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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 29 April 2010

Jeudi 29 avril 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 29 April 2010

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 29 avril 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
STATUTE LAW

AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE

L'ENSEIGNEMENT POSTSECONDAIRE

Mr. Phillips, on behalf of Mr. Milloy, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005 and the Ontario College of Art & Design Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 favorisant le choix et l'excellence au niveau post-secondaire, la Loi de 2005 sur les collèges privés d'enseignement professionnel et la Loi de 2002 sur l'École d'art et de design de l'Ontario.

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

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I'll be sharing the vast majority of my time with the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I think, after that mercifully brief introduction, I'm getting the majority of the time.

Interjection: The vast majority.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: The vast majority.

Our government has long recognized that investing in education and training is absolutely critical to the success of our province. With Ontario's economy undergoing some huge structural changes, our investments have never been more important. Advantages of the past—low wages, a low dollar, cheap commodities—are becoming far less important as we move to compete internationally.

Experts tell us that some 70% of new jobs require a higher education and that if we want those jobs, we've got to be smarter, we've got to be better trained and we've got to be better educated than the next guy. That is why our government continues to make education our highest priority.

In a recent speech from the throne, our government unveiled Open Ontario, a new five-year plan to create

new opportunities for jobs and growth, and investing in education is a critical part of that plan.

The late President John F. Kennedy used to say there is no better measure of our progress as a nation than our progress in education. He was right. After all, it is today's students who will go on to become the entrepreneurs who will build tomorrow's knowledge-based economy: the dreamers who will tackle the world's toughest problems and the innovators who will turn exciting new ideas into things that have the power to change our very lives. We believe that every qualified Ontarian who wants to go to college or university should have that opportunity.

Open Ontario includes raising the number of Ontarians with a post-secondary education credential to 70%. To reach this goal, our plan includes a provision to build 20,000 more spaces at our colleges and universities this fall. We're going to create a new Ontario Online Institute that will offer students a new option for higher learning in the increasingly digitized world of the 21st century. Another part of the plan is to shine a spotlight on Ontario's outstanding post-secondary education system, so that in that spotlight we can make our province the destination for those who are seeking higher learning.

We currently have more than 37,000 international students enrolled in Ontario colleges and universities. We will open our doors to the world and we will increase international enrolment by 50% over the next five years. President Obama was recently quoted as saying, "Those nations that out-educate us will soon be out-competing us." I think he's right. By encouraging more foreign students to come to Ontario, we can build new international relationships and increase our competitiveness.

To continue to attract those students and to ensure that the people of Ontario have the best possible post-secondary education system, we need to put our very best foot forward. We need to work diligently to protect the quality of our post-secondary education system. That is why this week—this very week—our government introduced the Post-secondary Education Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, which moves forward on three different fronts. Let me explain: Through this act, we have proposed amendments to the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000; the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005; and the Ontario College of Art & Design Act, 2002.

Ontario is moving to protect Ontario's reputation for excellence in post-secondary education, both at home and abroad. Our action will assure students that post-secondary programs offered here in Ontario are of the highest quality and meet our standards of excellence. Our pro-

posed amendments to the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, or PSECE, would, if passed, protect both international and Ontario students. The PSECE Act came into effect in 2001 to expand access to degree programs, improve student protection and implement quality assurance for new degree programs. The act allows private institutions from inside and outside of Ontario and public out-of-province institutions and colleges of applied arts and technology to apply to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to offer a degree program. Previously, colleges of applied arts and technology and private institutions located in Ontario could not apply to offer degrees in our great province.

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The act created the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, or PEQAB, as it's affectionately known, which has implemented rigorous quality controls and has been successful in protecting Ontario students from degree mills since that time.

But we've experienced an increase in organizations challenging the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act. They are challenging our ability to ensure the quality of our post-secondary education brand. Currently, there are no options provided in the act for financial penalties. The only enforcement available is prosecution under the Provincial Offences Act, a quasi-criminal proceeding. We believe that we need more and stronger tools of enforcement, much like the changes we have made to our Private Career Colleges Act.

If passed, the proposed amendments would strengthen the ability of the government to shut down unscrupulous and unauthorized educational organizations and prevent them from taking advantage of international and Ontario students. Our proposed amendments would allow the government to impose financial penalties and restraining and compliance orders against unauthorized degree-granting institutions.

Another key amendment would, if passed, allow us to reduce the red tape for publicly assisted colleges and other institutions by making the application process for consent to offer a degree program more cost-effective and less time-consuming, and that has got to be good news for all of us.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh my God, it's just so good.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate the affirmation from the bench opposite. That one who's so knowledgeable, who says without any hesitation, as an immediate reaction to the words I uttered, how good this act is—I appreciate that.

Currently, the minister must refer every application for consent to the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board. The minister cannot make decisions early in the process, even when the proposed new program is an unjustified duplication of existing programs or when few job opportunities actually exist for graduates of that particular program. It just doesn't make sense. That's why we want to change it.

In addition, the act also does not provide any choice about requiring a quality review by PEQAB, even in

cases where a quality assurance review has already been done by another reputable body. Our proposed amendments could and would reduce this potential duplication.

As well, we are proposing amendments to the act to define and clarify ambiguous terminology such as “degree,” “distance education” and “educational institution” in order to clearly identify the activities that are subject to the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That should do it.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thank you again for that wonderful affirmation. I knew, coming in this morning, that the honourable member opposite would be nodding in total agreement with the thrust of this bill. I do appreciate his enthusiasm. He's a good friend who knows post-secondary education very well.

Anyhow, I've noted that our Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures that will allow us to finally protect students.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There you go: “We didn't do it right five years ago; we're going to do it right today.”

Mr. Ted McMeekin: The honourable member is right: We are going to do it right today. I appreciate that. That is thanks to a number of changes in our approach to the private career colleges sector over the last few years.

We brought in the Private Career Colleges Act, we established the training completion assurance fund and most recently we did introduce financial penalties. We've doubled the number of inspectors from six to 12, we've appointed new provincial offences officers with the power to issue court summons and we've introduced financial penalties for private career colleges that break the law. We're also reaching out to students through a public awareness campaign to ensure that students understand the importance of choosing a registered private career college and an approved program, so they get the high-quality education they deserve.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Make sure they know: Buyer beware; it's not our problem.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Protecting consumers, particularly those in post-secondary education, as I'm sure my good friend the wonderful Minister of Consumer Services from the great riding of Hamilton Mountain would appreciate more than most.

