmarket–Aurora, as critic for the Minister of Transportation, has brought forward legislation to crack down and get tough on street racing. This became the root of the government legislation which was passed in this House to make the roads safer and strengthen the laws on the street-racing-related offences that occurred.

I mentioned Facebook and the public consultations. I know that the member from Huron–Bruce mentioned

earlier today, in some of her responses to this legislation, that they would be promising public hearings, letting people—young, old, and including rural Ontarians—have their say about how this piece of legislation affects them. They might have taken the biggest thing out of the legislation, but there are still some comments that people want to make in regard to the legislation. I'm going to be watching closely where these committee meetings are going to be taking place, making sure that the public, especially in rural Ontario—and hopefully educating some young people to come to committee hearings to get their input on how the process works.

I do want to remind the member from Huron–Bruce that it was just a few short months ago that they said that they would be having a lot of public consultations in rural Ontario in regard to pesticide banning, and we didn't really see that happen. I think that we were all here in Toronto, and that was not very convenient for a lot of people in rural Ontario to be consulted in regard to the pesticides ban. So we know that didn't happen, and I think she used some of the terminology—“Let's be naughty as opposed to nice”—so I'm going to watch to make sure that you are nice with these public consultations, and they do get to the places in Ontario that they should be hearing from. I'm just making sure you keep your promise on this one, and not like did you on the pesticide legislation that we brought forward—one of those many bans.

We've been kept busy compiling the list of bans that the Liberal government has brought forward—what are we into, some 30?—bans, bans, bans, bans, bans. Anyway, you don't want me to sing. But I'm hoping it does end soon. Please, I hope the bans do end soon.

Mr. Michael Prue: I want to hear you sing.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Oh no, you don't. I need to protect my colleagues somewhat from my singing voice.

It is the list of bans that go on, and we'd like it to cease. I know that the member from Thornhill is very good on the ban jam, and he's going to speak following me. It's unfortunate that we can't get some more members from the other parties to speak on this bill, but we will carry through and entertain you as much as possible. For those who can still get the legislative channel at home—because they're not on the satellite dish anymore. You didn't ban that. I mean, I thought TVO should actually carry more of the legislative channel. Anyway, I know we'll be working together to bring the Ontario legislative channel back to the satellite receivers. We don't want you to ban that anymore.

The minister, when he started the leadoff debate last week in this—I want to quote him, because I appreciate this comment—said that “every bill that comes before this House deserves significant analysis. So if someone disagrees with a provision in this bill, that doesn't mean that person has any less concern about the safety of young people or other people in vehicles than we have on the government side or I happen to have as Minister of Transportation. I think that's a very bogus and unfair argument when that takes place.”

I appreciate that. If we get up in the opposition and make a comment on this particular piece of legislation, it's not because we don't want our roads to be safer. We're making objective comments. So I appreciate the fact that he acknowledged that. We all want our roads to be safer, but there are some pieces of this legislation that just aren't practical, common sense, especially in rural Ontario, which is my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Further remarks the minister made, and this part is important: “I want to assure members when they comment on the bill that I believe what they're doing is coming from a sense of sincerity and a sense of their judgment on what is found to work best in this field.”

I know that we need to convince people that even if we disagree, we don't want to hear comments over there from the government that we don't respect road safety and want safer roads. There are more amendments that need to be made.

I'm going to just comment on some of the types of e-mails that I got in. I didn't go on to Facebook myself, but many of my staff did. We got a lot of reports, especially from reporters that would call in and ask for comment. You can imagine. I think just about every newspaper in my riding wrote about this legislation and how unfair it was, whether it's letters to the editor, the editorials themselves or just interview pieces that the reporters did.

From my area in Fenelon Falls:

“We live on a farm in Fenelon Falls and have three teenagers aged 19, 17 and 15. Public transit is not an option for us.” Certainly our roads and bridges are public transportation in rural Ontario.

“Our oldest daughter takes her younger siblings to various 4-H events each month, and this is a real help to my husband and I, since we are actively working or farming. With the new rule of one teenage passenger per vehicle”—how it would impact their life, their situation? She and her husband would have to commit to driving more and taking time away from working on the farm.

Also from a resident in the city of Kawartha Lakes who's lived there his entire life, currently 19, affected by the news: “The worst part of this law is that G2 drivers are not allowed to have more than one person under the age of 19 in the car with them at any time. I'm not quite sure why or how this part was thought up, but someone did not think it through. Is there not a climate crisis right now?”

I got that a ton from the young people who asked, “What's the impact on our environment if we can't car-pool, we can't have one dedicated driver? How can we get to and from schools, events, 4-Hs, our clubs, etc.?” But also the impact on the environment.

He says, “This law not only inhibits the things I would normally do. I now cannot go on road trips unless I only bring one friend. I now cannot carpool. I can't volunteer to be the designated driver. I realize that the law was put in place in order to try and save lives, but it clearly was not thought through.”

In another e-mail from the Kawartha Lakes area of my riding: “I agree with people who say driving is a privil-

ege. Since it's a privilege, shouldn't we let irresponsible people pay for their mistakes? Why should the young drivers who drive responsibly be punished for others' mistakes?" No question.

The example that was used so much was that a young person of that age over in Afghanistan can drive a tank, can carry a gun, protect our country, fight for the freedom of people in other countries, yet they could come home and they couldn't drive their friends to a party. That was used over and over again.