We're also working on a number of fronts to enhance quality and accountability across the private career college sector.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There's more?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Of course there's more.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hold on; let me put on my earpiece.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: You wouldn't want to miss this. There are two key measures that I think will take the sector to a whole new level. Are you ready?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. I'm taking notes.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I noticed that. You might want to do a thesis on this one day; it's such an important move.

Today, I want to highlight proposed amendments that will further strengthen our enforcement of this act. If passed, these amendments would raise the maximum financial penalties for provincial offences from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for individuals, and from \$100,000 to \$250,000 for corporations. These penalties would be in keeping with other consumer protection legislation such as the Consumer Protection Act, 2002. This would help us improve student protection and the quality of private career colleges and programs.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Hear, hear.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: “Hear, hear” is right. That is an important step—very important. We are going to compete in the global economy, and Ontario is going to win, because we’re going to have the most highly educated and skilled citizenry in the world right here. I see my honourable colleague over there is nodding in agreement. It’s very, very good to see that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Parkdale–High Park.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Parkdale–High Park—how could I forget?

You know, people from your riding have been lining up for days to tell us how excited they are about this bill.

Mr. Dave Levac: The galleries are full.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: That’s because they’re so confident that our government has this right.

The member from Brant, of course, has an international reputation for his educational acumen, and he has been very helpful in terms of moving this forward.

On the Ontario College of Art and Design, the third part of our act covers proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Art and Design Act. OCAD—I know this, because one of my daughters was involved with OCAD—is one of the leading art and design—

Mr. Mike Colle: My daughter too.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Colle’s daughter as well.

Mr. Mike Colle: Bianca.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Bianca Colle.

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Mr. Michael A. Brown: And Monte Kwinter’s a graduate.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I didn’t know that. Did you know Monte Kwinter was a graduate of OCAD?

Interjection: Yes, I did.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I knew he had that artistic flair, but I wasn’t quite sure where it came from.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: The member from York Centre.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: He’d be welcome to do this speech, I can assure you.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You’ve got the member all choked up here, Rosario.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: It’s such a great day, I’ve got to tell you.

OCAD is one of the leading art and design institutions in all of Canada.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Let’s take a pause and have a drink here.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I think I should, yes.

With more than 3,500 students, the Ontario College of Art and Design is one of the largest professional art and design institutions in all of North America.

As Ontario strives to further develop an innovative economy, OCAD is an important player in supporting our goals in developing leading-edge innovations. OCAD has forged strong ties with industry leaders in the creative, information and communication technology sectors. It is a key player in supporting Ontario’s innovative economy.

Known for its innovation and links with a variety of arts and technology sectors, OCAD is producing high-quality graduates with the skills and competencies to meet the demands of the new economy.

Ontario is proposing amendments to the Ontario College of Art & Design Act that will finally give OCAD university status as an institution.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Finally.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Right on, member from High Park. Thank you for that.

OCAD has been able to grant a bachelor’s and master’s degree since 2002, and the new amendments would reflect the academic evolution of the institution.

If passed, these amendments would change the name of OCAD to the Ontario College of Art and Design University. Changes to the act would also establish a university senate and appropriately amend the powers of the board of governors.

In conclusion, our Open Ontario plan recognizes the importance of post-secondary education in creating more opportunities for jobs and growth to compete in the global marketplace.

Ontario’s post-secondary education system is recognized for the quality of programs offered by our great colleges and universities. We are a leader in quality assurance for our post-secondary education system. This is a reputation we value highly and are committed to protecting.

Mr. Mario Sergio: We are proud.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: We are indeed proud. Ontario needs to act now, out of a sense of pride, out of a sense of hopefulness for the future, and with the certain knowledge that we can compete against anybody in the world. We just have to make sure that our most precious resource—our people—have the tools to get the job done.

Interjection: Determination.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: We are absolutely determined to act now to ensure that the Ontario brand remains strong.

I urge all members of this House to support the proposed Post-secondary Education Statute Law Amendment Act, with its amendments, secure in the knowledge that this would strengthen our ability to maintain the integrity and quality of Ontario’s post-secondary education system both at home and abroad. Isn’t that why we’re here and isn’t that what this place is all about?

Thank you so much.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments at the beginning of this reading of the bill. There's one thing I want to put on the record: I actually had an opportunity to listen to quite a bit of the member's speech, and I'm very concerned about some of the comments I heard last night when I visited the hospitality reception room for the career colleges of Ontario—a lot of private career colleges are here. One group in particular, the Northern Ontario Welding College—they've been in Barrie for the last decade, and they've done a remarkable job training people in welding. They feel somewhat intimidated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities about some of the actions it has taken. I only want to say that I hope, when we complete this debate and go on to committee hearings, that people who might be affected in a negative way by this particular piece of legislation—that they will, in fact, listen to possible amendments.

You have to remember that a lot of the private career colleges we have are operating with very little government assistance, and they're doing a good job training people in the province of Ontario. Any time we can train someone and put them to work, that's a very positive step. I had an opportunity to talk to only a couple of the people who had display booths at the reception last night, but both of them felt that the government wasn't addressing some of their concerns.

I also noticed that there were virtually no government members at the private career colleges reception, and I'd like to know why.

Anyhow, those are my comments. I'm hoping there will be positive amendments coming forward on this, and I hope the government will address in the debate or in amendments to the bill any negative comments we hear from anyone.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I listened very, very closely to the comments by my friend from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale—that's another big riding, I'm telling you—and I'm going to be as critical of his remarks as I was of the remarks by the minister yesterday, because I think we have a system that we cannot be too proud of. I know that you say you're proud of the reputation you've got. The Ombudsman wasn't too proud of the reputation you have. In his dissection of a number of problems he has studied, the ministry has nothing to be proud of.

You talk about being a leader in quality assurance. You're not. You talk about moving to protect Ontario's reputation. Yes, you must, because our reputation is not that strong. You talk about the Private Career Colleges Act having strong enforcement measures to allow us to protect students—at least the minister did yesterday. If indeed there were strong enforcement measures, why has he not applied them to those rogue institutions that have been set up and have cheated many students of a year or two of tuition and a year or two of their lives, when many of these institutions are not registered?

The member from Simcoe North talks about some of these private colleges being intimidated or afraid. Well, if they're registered and they have followed the quality assurance measures that are requested of them, there's no problem. And if these private institutions are not registered, that is against the law.

I'll have more opportunity to speak to this in a half-hour or so.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First of all, I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for his wonderful speech about the importance of amending this bill to make sure that all the people who come from everywhere to study in Ontario will be protected, that Ontario is open for international students and also that when they come and study, whatever college they study in should be accredited and looked after very well. The importance of this amendment and of Bill 43 is to create a protection mechanism.

Also, the member from Simcoe–Grey talked about yesterday's event, and that there was nobody from the government side. Yes, there were a lot of members. I went.

0930

Mr. Jim Brownell: Absolutely. I was there.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, I was there, and many people went yesterday. We were in and out. It's not about this. We believe that everyone in the province of Ontario, everyone who registers, everyone who has a legitimate concern should come to this place and voice their concern. This is what's important about this place: It's open for all the people from across the province to come and talk to us. That's why we're here: to listen to the people and address their concerns.

The most important thing is education—how important it is when you allow people from across the globe to come to Ontario, learn and not just get an academic education but also learn about the culture, the traditions, so that when they go back, they can create some kind of a special tie with Canada and Ontario, and maybe create trade missions.

I think it's important, and that's why the most important thing is how we can create a mechanism, and how we can allow the colleges and universities to update and upgrade their capacity to be able to absorb those massive numbers of students coming from international backgrounds.

Also, the most important thing is to cut the red tape and make it more accessible, with special protections and guarantees for all the people who want to come to Ontario.

I want to congratulate the member from Ancaster—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I have listened carefully. In fact, the content of the remarks by the member were engaging and entertaining. I'm very disappointed that the minister isn't here.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I shouldn't say that. The minister—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd just remind the honourable members that we don't comment on whether someone is here or not here. They may very well be in their offices, working hard, or in committee.

The honourable member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: That was inadvertent and I apologize for saying that.

I'm just saying that this bill is pretty significant, given the context of what was in the budget speech and the expansion of the pressures on the system. This was in the budget speech that was read by the minister. I'll be making comments on that in a very few minutes, with the indulgence of the House.

The member did speak of the importance of some of these changes that were, I believe, in direct response to André Marin's reports on the inaction that I believe has precipitated this bill.

Our critic is predisposed to listen closely today on this, because I'll be sort of speaking earlier than I should be.

The comments by the member were valid. I'll make a couple of comments that say that there are a lot of good things in the bill and we're going to listen. We certainly hope it will go to committee.

With that, we'll wait until my time to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank my honourable colleagues from Simcoe North, Trinity–Spadina, of course the great riding of London–Fanshawe, and Durham for their comments.

This bill is basically about three things. It's about responding to challenges and creating opportunities, it's about enhancing quality, and it's about protecting students. Those are three pretty important imperatives.

The honourable member from Trinity–Spadina talked about quality. I'm reminded that Aristotle once said—

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: A good Greek.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: A good Greek, says my honourable colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who knows good Greeks.

Aristotle once said that if you want to know if the shoe fits, you have to ask the person who wears it, not the person who made it. In that context, we do very well. You talk to students about how they view their post-secondary education, and it's virtually universally positive. There are studies to show that. We of course have one of the highest post-secondary graduation rates in the western world, if not the highest.

We're going to move ahead. Of course we're going to listen to any thoughtful amendments. Our government is all about listening to thoughtful amendments so that we can enhance any legislation.

We're not here to fear the future, but to shape it. In order to do that, we need to hold fast to the best of our

past and race, as this bill does, to embrace the very best of our future.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to stand down our lead speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the lead be stood down? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole: I might just mention directly that our critic on this has given me as much help as he possibly can in the short time that we've been allowed. In fact, he'll be listening to every remark, because he's sitting in the chair.

I want to start by saying first of all, I'm sort of a product of lifelong learning. In fact, it has taken me longer to learn than most people here, I suppose. But I mean that quite sincerely. I attended three or four different universities and graduated from two of them. Now, the deal here is that all of us, including the young people here today, should realize that we're in an environment of lifelong learning. It is institutional to some extent, and it's coincidental to some extent.

If you look at access to information today, the virtual world of information—Google and the Internet—the piracy that occurs, plagiarizing etc., is profound. I can say in our own family I have a couple of nephews who have Ph.D.s from Canadian universities and American universities. My youngest daughter just graduated with a master's degree from a university that I believe is in Scotland. She got her undergraduate degree here in Ontario. I'm so proud of how my wife is an educator, a retired teacher. Education was the primary goal in our lives, and I believe for many new Canadians, it's the primary goal. They come here because there is a rich opportunity and a rich environment.

I also think locally: My riding of Durham is home to one of Ontario's newest universities, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. I want to thank Dr. Polonsky, who generated the enthusiasm and the conceptual idea to develop what was a college into a new university, and now we have the Durham equivalent, UOIT. Dr. Ronald Bordessa, the president there, comes from a background at York University, and I think as well from Royal Roads in British Columbia.

We also have Durham College, which is a technical college, a quasi-university, I guess, that works with universities. Don Lovisa is the president there, and he is bringing that into the new world of the new generation of energy and energy technologists—that program. They've instituted in the midst of the building some of the infrastructure for renewable energy right on-site for hands-on training and learning.

I think all of our communities are really committed to partnering, whether it's a college with a university—and the crossover programs today are very important. I think recognizing credits in the college sector, to transition into the university sector, is important. Many university graduates today with an arts degree go to college to get some practical learning to apply to the workplace.

I think it's very important: Success today, it's often said, is a knowledge-based economy. In that, it's global. We cannot be isolationists. Let's be realistic. There are two or three books that were written recently, and I refer to them often. I think Richard Florida's book on the creative culture is important, about the jobs of the future. I ask, what are the jobs of the future? We see the erosion and loss of jobs in manufacturing cascading out the of this country, and we see the problems in the typical, traditional economies of northern Ontario. Those northern Ontario economies based on resources, whether it's pulp or minerals in the ground, show that the economy there has to change.

The interesting part of this whole debate on the revolution of colleges and universities and knowledge is that you don't have to be in Toronto or Ottawa or Waterloo. You can actually learn virtually. Many of the programs today—in fact, when I was still working 15 years ago, I was in a program working on my master's degree in mechanical engineering at Northwestern University. I never got the degree. I finished the first four courses, I believe it was, in statistics and stuff like that. But it was all done virtually. You went to the Northwestern campus for a week or something and then you came out and studied online in collaborative mode, learning with other students on problem-solving. That's the reality today.