I have to say that the majority, a big majority of the young people I meet, are truly responsible people. In rural Ontario, you have to be responsible, I think, at a younger age than a lot of kids in urban Ontario. That's mainly due to our lifestyles and the fact that they start working a lot earlier, especially if they come from an agriculture background. They're on the farms, they're helping their parents and their family out from very young ages. They are really responsible. Education goes on, and MADD does a good job going to schools, too. I have a good local chapter in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. There's a lot of education out there for young people, to keep them safe and just to make them aware of the responsibility you have when you're driving. A car can be a weapon, and it is to be taken seriously.

Another comment says, "Instead of the three of us driving to the movies in one vehicle, we would then have take two vehicles, doubling the traffic and greenhouse emissions involved in the journey. Ironically, this also puts two young drivers behind the wheel instead of one."

I got a good comment, if I can find the e-mail here, from—I didn't ask him if I could use his name, but I'm sure he will be okay with it because he ran federally for the NDP in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, and that's Stephen Yardy.

1700

Mr. Michael Prue: He had signs up everywhere.

Ms. Laurie Scott: He was, I have to say, a very good young candidate. The great story of the campaign was that the current MP for the Conservatives, Barry Devolin, actually handed Stephen Yardy his graduation diploma while the campaign was going on. And he's still actively engaged. He was a good young candidate. People wanted him to run again so, hopefully, they are grooming him to run again.

But he says in his e-mail he is opposed "to certain aspects of the new young drivers law that was introduced" in the "Legislature on Tuesday, November 18th ... I respect the idea of zero tolerance. I strongly oppose the new proposed restrictions to drivers under the age of 19 who currently hold a valid G2 licence; these restrictions would forbid any driver under the age of 19, holder of a G2 licence for less than a year, to have more than one passenger in the vehicle at any given time of the day.

"This is no more than a feel-good measure to make it look like the McGuinty government is doing something, while attacking the young people of Ontario. I do support

the current restriction on young drivers where they currently cannot have more than one person under the age of 19 in their vehicle between 12 a.m. and 5 a.m. for the first three months of having a valid G2 licence.

"The measures as they stand in this bill would restrict students from carpooling and ... general travelling in large groups during the day. I don't know about Mr. McGuinty or the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Bradley, but I know of no young person who drinks at 10 in the morning.

"The government should stop its attack on the young people of this province and start looking at real measures of fighting drinking and driving.

"In solidarity,

"Stephen Yardy

"Lindsay, Ontario"

That's great, Stephen; you're still engaged. I believe he is attending Fleming College in Lindsay, which is a great college. We have a super campus there, Frost Campus, that he attends. Kudos to him for running in the election and kudos to him for staying involved in politics and for sending us his opinions on legislation that is brought forward.

There has been a lot of talk about age discrimination and some of the penalties that are involved. I know that my colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills commented on the stiff penalties. If you go over 10 kilometres an hour, then your licence can be gone for 30 days. I mean, we're all human here.

There has been some conversation in the Legislature today too about the speed limits in Ontario and how slower drivers could actually encourage—more accidents can occur. So I think we have to look at all of this, but that is a really, really strict fine. I don't think we're all complete angels here. Taking a driver's licence away from them for a month so they can't go to their clubs, the 4-H clubs or different clubs they belong to—they can't get to school; they can't get to their jobs; they can lose their jobs. I think a little bit of practicality and common sense has to come into play here. That's a pretty stiff penalty for going more than 10 kilometres over the speed limit.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Anyway, it's a strict penalty for the young people. I think there's a lot of this, with age and discrimination.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay, well, the member is going to have his two-minute hit, so he can certainly bring that up.

Some headlines from my local press—from Catherine Whitnall from Kawartha Lakes This Week: "Province's Proposed Young Driver Legislation is Ageism in Action." She's got a young 16-year-old son and she's avoided taking him to write his G1. It's not that she doesn't believe he's "responsible enough. In fact, I have greater confidence in his skill behind the wheel than I do for my own ... mother. I just don't want to share my car," she says. She goes on: "Under current law, G1 and G2 drivers must maintain a zero blood-alcohol level. An

amendment” that “would shift this requirement to all drivers up to age 21.

“These changes should be across the board. Age doesn’t dictate one’s driving ability. Neither should legislation.” That’s from Kawartha Lakes This Week.

From the Haliburton Echo, Martha Perkins, the headline is “Teen Drivers See Red Over Passenger Limit.”

Interjection: Oh, they did?

Ms. Laurie Scott: They did. They see red up in Haliburton when they get some of their freedoms taken away.

It says that “although drinking under the age of 19 is illegal, it’s ‘inevitable’ that teens are going to break that rule. However, they’ve heard the message about designated drivers loud and clear and are usually careful about following that policy. A designated driver, however, will not want to have to drive passengers home one at a time. There won’t be enough designated drivers to go around.”

Those are just some of the comments from a few of the newspaper articles, and I guess I’d better cover all the bases here.

From the Post, it says: “It shows that in the Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock area, it’s not the young drivers who are the worst offenders for the drinking and driving. Instead, the average age of those charged is 39. Kawartha Lakes OPP records show that 12 people age 21 and under have been charged with Criminal Code drinking-and-driving-related offences since January 1 of this year.”

So again there is certainly some questionable age discrimination in some of it. I’m running out of time, and I wanted to bring in the fact—and I will show one—about a person from my riding in Woodview but very close to the member from Peterborough’s riding. They write in. It says:

“Please add my name to the list of people who applaud the changes regarding zero tolerance....

“Then add my name to the long list opposing the unfair proposal to limit first-time drivers to one teenage passenger. It is a discriminating proposal.