0940

I went to the University of Toronto—that's where I graduated from—but my point is this: The way we learn today is profoundly different. Now, I don't know whether it addresses this, but in their budget—I wish I had more time. I'd like to have the lead on this if I could, but I know the Speaker would not allow that because it's his job.

But in the budget on page 60, Open Ontario's goal is to raise Ontario's post-secondary attainment rates to 70%. A very laudable goal; we would support that objective. You've got to keep the standards high. If the number's so important, don't lower the standards. If you want to say you've got 70%, how do you compare on some of the Euclid tests and Descartes tests and all these other tests that test the high quality of math, science and real knowledge?

It says the first step is that the budget will provide \$310 million in new funding for 20,000 new spaces in colleges and universities this year. I question whether or not that's enough money. I'm not asking them to spend; I'm asking them to think outside the box. The reason I say that is because learning in a virtual university is not a negative thought. The quality has to be there.

Here's a good example: MIT, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, probably one of the most prestigious universities. If you read Friedman's book *The World Is Flat*—and he has a second book now, *Flat, Hot and Crowded*, which is pulling together globalization as well as global warming—what they say there is that the most patents that were issued, for the first time in history, last year, were issued in India at Bangalore University.

They graduate more electrical engineers in India than all of Canada and the United States combined. That's the competition globally. Get with the game.

Now, if you were going to get a lecture in advanced theoretical physics, where would you like to get that lecture from? I'd want it from the very best practical theoretical physicist in the world, and that's possible today by conferencing and visual interaction by computer. My children live in three different countries: Australia, England and the Isle of Man. I say this all the time: We speak to them almost every day online, and to our grandchildren, on Skype. Corporations today have virtual contact throughout the world: online, real-time. When the president of some large company speaks, he speaks from some country to their international partners. That's the world today. Let's get over it, that it's some direct institution. I agree with the sentimental values and the importance of the socialization and real contact with real people at the university, totally agree with that, totally understand, especially for undergraduate students. But for graduate students, they want the very best.

I'm going to read one example of a paper this morning. In the media this morning there were a couple of articles on this which I think were very appropriate, and this complements something in the bill. There's a particular section in the bill which I think is important and necessary in a knowledge-based economy. Here's what it says, and this is from CBC News: "Private Universities Target of Ontario's Crackdown"—that's one part of it. It says:

"Currently, Ph.D. students can start the process of acquiring permanent resident status in Canada only if they already have a permanent job offer." The changes announced will do the following. This is as reported by Mike Crawley of CBC News, who "spoke with Irada Ibrahim-Zada, a Ph.D. student in the U of T's Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathobiology who is from Azerbaijan. She is doing research about why certain cancer drugs do or don't work well with different patients depending on their genes.

"Ibrahim-Zada said removing the rule that requires a permanent job before applying for permanent resident status will boost her chances of being able to stay and work" here "in Ontario."

That's ultimately what we want. We want that. That is a provision in this bill which I would support. I would encourage our leader, Tim Hudak, and our critic, Jim Wilson, to support that.

She goes on to say, "Right now, knowing that I can graduate from a Ph.D. program and directly apply as a provincial nominee makes my life easier."

New Canadians are going to bring new growth to this province, and that needs to be supported. We attract—based on what? I think we attract them—we've heard for the last couple of decades that new Canadians are coming here with Ph.D.s or engineering degrees and driving taxis. We need to change that. We need to change it and make full use of all of the skills and knowledge that are

here. It will pressure our institutions to respect and respond.

The budget speech I mentioned went on to say, and I'm going to quote from that again: "Tens of millions of families around the globe want what Ontario offers—a quality post-secondary education that leads to a good job and a secure future." Who doesn't want that? My five children do; that's why they're in different countries. They go where the action is. It's a global deal. If you want to be with the best, you've got to run with the best.

Here's what it says. The minister said that we are aggressively promoting Ontario's—I'm not sure the word "aggressively" is the right word. It should be based on quality, and that will be the eventual outcome. We are aggressively promoting "Ontario's post-secondary schools abroad and increase international enrolment by 50% ... guaranteeing spaces for qualified Ontario students." Wait a minute here—a 50% increase; \$310 million. That's not nearly enough money.

Do you know what this is about? Tuition for foreign students is double or triple the regular student tuition. It's a money-maker. Let's call it what it is. It really is. I say that not to be cynical or critical. Let's say what it is. They're going after the market, like New Zealand and Australia are doing as well. I should add that New Zealand and Australia, where my daughter lives, are doing the same thing. There's money in it, big-time money.

These students come, they pay tuition in the hundreds, maybe thousands of dollars—Ph.D. and graduate students—maybe hundreds of thousands. They live here, they buy here, they buy groceries, they rent, they do things, they bolster the economy. What's good about the bill is they're going to allow them to stay as permanent residents and bring their skills and knowledge here.

I want to say also that everyone here, I think, realizes everything I've said. I'm just putting it on the record. What's really important, though, is to put some context around the real purpose of the bill, as the member said this morning. Opportunity, quality and protecting students were the three prerequisites, I think.

I think it's very important to look at the work done by the Ombudsman, André Marin. He has issued two reports on this. There's work to be done, and this bill reacts to some of that.

The goal is to increase the number of Ontario students, as I said, with post-secondary education to 70%—watch the quality numbers. Don't just get caught up with the numbers. Let's measure the quality.

Some of the academics argue with this measurement of quality. Let's put ourselves up to the world's best. It's like the Olympics. How successful, how wonderful to see our Canadian athletes in the Winter Olympics. What a terrific inspiration for all of us. We can do it. The leadership has to start here. You can't force it on the students. You have to show the rewards are there for excellence. In fact, my belief is—and I'm on my own, saying this; I would encourage our leader, Tim Hudak, to say this—I think the top students' tuition should be free.

Interjection: How come you're saying you're alone?

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, basically, you and I are the only ones here.

The truth is, though, I would say the top students in my day and age, when they were an Ontario scholar—there were two Ontario scholars in my grade 13. Both of them have Ph.D.s today. They were brilliant. In fact, they knew the answer to the question when the lecturer put the equation on the board. One of them is head of fine art, I think, at Carleton. The other is a physics teacher at Queen's, I believe. Today, there are two pages of Ontario scholars, from every high school.