“I live in a rural area with absolutely no bus service.” I mean, it’s just not feasible in our area. “A taxi ride is \$60 each way from my home (Woodview area) to Lakefield. Not too practical for young people in our area who want to attend school functions after the school buses leave. Of course, the same applies to northern kids who travel long distances to their schools and other activities as well. It would appear that it would work for city kids with many options for travel in their area. Perhaps the entire Legislature needs reminding that rural members of the voting public tire of being discriminated against with legislation which makes sense in urban areas but not in rural.” Hear, hear, to that. “The whole population in this large province do not have the same options available to Toronto and other big city centres.

“I want you to know that my children are well past the age affected by this proposal. I have no personal reason to oppose this bad proposal.”

That’s from the Woodview area in my riding saying it all very much—McGuinty Liberal government, urban

agenda, discriminating against rural Ontario—and that’s certainly in the long list of bans that we have. So there’s some direct discrimination to young people in this.

I think young people do take it as a privilege and drive very seriously. They take their education, their improvement courses, and they do their part to be safe and responsible young citizens. Certainly our party feels sad when we hear the tragic stories on the roads, but there are a lot of responsible young people out there who don’t deserve to be discriminated against in the way parts of this legislation will affect them.

I’m looking forward to the committee hearings that are going out across the province, especially the ones in rural Ontario, and maybe the government will hear some more good advice that they can take under their wing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to comment on the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who I think made a number of very good points. Just to reiterate some of them and to prove that I was listening throughout, she talked about Stephen Yardy, and indeed he is an amazing young man. I was absolutely impressed with his ability, fresh out of high school, to take on the daunting task of running for federal office. He did an amazing job, and I think he is someone that other young people might like to emulate: someone who is willing to go out there to take on a public process, to step right into the limelight and do the best job he could. What he had to say, which was quoted in the body of the letter, I think shows a level of maturity and understanding that is very common, that is not rare, among young people.

Second, she talked about the penalties, and it is absolutely correct: The penalties that are meted out to new drivers, particularly young drivers, will be very different from the penalty that would be meted out to a member of this Legislature. It’s not because we have privilege; it’s because we are older and have been driving longer. In fact, if one goes 15 kilometres over the limit, and I do recognize the parliamentary assistant correcting that earlier, then one would be eligible for demerit points. If I drove 15 kilometres over the limit, I would get a fine in the \$25, \$30 or \$40 range and I would get a demerit point. But a young person, under this act, will suffer much more. Not only will it be the loss of licence for 30 days, but it will be the inherent increase in the insurance rates, much more so than me. They are already onerous and they are already usurious, and I’m saying that it’s simply not fair.

The last point was about those who drink and drive. In her constituency the average age was 39; I believe that’s what she said. In fact, only 20 or so people under the age of 21 were arrested in her constituency, according to the OPP, in that period. So I think we need to bear that in mind when we’re looking at this legislation. I look forward to the public hearings, where all of this and more will come to light.

1710

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the comments from my friend from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

The first issue I want to deal with is the public hearings. I am hopeful that the House leaders of all three political parties will get together and decide on public hearings that will be heard across the province and will be available to all people. Like most members, I am very encouraged by the engagement, particularly of young people, in this exercise that has surrounded Bill 126. I am sure that they would want to know that the minister today recognized their concern about passengers being carried by G2 drivers during the first year of the G2 regime, where they could carry only one other person 19 or under. That has been eliminated from the bill. So I'm sure she will be sending e-mails to all of those people who have e-mailed her to let them know that they have been successful in bringing that to the government's attention and having the government respond in a favourable way to their supplications.

I want to quickly ask the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock if she's in favour of the blood-alcohol content being zero for those aged 21 or under in this legislation. Statistics show that fatalities are significantly higher for those drivers 19, 20 and 21 and the alcohol content is a strong factor in those fatalities. I'm looking forward to her response on that particular issue.

This is a broad bill that covers a wide range of elements, and I'm sure we'll have a chance to talk about more of them later.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'm looking forward to responding to the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, but the member for Algoma–Manitoulin raised a little bit of concern. Previously, I believe, the member for Durham stated that we had a commitment for the hearings, and I just heard that there was not a commitment for those hearings. At the very least, we should be having hearings in Kagawong or at least Mindemoya. He would know that to which I refer.

He constantly mentions this zero blood-alcohol-content issue, and I think the real question is, is there anybody out there who does not support that? It's not just the age group that's targeted, but what about all drivers? If you ask those same individuals about all drivers in that sense, I think you're going to get—society is now completely turned around—the same response.

I've made my decision. I don't drink. I'm always the designated driver, and I never understand what they're laughing at or making fun about, and it's kind of annoying. But you make those decisions. I think part of it is that society has matured to that point, but we have to look at some of the restrictions on teenage youth as a whole. Once upon a time we used to say that a 19-year-old man shot—a 19-year-old boy; we've just changed the age discrimination. As mentioned, we've now moved it up to 22 for these individuals.

I see society as being very responsible and very active, but I see where we're clamping down and we're

tightening the grip on individuals and youth in society and making restrictions so strong that the options they have are becoming more and more limited. Quite frankly, I coach kids' hockey, and on a regular basis I see these poor kids stuck on the computer and everybody is mad because they're playing on the computer. What the heck else do they get to do? They can't drive a boat now, and let's not have them on an ATV or let's not have them do this and that and everything else in society. The tighter we squeeze our grip on youth, the more they're going to slip through our fingers. That's one of the problems that we're having. We need to make sure that we raise kids—and it's not so much that we're going to pass laws; it's what's going to happen within the families and the core of our society, in those core areas, whether it's the faith community or other aspects that are going to make those changes and make society stronger.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a moment to add some comments to the speech by the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Of course, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is just east of the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Speaking to Bill 126, the member talked about the propensity of this government to bring in bans, and she specifically mentioned the pesticides ban. I know that I had the Landscape Ontario folks meeting with me last week to point out how so often, as has been the case with this government's bans, they're not based on science. In the case of the pesticides ban, it's based on politics or which particular interest group—in this case, some very specific environmental groups—has a direct line into the Premier's office to make requests that aren't based on science.

So there are pesticides that are on the reduced risk list for Health Canada, which means they've had extensive testing done, and yet the province is banning these substances even though none of the municipalities that have specific bans to do with pesticides have banned any of these particular products. I think that not until we get the inevitable grub infestations that will happen because we aren't using these products, and the people affected are calling their Liberal MPPs to complain about this, will we get some reason happening here. But right now this government has brought in a record number of bans, and unfortunately they're so often based on political science.

This afternoon, of course, we're talking about Bill 126. I do support some aspects of the bill: the changes to do with the ignition interlock devices being one of them, and making it easier to set up reciprocal agreements with other states and jurisdictions is another positive aspect of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Laurie Scott: As I said, I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak at length on Bill 126, the Road

Safety Act, this afternoon, and I appreciate the comments by my colleagues from Beaches–East York, Algoma–Manitoulin, Oshawa and Parry Sound–Muskoka.

The theme kept coming up, and I want to read from one more newspaper, the Brock Citizen, because I'm trying to cover most of them. Their headline is, "Proposed Laws for Young Drivers Irrational." In this article, the lady says, "The government is simply trying to punish young drivers before they even get a start, and that's wrong. How are we ever considered young adults if the choices we make are continually being limited by laws?" She goes on and says, "In many cases, these irresponsible teens not only have friends in the vehicle but they have consumed alcohol and are driving at outrageous speeds. Those are the teens who should be punished, not the rest of us. The laws that are currently in place make it impossible for young drivers to get a start." She mentions what I'm sure we all hear about: "Especially males are paying outrageous prices for insurance before we even get behind the wheel. Shouldn't we at least get one chance? It's a person's choice if they decide to drive irresponsibly, and I believe that those are the people who should be penalized, not the innocent drivers."

Society has no tolerance for drinking and driving now. I mentioned MADD, but I do mention a lot of the driver education programs that go on.

The question about this legislation that was brought up many times in the newspapers was the knee-jerk reaction. It wasn't thought out. As the member from Beaches–East York said, why was the passenger thing in the legislation at all to start with? Why didn't we think this out before we brought it in? We've antagonized a lot of people. Getting young people involved is good, but things could have been thought out a lot better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Six and a half hours of debate on this bill having taken place, pursuant to standing order 47(c), the debate is deemed to be adjourned.

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The House leaders had an agreement that the government would keep this debate going. I would hope that a member of the government will stand up and keep this debate going this afternoon so it can continue tomorrow.

1720

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this. I, of course, was not the one at House leaders' debate, but I do understand that there was a discussion with House leaders and there appears to be an agreement to keep the debate going until 6 o'clock. So, in light of that, I'm happy to do whatever needs to be done to facilitate the pursuit of a debate for the rest of the afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is the Attorney General, then, specifically saying that pursuant to standing order 47(c) the debate should continue?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Yes, until 6 o'clock, I understand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise to add my voice to those discussing Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts. That's kind of an interesting title given that most people, especially young people, are just talking about a bill that pertains to drinking and driving and age. That's primarily what I want to discuss today, but I also want to, in my opening remarks, make reference to a couple of things.

One is, this is an interesting bill because it's the first time that the government of the day has discovered what social networking means. It didn't take very long, when debate opened on Bill 126, for Premier McGuinty to get wind of the fact that there were, oh, then about 100,000, now, as I understand it, about 150,000 people on a Facebook site, all of them pretty well being young people, all of them opposed to what the government was trying to do. Interestingly, in reaction to that, the Premier came out and said, "We hear you loud and clear. We think we'll be able to do something on this."

Following that, sitting here and participating in the debate or at least watching the debate take place, noticing the presence of the transport minister for much of the beginning of the debate itself, taking copious notes—and I appreciate the fact that he was. It's not often that you see ministerial presence in this House during the long hours of debate and, very particularly, responding in what seemed like a favourable way to our repeated requests for hearings and for the fact that there seemed to be a number of inequities in this bill.

I can't support the bill as it stands because many of its proposed changes are discriminatory. They negate the need and requirement for personal responsibility and, all in all, I do not believe that they would be effective in the prevention of injuries and fatalities that result from irresponsible driving.

The bill flows, obviously, from one or two very tragic accidents that would, frankly, never have been prevented had legislation like this been in force. If, indeed, the bill flows from those, one has to ask the question, "Why is it there?"

In Ontario, as in the rest of Canada, we have lost many lives—young lives, old lives—to drunk-driving accidents. That in and of itself is tragic, but it is not particularly related to age. These are all needless and preventable tragedies; however, my position is that Bill 126 will not be successful in preventing those tragedies but will instead put an unfair burden on those who have committed no crime. I believe that young and old people do make mistakes, and you can never legislate mistakes away. Laws are made; laws are broken. Sometimes when the law is broken the perpetrator can walk away, having learned his or her lesson from the mistake that's been made. Those are the good ones. Other times those mistakes turn into tragedies and they leave behind grieving families and friends.