I don't know whether they're—I put it that the kids are smarter, perhaps. There's certainly a lot more information around, and more easily accessed.

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Here is the deal: Even the ones who get the award for top student—I'd be giving them a significant scholarship. They used to give \$500 when I was back in school; they get nothing today—maybe \$100 or something—and tuition in Ontario is the highest in Canada. If you really want to do something about increasing access, make it affordable; make the loans affordable; have an income-contingent loan repayment plan—some real plans for this 70% goal. We don't want them graduating with \$50,000 in debt or more. It's unacceptable. This is our future. We're going to depend on them all achieving their best potential in the least obstructive way.

What André Marin said was this: While these goals—of 50% and 70%—are commendable, do these increases come at the expense of students and graduates such has been the case at Cambrian College and Bestech Academy? I'll mention more about that in a minute; it's in the Ombudsman's reports. He has two reports: Too Cool For School, which was introduced in July 2009, and Too Cool For School Too, in August 2009. He's got it. He gets it. I'm not sure if this fixes it. It does give the minister much more authority, I'll say that.

The minister calls for stronger tools of enforcement, yet Marin goes on to say, in a scathing report by the Ombudsman—here's what he said:

"Despite the fact that it is illegal to operate a private ... college that is not registered with the ministry, a considerable number of unregistered training facilities exist in Ontario, presenting a risk to unwary consumers"—who are students. "The Ministry is fully cognizant of this reality. However, it does not vigorously pursue information about or enforcement against rogue operators." That's our Ombudsman.

They fired the Ombudsman. André Marin is too direct. I think he has been one of the best Ombudsmen we've had. He's quite outspoken—I will say that—but that's his job, to comment with facts and evidence.

Here's what it really comes down to: Looking at this again, this is a report from April 26. This is very current, and I need to speak quickly here. Here's what's actually happening: "The institution"—that we're talking about—"which is headquartered at Prestige Restaurant in Hawkesbury, Ont."—what's it called? Wait a minute; it's

called Hawkesbury University, and it operates at a restaurant in Hawkesbury, Ontario. I've been to Hawkesbury. I lived in Quebec for a while. I used to drive through Hawkesbury on the way home.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: They have a university?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yeah, it's in a restaurant.

It "has no approvals from the Ontario government to do business in the province as a university or as a private career college. Earlier this month, the province issued a restraining order under the Private Career Colleges Act"—which is an existing act; it was in 2005 that that act came in—"barring the unregistered school from advertising its unapproved programs.

"Owner Ashraf Hossain Siddiky had been advertising the school on a bright yellow website, which remains up despite the restraining order handed down April 19. Efforts to reach Mr. Siddiky were unsuccessful." Can you imagine? He's probably out of the country.

"The ministry says the website was tweaked during the investigation to say the school was 'proposed' and that it is 'not yet operating.'"

What's happening here is—this is a real case; I'm not making it up. This is in the—I hope it's not the Toronto Star, because they're usually pretty good to the Liberals. They never say anything critical, anyway. We call it the Liberal briefing notes. This is actually in the Globe and Mail, which is a very balanced media piece as well.

But this is about enforcement. What does the actual bill say? Well, I have a copy of it here. I haven't had time to read it because it was just issued Tuesday. I have most of it read, though. I assure you that I look at them; I don't just kind of go over what—the ministry gives these guys over here the speech, and we saw that this morning, and they read it. That's the end of it. Some of them might go to the briefing. I think Mr. McMeekin is probably the parliamentary assistant for something. I'm sure he's going to make sure that—I want to see how many amendments and hearings are actually listened to, because our critic, Mr. Wilson, was on the board of governors for the University of Toronto, and I know that he will bring some substance and content to his observations.

Here's what it says: "The inspection section of the act, section 9, is amended to more closely parallel the inspection section in the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005"—I just mentioned that—"and the act is amended by adding provisions dealing with administrative monetary penalties" etc.

It goes on to say: "The provincial offence penalties are increased from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for individuals and from \$100,000 to \$250,000 for corporations." This guy in Hawkesbury—a quarter of a million dollars will shut him down in no time flat.

The point here is that we want a knowledge-based economy. We want the best possible thing. I think that some of the things they're doing here are laudable, commendable and supportable. Our leader, Tim Hudak, is big on jobs and the economy. That's his whole deal: opportunities for young people who will pull us into the future where Canada can be the leader.

A lot of this is missing. A lot of it's not here. The ink isn't dry. We're going to require it to go to committee, and you can count on it that we will be there, making sure that we have the right tools in the right place at the right time.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: As always, it's interesting to listen to the member from Durham. He brings passion to the place. There are a couple of areas where we could agree with him, from the New Democratic Party; just a couple. One is the sorry, sorry state of post-secondary education in this province right now under seven years of Liberal watch. Here are the facts: We are now 10th out of 10 in per capita funding for post-secondary students. We are now the highest-priced place to get a post-secondary degree out of all the provinces and we have the highest level of indebtedness upon graduation.

Now, where does it look better? Well, everywhere, just about. We are increasingly becoming like the United States: We have students graduating with \$50,000, \$100,000, \$150,000 worth of debt. Contrast this, might I say, with most of Europe, in particular those social democratic countries where, guess what? People are always astounded when I say this: Post-secondary education is free. That's what we should be aiming for here, free post-secondary education so that it's open to everyone. The member from Durham said, "It should be free for the best students." Well, it is free for the best students in many jurisdictions in the world. I mean, imagine, students here. You should be in the streets. You should be out in front of Queen's Park. You should be demanding not only a reduction in tuition, but real steps towards the goal, which is to make it accessible; to make it open and accessible to everyone—i.e., free.

I remember a wonderful article in NOW Magazine. Its title was, "Did You Know that Your Professor Makes Less than You Do?" That's the other ugly secret about post-secondary education: Professors here are being treated worse than workers in other professions and make less, sometimes, per hour than baristas at Starbucks.

Here is the educational system in Ontario. This is the reality. This bill isn't going to do much to change that.

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

Mr. Ted McMeekin: In response to the honourable member from Durham, I want to offer a couple of observations. Thomas Friedman, in his book *The World Is Flat*, pointed out to us that in a world where you can purchase resources, borrow capital and copy technology, the only real advantage any country has is, in fact, the degree to which their citizenry is educated, is trained and can be a competitive workforce in the global economy.