When I meet a family who's experienced this, I never, ever say, "I can only imagine what you must feel," because I can't imagine what they feel, and may no

family ever have to deal with it. Any family that has experienced a tragedy like this, however, is a family that I grieve for. I can offer no solace. Certainly, legislation like this can do no more than that. Governments cannot legislate against all mistakes, and my proposition is that government stop trying. The role of individual responsibility cannot be underestimated when we talk about making our roads safer. This has to be about education. It can't be about legislation. Drinking is a privilege that is granted to adults by society, and driving is a similarly granted privilege of adulthood. Many privileges are out there, not rights.

As I've mentioned in this Legislature before, one of the things I choose to do in my spare time is fly an airplane. That is a very large privilege with a huge educational curve. It relates to age, regulations and an ability to communicate in a particular way. There is the whole element of controlled flight, that is, how you operate the controls of an airplane. Any little motion made out of step or out of time, and you and your passengers are in a lot of trouble. Airmanship is the word that we use to describe that. If I add one factor to that, and that is even—in the case of flying—one drink, because alcohol's effects are magnified by altitude, I and my passengers can be in an awful lot of trouble very fast. Isn't it interesting that you can fly a plane, you can obtain that licence, at age 16? The Speaker himself is a pilot, as I've just been informed. So are many members of this Legislature.

So the people who are pilots know those laws. Drinking and driving require maturity and responsibility, things explicitly stated in existing legislation. At 18, the law says that we are, to all intents and purposes, adults. One little exception: You can't drink until 19. But you can fly. You can get married. You can join the army. You can die for your country, and sadly, we recorded the deaths of three Canadians today coming back down the Highway of Heroes. I don't know their ages, but some of those young men and women have been down below the age limit that this bill looks at to enforce new regulations pertaining to driving that, I contend, are discriminatory.

My position is that you're either qualified to be a driver or you're not qualified to be a driver. You either earned that privilege by proving your skills in tests designed to put those skills on trial or you have failed. Our young people become full adults in the eyes of the law at 19. By then they are able to, as I've mentioned, vote, a right they acquire at 18. They are able to enlist in the army. They are able to get married. And, yes, they are able to buy and consume alcohol because society has conferred these rights on them as adults.

With Bill 126, Premier McGuinty says that while all that may be true, they are not responsible enough or mature enough, up to and including age 21, to be considered as adults when it comes to driving. Now, call me thick-headed or wrong-minded, but I just don't get it. At this point I've got to say that our party, in having considered this bill on the question of age 21, will be putting forward an amendment to remove the reference to age 21

and replace it with "novice driver," which would be defined in consultation with the opposition and based on public input.

Again, I refer back to the presence of the Minister of Transportation, who seemed quite agreeable when the initial speakers on this bill talked about hearings, and very particularly hearings that would travel around the province and get input from interested stakeholders right down to the individual drivers: the kids who have to drive 20 miles just to get to hockey practice and are necessarily, because they're in rural environments, bound to take additional passengers. Yes, I know that has been addressed in part in question period this morning. Also, the automatic suspension for speeding, regardless of speeding conviction: We couldn't support that. So a couple of things that I wanted to get on record there.

In my opinion, there are many different young adults. Some are thinking about global politics. We all know some of them. They want to do their part to improve the world, and indeed are considering doing things like joining the army. They're willing to die for their country. Others are consumed by keg parties and batting cages. That's a rather interesting juxtaposition, because I can show you 45-year-olds just like that. You don't have to limit that to age 21. I've met 21-year-olds that I wouldn't trust with a remote-controlled car, and I've also met 15-year-olds whose maturity and sense of responsibility could rival that of many a full-grown adult.

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Speaking about flying, come and see some of the people out at Buttonville airport enrolled in the flight program at Seneca College—quite amazing young people with incredible discipline, because that's what it takes to get through a program like that and to pass it. These kids are flying simulators that are a precise replica—for example, a Canadair regional jet—and, to them, they're in the air. Indeed, they should be because ultimately they will be. That's the kind of young adult who taught me to fly when I originally embarked on that enterprise, on that avocation. It was a 20-year-old young woman, who had completed all of her appropriate diplomas and degrees and was perfectly capable of teaching an old guy like me to take the controls and do it properly. So there are kids like that. Most kids are like that, yet the McGuinty Liberals are trying to group all of them together and play parent to each and every one, and you just can't do that. They're trying to punish the many for the errors of the few, and burden responsible young people with additional requirements, only because they fall within a certain age bracket.

In this country, the only reason for you to lose the privileges of adulthood is committing an act that proves that you're not capable of handling the responsibilities of an adult. Check out our jails. Those folks aren't kids, and there are too many of them.

One of the fundamentals in Canada is that every adult is treated equally under the law. That's worth saying again: Every adult is treated equally under the law. So why are we going to make an exception here? When it

comes to driving, one law should apply to all new drivers. It's not about age, and any driver, young or old, who is found unable, incapable of taking on all of the responsibility of driving, should not be permitted to have a driver's licence.

One of my constituents is a 25-year-old woman, who would not be affected by the changes proposed by this bill. She wrote to me and said that she disagrees with the provisions of Bill 126 that differentiate between drivers based on age. If I may quote from that e-mail, she says, "I think it is incorrect to lump all people in the same category, just as it would be wrong to lump all men into one category." She goes on: "Statistically, you are more likely to speed or cause an accident" than she is. "Does that mean that there should be a separate set of laws for male drivers," because they're differentiated from female drivers?

I think the answer is obvious; nobody is trying to do that. But it is a valid question. Insurance companies differentiate. They apply actuarial tables to rates, and charge for insurance. Licensing authorities simply assess whether or not you can pass a test and are therefore capable. The age demarcation is not indicative of anything but a number. So a new driver aged 30 is advantaged under this legislation for no particular reason. A driver who has been at it for a couple of years, who happens to be age 21, is disadvantaged—again, for no particular reason.

Another constituent who called my office argued that the proposed restrictions regarding alcohol limits and passenger limits are setting up young people for failure. The reality is that we already have legislation that makes it illegal to drink and drive, whether you are 19, 20 or 65. If 0.08 in my blood isn't going to make me any worse behind the wheel, why would it be particularly more detrimental to somebody under the age of 22? And the answer is, of course, that it wouldn't.

There are some interesting little elements to this law. I'd like to read one from section 48 of the law:

"Where a young driver has been brought to a stop by a police officer under the authority of this act and has provided a sample of breath under section 48 which, on analysis registers 'Pass' or otherwise indicates that the young driver has no alcohol in his or her body, but the police officer reasonably suspects that the young driver has alcohol in his or her body, the police officer may, for the purposes of determining the concentration of alcohol in the young driver's blood, demand that the young driver provide within a reasonable time such a sample of breath as, in the opinion of the police officer, is necessary to enable a proper analysis of the breath to be made by means of..."

Does this or does it not open the door to abuse of young people over older people by police officers? I say, the way it's written, it does. That, again, is another reason why our party would like to see a full discussion of this, not just in Toronto, not just in Thunder Bay, but at points around the province: so that the appropriate people can be heard and the appropriate modifications made.

In fact, if a person under 22 can be affected by 0.08, then so can all the rest of us, and the lower restrictions should apply to all. I know what you're thinking, especially those of you listening out there: This sounds like MADD—and there's nothing wrong with the group MADD. But so far, 0.08 seems to be serving us well.

I say there are a lot of other factors. An example would be the size of the individual and their ability to consume. Let's suppose that you've got a couple of young people who are less experienced with alcohol, which is what this bill seems to presuppose, and one is saying, "You know, I can have two drinks and I'm still under 0.08," but the guy doing the talking is 200 pounds and the person who is doing the listening is 100 pounds. Two drinks in these two people have differing effects. So I have to ask the question, can we foresee a limitation based on body mass index? Let's hope not.

If a person shouldn't be driving after consuming one glass of wine, then their age doesn't matter. They are or they are not able. This is not arbitrary. The point isn't to graduate people but to graduate licences. Do we really think that a 21-year-old planning to drink and drive under the current restrictions would all of a sudden change his or her mind just because now Premier McGuinty says you're not allowed to have any alcohol at all in the bloodstream if you're under 22? I think the answer is obvious, and it's no.

We have seen too many traffic fatalities involving young people where laws were broken—laws on alcohol abuse, laws on speeding—so the question is begged, will new laws address that? "Well, they've passed a new law," young person X says, "so now I can't do that anymore." I don't think so. That doesn't just go for young people; it goes for anyone who is contemplating drinking and driving. Drinking and driving and speeding is a lethal combination, regardless of the age.

So, again I say, either we're dealing with adults or we are not. If the thought of getting hurt, hurting others and having licences suspended or taken away isn't going to prevent drivers from drinking and driving, then "Father Knows Best" McGuinty's age restrictions aren't going to address the issue. I could go for more stringent testing across the board, perhaps; more RIDE stations, perhaps; more education so that people understand what they're doing when they imbibe, but not new redundant laws that are discriminatory against one group and not against another group.

What is really needed is the education component: the realization that there are serious consequences to breaking the law and the certainty that, yes, those who do break it will be caught and will be punished. So I would urge the government to focus on investing in enforcement and in having stringent consequences for those drivers who exhibit dangerous tendencies. Passing a law is easy and it is cost-free; policing is a real deterrent, but it is expensive.

I don't want expediency to trump real solutions. I support efforts to ensure that getting a driver's licence entails tests that are challenging and that truly test a new driver's skills on the road. Protecting us from each other

works for me, as this House knows; trying to legislate protection of me from myself is just plain dumb. But I also support knowing the difference between speeding and racing, for example; between speeding 10 kilometres per hour over the limit on a highway and 10 kilometres per hour over the limit on a side street with school-children walking home. I strongly believe that punishments should reflect crimes—not be lumped into the same category.

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Let's not forget the role of the parents, in the moment I have left, who, above all else, teach by example and have the tools that are absent from the arsenals of various governments. A constituent whose son is a teen but has a G licence says in her letter to me that "my son knows full well that if drinking, driving, tickets, unsafe habits become issues, I am simply going to sell the car." That's good parenting and, again, not something that anyone can legislate. Parents are still our best bet at making our roads safer, so let's leave them with the opportunity to make a decision on whether their child is ready to take the car keys.

In closing, let me say that I was pleased to hear in question period today that the Minister of Transportation is planning to drop the provisions of the bill that speak to passenger limits and time limits for drivers under age 22. This is an issue that many of my constituents have written to me about, with every single one saying that it was a misguided and self-destructive proposition.

I look forward to comments from members, and thank you today, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently again to the member for Thornhill. He gave a very impassioned, eloquent and I think balanced and researched speech. He talked about the rights of people, the privileges of people, the rights and privileges of parents, as well as of young people, and the difficulty or near impossibility of attempting to legislate bad behaviour. What he didn't say, but I think he inferred, was that it's very difficult to legislate against people who are intent upon breaking the law, and it doesn't matter whether it's this new law or the laws that are extant at this time.