The member opposite suggested that today, international students want to go where the action is. We agree with that, and I guess what we're trying to do in this bill and in some of the other initiatives that we've taken is make Ontario the place where the action is; make Ontario the destination of choice so that those wonderful

international students who want to come—we're making it easier for them to come, study and stay—can contribute to building a stronger, healthier and more caring and prosperous Ontario. Those who come and study and go home can become our partners in the economic situation that the global economy is all a big part of today.

The reference to student aid was interesting. I just want to say that in addition to freezing tuition for a couple of years, you may recall that students in Ontario have access to the most generous student support in the country. We've doubled our investments in student aid and tripled the number of grants available. In fact, independent studies have shown that of all the provinces in Canada, students graduating from Ontario are doing the best in terms of low debt. They're also doing the best in terms of access to student support, and I think we can be proud of that.

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

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Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Durham for his presentation on Bill 42. I wasn't in the chamber when the discussion started, but I came in and I heard the member speaking very passionately about the education system in general. In fact, I think a couple of times he mentioned that he wasn't sure that he was right on the topic of the bill, but he wanted to have some input into the system in general, the bigger picture. I very much appreciated that. He mentioned here this morning that if you read the bill—and maybe not everyone has read the bill. As I was driving home yesterday, I was listening to the radio. They kept playing this clip on the radio. If I heard it once, I heard it 25 times. It was the Premier of the province of Ontario saying on the education bill and the changes that were being made, "It's 206 pages. To be frank,"—I'm not sure if the word was "frank"—"I haven't read it." That was last night. The tape was from yesterday afternoon. He hadn't read the bill, with all the curriculum changes that were being proposed that he withdrew and then came back and was going to put back in. He was quoted on the radio on a regular basis for an hour: "I haven't read the bill, because, well, you know, it's 206 pages. I can't read 206 pages that quickly, so I haven't read the bill." Incidentally, that bill was introduced months ago.

Mr. Dave Levac: That's classy.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It was; that was on the radio, member from Brant—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member for Durham has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park, and I'm just going to briefly respond. She talked about being 10th out of 10. Those are the facts. I guess I'm waiting for the member from Trinity–Spadina. He's quite respected on the education file. I would say that she talked a bit about student debt, as well. I did briefly touch on that. It's not so much in this bill, but it's about this bill.

The member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale—I think his passion is completely correct, what he said. But the thing is, they say one thing and do another. Here's the reality: When I look at the reality here, with Open Ontario, what did we do with the single largest file in this province, the energy file? What did they do? They gave \$7 billion to Samsung, a Korean company, when my university is the top university in nuclear engineering. What the heck is going on? We have to go to Korea to get our future built? Come on here, wait a minute. You say one thing and do another. This doesn't make sense. We should be sending our students to Korea. So I'm really upset.

The member from Oxford has it right: The Premier is ambivalent at times. Respectfully, he is the Premier; he was elected by his party members and that. But he's starting to waffle. He screwed up on the transit plan in Toronto. I think the energy file is completely ruined. Brad Duguid doesn't know anything about the file, quite frankly; Gerry Phillips does. My beef is this: This is so important that we'd better get it right, because it is a knowledge economy. We're 10th out of 10 on support for it; our students have the largest amount of debt. This plan here is saying we're going to expand it by 50% more enrolment of foreign students—a cash grab. Look, let's make sure quality supersedes all other goals. Our students are what we're here for, and that should be the number one objective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just remind honourable members to refer to each other by their riding names. Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to speak to Bill 43, happy to have the time to be able to cover as much territory as I possibly can. I want to say a few things. Next week, when this bill comes back for debate—because I won't be able to finish my lead—I'll touch on the fact that this government has a strong interest in bringing 20,000 new students to our post-secondary institutions. I will speak about some of the problems connected to that. I'm going to mention distance education, online education, because I've got some concerns about that. I'll briefly touch on OCAD, because it's part of this bill. It's an unusual thing to do when you introduce this kind of bill to introduce OCAD into it. I've got no problem with it but I'll speak to that next week.

I want to start by saying that the minister introduced this bill two days ago, and we are debating this bill today. It's a bit unusual in my mind to have a bill presented two days ago and debated two days after. We have been given very little opportunity to do a review of previous bills. It's true that the government has a few more resources than we do. We've got 10 members; they have over 70. They have a whole lot of research; we don't. We do our best with limited resources, but it would have been nice to have been given a little more time to do a little more careful research. I wanted to point out that it should be a right that opposition members get to be able to have a little more time to consider these bills.

I was a bit surprised that the minister wasn't here to debate the bill. I'm sure he's got other things to do, no

doubt. But normally ministers introduce their bills by way of debate in this Legislature. The member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale did the 20 minutes on this bill, and that's fine. I just wanted to point out the unusual nature of the time frame of when a bill is produced and when we're debating in the Legislature, and the fact that the minister wasn't here to present and debate on his own bill.

Secondly, I know that the minister, in his statement two days ago, talked about the following: "I have noted that our Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures that allow us to protect students. Today, we are proposing amendments to further strengthen our enforcement of this act." I want to say how laughable that statement is, because we—you as a government; we collectively as parliamentarians—don't have a good record on this matter at all. And I am wary of presenting the comments by André Marin, who wrote his report *Too Cool for School*, because I know fully well that he is applying for his job again. To bring forth his name and to bring out his comments I fear could hurt his chances of reappointment, because he has done such a good job. I'm hoping it doesn't, but I fear it could, because he has been so effective, doing his job so well.

I am proud of civil servants who make us accountable—I am. This is not to say the previous Ombudsmen and -women were not good at what they did. But this Ombudsman has made us accountable, and rather than praising him, we are punishing him. The government conveniently says, "Oh, no, we're not. He can reapply, and he is. What's the big deal? It should be the norm that people reapply for the job." Maybe so. It hasn't been the case in the way we dealt with others, where there have been automatic reappointments. But that's fine; I think he's quite happy to go through the reappointment process.

I want to quote him because I want to contrast the opinion of the minister that I just read out on the record with the opinion of Monsieur Marin as it relates to private colleges. He says in the overview, "Despite the fact that it is illegal to operate a private career college that is not registered with the ministry, a considerable number of unregistered training facilities exist in Ontario, presenting a risk to unwary customers." Remember the statement of the minister: "I have noted that our Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures."