People who break the law often go out with the mistaken belief that they will not be caught. It's part of the reason that they do it; it doesn't matter whether it's drinking and driving or speeding, or the Highway Traffic Act, or whether it's a law under the Criminal Code. It is, in fact, a mistaken belief of many people that they're not going to get caught, which is why they take the opportunity or the chance. Unfortunately, all too many of them are caught and all too many of them suffer the consequences, and others suffer the consequences of their actions.

I commend the member for Thornhill because he put eloquently and in a nutshell, in about 20 minutes, what I think many people out there are thinking. Although there is some support for this bill, there are also people

wondering, quite rationally and reasonably, what this bill is going to accomplish in terms of what is already out there. What is going to be accomplished when you cannot already drink and drive? What is going to be accomplished when you cannot speed in this province without getting a ticket or losing your licence? What is going to be accomplished by all of this? I wait impatiently for the community results and what people have to say when they come before committee. I commend the member for Thornhill for what he had to say today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I first want to say to the member for Thornhill that I agree with him. Driving is a privilege. It isn't a right, it is a privilege, and I would bring to his attention some of the statistics that I think people need to understand.

Drinking and driving is still a factor in one quarter of all road fatalities. In the 10 years to 2005 inclusive, 233 drivers aged under 22 were killed in drinking-and-driving collisions. Drinking drivers aged 19, 20 and 21 have the highest rates of involvement in both fatal collisions and collisions overall. Their involvement rate in fatal and injury collisions is 28% higher than drivers aged 22 through 24. In 2005 alone, collisions that involved drinking drivers aged 19 to 21 resulted in 31 fatalities and 573 injuries. All US states now have zero blood-alcohol-content laws for drivers up to age 21, and this is cited by them as one of the single most important reasons for a drop in young driver collisions. Zero BAC already works for novice drivers in the graduated licensing system. In the four years following the introduction of a zero blood-alcohol-content requirement for G1 and G2 drivers in 1994, the fatal injury and injury collision rate involving the youngest drivers, aged 16 and 17, fell by 76% and 53% respectively.

I say to the member, we need to make our roads safer, and this is one way—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions or comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was about to say that probably we have just witnessed, or listened to and heard, one of the most powerful speakers. The member for Thornhill gave a very cogent argument for his position, and I think the other members, including the parliamentary assistant, are stymied on how to respond.

He's pointed out several key things. The issue that he dwelt on is the driver testing, if I'm not mistaken. It was one of the sections of the bill that a lot of people, and probably members here in the House, have not read. In fact, I could easily slip to that section of the bill because he pointed it out to me earlier on in our conversations.

I think it's important that we make sure that people's rights are respected. There is a provision in this bill that there's a discretionary component when the police intervene—someone who has been stopped under some suspicion; inappropriate behaviour while driving—and they can just require them to have a breathalyser test, which I think is important at this time of year—the RIDE programs. But he looks at the individual's rights and

that's where there's a bridge; there's a necessary balance here of individual rights and collective societal rights.

I think any person who is confused would say, "If you're under 21, or 21 and under, there are two standards in this bill." This is an important distinction. We're right down into the bone and marrow of the argument that we're trying to address here. It's about individual rights and collective rights and responsibility, and the rights of police officers to intervene.

If we were to listen to the member for Thornhill, we would be wiser, and the minister would be wise to listen to the wise counsel, the comments from the member for Thornhill. At the end of the day, we agree that safety on our highways—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I appreciate the input from the member for Thornhill. I think he makes some thoughtful comments, and I do respect that.

In terms of perspective, if you look back historically at the debates that have taken place in this Legislature and other Legislatures, you'll see it's a recurring theme. When the seat belt legislation was discussed and debated, there were so many legal challenges. So many people said, "You can't infringe on a person's right to drive in a car, and strap them in. They're going to get hurt." There was so much opposition to seat belts. Who would now think of removing seat belt legislation? In the graduated licence debate people said, "You know, you just can't discriminate against young people. They should have a licence. A licence is a licence." That was opposed. Limits on speed on our highways: There are so many people who think, "Let's do like they do in Germany with the autobahn. Let them drive at any speed limit at all." But there is a very large majority of people who believe that it's the role of society to try to protect people and protect society as a whole.

The Tories, the Conservatives, called protecting people's lives on highways things associated with nannies. It's just ludicrous that they would do this.

In the state of Florida, Governor Jeb Bush removed the helmet laws, so now they drive around on motorcycles without helmets in the state of Florida. Can you imagine the horrendous accidents that occur if you drive a motorcycle without a helmet? Child safety seats: There were many people who said, "You can't force my toddler child into a seat." I know my own children, if I ever dared put my grandchildren in the car without seats, would just basically refuse that, whereas we used to drive without them. So let's think of safety first.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Thornhill, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Kind of from the last to first, I'd like to respond a little bit to what was just said by the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, who mentioned a couple of examples of things that we have legislated that tend to protect us from ourselves. He's used the word "nanny-statism", and that's a word that I use often in debate, but not today.

Seat belts are a reasonable idea because they protect people in a car from flying out of the car; it's not us from ourselves. So it's kind of apples and oranges when you mix that with what we're talking about today. We're talking today about a law that is discriminatory against one particular group of our society. I could buy into a law like this if we talked about novice drivers, not of a particular group of drivers categorized by age. I think that's a great distinction.

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In terms of other comments that were made, the member from Beaches—East York—and I thank him very much for coming back to me on this—agrees that you can't legislate against lawbreakers, and that was the main thrust of what I wanted to say. Legislating against people who are going to break the law never matters. You can enact all the laws you want. We discussed in the spring-time a law that I have often recalled in debate here that had to do with smoking in a car where there was somebody under 16 years of age present—probably a reasonable idea, but since there's nobody around to enforce it, it was making a law for the sake of making a law.

To the member from Algoma—Manitoulin, thank you very much for the statistics. The statistics very particularly on zero blood-alcohol content were interesting, and again they may well be appropriate for novice drivers, but they are not appropriate for a particular age group. So it's all discussable, it's all negotiable, but that's why we're calling for extensive hearings before this bill becomes law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This government, of course, is going crazy on bans. They're socially engineering the province of Ontario, and Bill 126 is another step along that path. By my count, there have been over 30 different bills introduced by this government banning various aspects of our lives: the ban on cell phones, which was from my friend from Durham, banning teen drivers, banning single-use water bottles—that one didn't go through, thank goodness—a ban on expiry dates of gift cards. Bill 126 is a further ban.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Well, the ban on retail gift cards doesn't really work. It wasn't thought through clearly enough, doesn't really work. If I have a gift certificate for a service, it expires, and legally so. If I have a gift certificate for a dollar amount, it doesn't expire. So people think they have a gift certificate that doesn't expire. Surprise, it does expire unless it's for a specific dollar value. Bill 126, which I'm speaking to, Mr. Speaker, continues that process.

There was a ban on sushi which didn't go through. There's a ban on used-oil heating that's currently being discussed. There's a ban on the sale of incandescent light bulbs which doesn't take effect until 2012, but it's going to force us into using fluorescent light bulbs, which are laced with mercury, which could be very damaging to our health.

There's a ban on smoking in private apartment buildings. There was an infringement on your civil rights—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Halton—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Bill 126, the bill I'm speaking to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Halton, yes. I just did hear "126," but I hadn't heard it much before. Please speak to the bill.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Bill 126, which I'm speaking to, continues that ban such as we had on pit bulls. Bill 126 was—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Halton, you're either going to speak to Bill 126 or we're going to move on.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm speaking to Bill 126.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, you aren't, and I'm really not going to argue with you about it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm not debating—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You'll get to Bill 126 quickly.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The Speaker is not being entirely objective in this matter, but I'm not going to debate with him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Halton, I'm just about to move on. Please speak to Bill 126.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Mr. Speaker, the minister announced in the House today an amendment to the bill, that one part of the bill would be withdrawn, and that's perhaps a good start, but there are other parts of this bill which also need to be withdrawn.

The automatic suspension for speeding: That is one that infringes entirely on the rights of people who are in a particular age group in this province. The administrative suspension is something that—the individual who is convicted of this never sees a day in court. It's done administratively, it's done without his day in court, which is one of the basic tenets, a basis of British law. You always have the right to appear in court, and yet here in this bill your licence can be suspended administratively without ever appearing in court.

The alcohol concept of this, the zero tolerance for alcohol: As was pointed out by my friend from Oshawa this afternoon in statements, such things as vanilla extract, mouthwash, Benylin or some cough medicines contain significant quantities of alcohol, and the mere presence of them in the mouth can register on the alcohol blow machines the police carry. They could be convicted and have an administrative suspension without ever having been guilty, without ever having consumed alcohol as was intended in the act. So a zero level of alcohol may be desirable, but it certainly isn't enforceable.

As the member for Thornhill pointed out in his eloquent speech of just a few minutes ago, if someone has the maturity to obtain a licence, then they also have the maturity to be treated equally under that licence. Regardless of whether they're 19 or 20, or whether they're 45 or 50, or whether they're 65 or 70, they should be treated the same; under this piece of legislation they're not, and particularly so when it comes to the alcohol provisions. If 0.08 is not good enough for people in Ontario, then the 0.08 should be changed, not some people in Ontario being picked on, pointed out or being treated unequally.

This piece of legislation also has the effect of distracting the government and the people, the public in Ontario, from the crisis in our economy. That's another problem that I find with Bill 126: It takes away from perhaps one of the most urgent times in our history, when we need action on the economy. This bill is taking people's attention away from the economy, which is in such dire straits in this province today as we sink to the bottom of the 10 provinces and three territories.

I wonder why the province is telling people who are old enough to volunteer for Afghanistan, people who are old enough to cast a ballot in our voting system, who are old enough to walk into either a bar or a liquor store and purchase alcohol, who are old enough to get married, who are old enough to have children—I wonder why this government is telling them that they are not old enough, they are not responsible enough to drive the same as every other adult out there. I wonder why this government is telling them that. It seems to me that this is an emotional reaction. Although much of politics is emotional, legislative action should be based on the facts; it should be based on a sincere understanding of those facts and a reaction to them.

This bill also talks about the increased penalties that are levied against drivers who pass from one area to another. A fine for careless driving, for instance, increases fivefold. That's a huge increase. It's something that is necessary, and it's something that I would support in this act. The increased fine for not stopping at a red light goes up astronomically as well. That is something else in this bill that I would support. The bill is not entirely wrong, but the concept of the bill when it attacks the rights of individuals I take great exception to, and I think this government should continue its review, as it has done, as it announced in question period today; it should continue that review and have a serious look at some of the other parts of this bill.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Tuesday, December 9.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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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 Ageloniitis, 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 Oraziatti
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziatti
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
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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