I continue with the reading of the comments made by Mr. Marin: "The ministry is fully cognizant of this reality." In other words, they know. "However, it does not vigorously pursue information about or enforcement against rogue operators." Again, I quote the minister when he says, "Our Private Career Colleges Act has strong enforcement measures that allow us to protect our students." Contrast it with the remarks made by Mr. Marin: "When an unregistered trainer does come to its attention, the ministry typically expends considerable time and effort, not on aggressive enforcement," member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, "but on education and persuasion, attempting to bring the violator

into compliance with the act through encouraging voluntary registration."

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Mr. Ted McMeekin: That's why we're bringing forward the act.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale. No, no, no. The point is, the bill that you have in place has enforcement mechanisms. You do not apply them, and you do not apply them vigorously. In fact, you sit down with the violator and say, "No, no, no, not like that. You could do better. This is what you should do not to be in violation of the act." You understand, member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, who I like, how laughable it is when I hear you and the minister say that you've got tough measures in place, and tough enforcement, and Mr. Marin says yes, you do, but you don't apply them. "Sometimes this approach works, and sometimes, as in the case of Bestech Academy Inc., this passive course leads to unmitigated disaster." So much for your protection of students.

"The ministry had cautioned June Ballegeer, the owner and president of Bestech Academy Inc., in November 2006, that in order to advertise and provide vocational training for gas and oil burner technicians, she had to be registered under the act. In spite of the ministry's warning, Ms. Ballegeer began promoting Bestech Academy and enrolling students without the ministry's knowledge." Member from Ancaster, you have to listen to this. I know you haven't had an opportunity to read this document, because I know how busy we all are, and I have much respect for all the members of this place, including and especially the Premier, who has a big job. He makes \$220,000 running a \$100-billion place. I don't envy him at all. And he can't read every document that comes before him; he cannot. He earns a whole lot less than a whole lot of civil servants in this place, and this man gets slapped around day in and day out. I have a lot of respect for someone who makes so little and gets slapped around day in and day out, versus other civil servants who make \$2 million and \$1.5 million, \$1 million, \$800,000, and they run little institutions, whereas this Premier runs a \$100-billion operation. I'm telling you, a lot of respect.

"In April 2007, the ministry became aware that Bestech Academy was providing illegal fuels industry training at its Stoney Creek campus." That's in the area close to where you are, member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale. "By December of that year, the ministry learned that Bestech Academy was also falsely marketing itself as a registered vocational college. Instead of trying to shut down Bestech Academy to protect student consumers, as a result of confusion and miscommunication, the ministry instead proceeded to support the school through the Ontario skills development program. In the end, the province spent upwards of \$60,000, a substantial amount of which represented tuition fees, to send seven mature students for retraining at Bestech Academy."

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, I say this to you with all due respect: You don't have a good record. By that, I don't mean you; the ministry doesn't have a good record. It is a shameful record that I understand you're trying to correct, but you've got a bill in place at the moment that you're not applying. What confidence can anyone have that once you pass a new bill to make enforcement a little better, it's going to have any better result?

Speaker, I know; I can see you're edgy. You're standing to say the time has come, but we'll continue with this discussion next week, I'm sure. Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Today it's my pleasure to welcome the family of page Kyle Rutherford from the great riding of Oxford. I'd like to introduce John and Sandra Rutherford and Ralph and Irene Baker, Kyle's grandparents. It will seem like all of Oxford is here, but these folks are here in the gallery, and they are all relatives of Kyle. Parents Mark andCarolynn Rutherford are here as well, along with Kyle's uncle and aunt, Paul and Marilynn Vanden Borre, sister Jenna, cousins Cole and Tanner Pirie and his friend Mark Vanden Borre. I know they caught the very first train to get here in time to see Kyle enter the chamber with the morning procession. I would like to join with the Legislative Assembly to welcome them to Queen's Park today to watch Kyle perform his duties so admirably as a page.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to welcome the mother of Kate Hickey, the page who is currently here from the riding of Timmins–James Bay. Jane MacAdam is down in order to watch question period and see what her daughter has really been doing for the last three weeks.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to introduce some folks who are very important in the life of Andrew Bacic, one of our pages here from Chatham–Kent–Essex. His mother, Monica, is here; his father, Bob; sister Joyce and brothers Matthew and Justin. Would everybody welcome this very Bacic family?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome the family of page Ara Mooradian. Her father, John, is here, and her sister Talin, and her aunt Debra Roberts, are here today as well.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Steven Jack, Max Walton, Clive Walton, Zoe Walton, Kyra Walton and my partner, Shawn Kerwin.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to welcome Mr. Nick Jasper and the grade 5 class from Sommerville Manor private school. They're here to watch question period and take a tour of Queen's Park.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to welcome Swapnil Abrol, a student at Sir William Mulock high school in Newmarket who also happens to be a co-op student in our constituency office. He's here with us today, as well as Daniel Stackaruk, a political science student who will be working on Parliament Hill for the summer and is here to observe us today. Welcome to both of you.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislature the family of Darcy Feagan: Mary Anne Feagan, her mother, and Mike Feagan, her father, in the members' gallery, along with friends, companions, relatives and all sorts of folks from Port Colborne and beyond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's my pleasure to introduce to the assembly a number of people who travelled far by bus last night from Timmins, Smooth Rock Falls and area: members of the Save the Met Site Coalition, who are here to watch the debate on Bill 36 this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome back to Queen's Park former student usher Jenni Simon and former information officer Svitlana Yurchenko, both seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning. Welcome.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a parliamentary delegation from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, led by Mr. Tran The Vuong. Please join me in welcoming our guests. They're here today learning about the establishment of constituency offices.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table an order in council reappointing Gord Miller as Environmental Commissioner, commencing May 1, 2010, to October 31, 2010.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: Millions of people visit Niagara Falls every year, but apparently the Minister of Tourism isn't one of them, so this question is to him. The Niagara region is one of Ontario's most important tourism destinations. Niagara's tourism industry leaders want to meet with the minister to share their vision. But in the 100 days since he was appointed minister, they tell us the minister is ignoring them. They wonder if he's even set foot in the region. Is the Minister of Tourism avoiding Niagara Falls because he has nothing to say, or is it because he can't explain why the Premier handed out an untendered contract for Casino Niagara after the ban on untendered contracts?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about tourism in Ontario. During my 100 days—the opposite member was right—I've been very busy with a lot of briefings in terms of culture and tourism. At

the same time, in terms of the Niagara Falls area, we have appointed a new chair for the Niagara Parks Commission. So there are lots of things going on. I myself visit Niagara Falls every year, and many, many times. I will be visiting that area in the near future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Casino Niagara deal was handed out in open defiance of the Premier's ban on untendered contracts. In fact, it was so blatant that the RFP could have been written by Smitherman. The minister need not avoid Niagara for that. In Niagara, they all know about the decision to abandon the RFP, and it came after the casino's existing landlord hired Liberal lobbyist Bob Lipinski. Meanwhile, their once-lauded Sorbara report on tourism is gathering dust on the minister's shelf. Is the minister avoiding the Niagara tourism industry so he doesn't have to face this question, or is it so that he doesn't have to explain Bob Lipinski's mysterious success fee to lobby for the Maid of the Mist?

Hon. Michael Chan: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As minister responsible for the OLG and the Niagara casino situation, I am proud that this government has made a record investment in convention and tourism in that area by building the new convention centre. The process associated with Fallsview and the Niagara casino has been, in my view, appropriately handled. We are investing to ensure the future success of that gaming facility. It's an important part of our gaming infrastructure. We remain committed to it. That's why we made the investment in the convention centre. That's why we will continue to work with the region to promote not only the casino, but all the wonderful tourism opportunities in the Niagara region.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: The supplementary question is to the Minister of Tourism, and I would respectfully request that he take the question and not refer it. This minister has been in the portfolio for 100 days, but what has been accomplished? It would seem very little. We don't even have an explanation as to why he's sitting on the Sorbara report. It's not that the minister has lacked opportunities to meet members of the tourism industry in Niagara. Just yesterday, the Minister of Training made an announcement at Great Wolf Lodge in Niagara Falls, but the tourism minister missed the opportunity to join him. Is he refusing to meet with the Niagara tourism industry because he's embarrassed by the Liberals' paralysis on tourism, or is it so he doesn't have to explain why they appointed Fay Booker to the Niagara Parks Commission when her main qualification appears to be her Liberal Party membership?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you once again for the question, and thank you for the opportunity to talk about tourism in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister, no—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I refer it to the minister.

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

Hon. Michael Chan: It is Ontario's highest priority to build a stronger, more competitive economy. So the tourism industry in Ontario is facing numerous challenges, including increases to passport fees and the rising dollar. We are facing these challenges head-on. Our government is fostering a competitive business environment that will attract jobs and bring investments to Ontario, as well as to the Niagara Falls area. This is why we are moving forward with the implementation of 13 new tourism regions. This will improve and coordinate tourism marketing, attract more visitors and generate more economic activity. In the 2009 budget, we announced \$40 million in annual funding to support the industry.

1040

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: This question goes again to the Minister of Tourism. The minister has had 100 days to meet with the Niagara tourism industry but he appears to have confirmed that he has not. The HST is scheduled to take effect in 63 days. The minister has just 63 days to help the Niagara tourism industry by cutting some of the taxes that are crippling its competitiveness. Can the minister name just one tourism industry leader from Niagara who favours the HST?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. I'm going to talk about the HST the opposite member talked about.

Come July 1, the HST will be in place. This will help all businesses in Ontario, as we know that there's a tremendous business tax reduction. It would help create jobs. According to the Jack Mintz report, the HST will generate close to 600,000 jobs, attracting \$47 billion in investment to Ontario. This is good for tourism because it creates jobs. People are going to go back to work, and when they are working they generate revenue, they generate income through their households and they have disposable income to go around Ontario promoting our domestic tourism market.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Twelve days ago, I visited Niagara-on-the-Lake. If the Minister of Tourism took the time to meet with the tourism industry in the past 100 days, he would have heard from Janice Thomson. Ms. Thomson is the executive director of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce. She says, "The HST will be increasing the tax on accommodation when people have less money to spend already."

The HST may be on top of destination marketing fees that add a 3% tax on overnight visits. What makes the minister think that charging 16% on accommodations will make Niagara more attractive to potential tourists?

Hon. Michael Chan: Refer to the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to the member, I appreciate the question in regard to revenue. Specifically, I can say to the people in the tourism industry and I can say to

the good people at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, I'd be happy to visit them as I've visited—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: The tourism industry, particularly hotels and restaurants, have been very clear that the nature of our tax reform lowers their cost of business. For the first time, the PST that they have been paying, which has been embedded in their prices, will come back to them by way of an input tax credit that lowers the cost of business. So not only are we lowering—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. Final supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The tourism industry doesn't want to hear from the tax man, they want to hear from a Minister of Tourism who will stand up to support them.

Day trips from the US have declined dramatically because of a high Canadian dollar, and the Liberals' greedy tax grabs will not make overnight stays any more attractive. The tourism industry wants a plan, not another attack on their competitiveness. They thought they had a plan with the Sorbara report, which is now gathering dust on a shelf. Instead, they've ended up with a government that is now adding a new tax on top of destination marketing fees, on top of a municipal marketing fee of 3% or more, meaning visitors may actually pay up to 19% tax on accommodations.

What is the minister doing to fight for the tourism industry in Niagara Falls and across the province that is under attack by the Liberal government's tax agenda?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I refer that to the Minister of Tourism. It's a tourism question.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. The member opposite was right.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: The member opposite was right. It has not been easy in the last year or two and the tourism industry has faced many challenges. The rising dollar is one challenge we will face head-on.

This is why we are committed to investing in key marketing campaigns like There's No Place Like This. This campaign helps us better market Ontario and Niagara Falls. From the spring of 2007 to the fall of 2009, the campaign generated more than 1.5 million trips. We will continue to build on this campaign to ensure that Ontario remains a must-see destination in domestic, national and international markets.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier's minister in charge of unfair tax schemes is finally coming clean. At the 11th hour, he's telling Ontario families to buy now to beat the HST. Will the Premier be taking his minister's advice and scrambling to the nearest buy-early and—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Peterborough, I've been listening to references to a Premier from another province. I think it's important in this chamber that we talk about issues that pertain to the province of Ontario, and I don't need to continue to hear about my good friend who is the Premier of Nova Scotia.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, can I start over again because there was a flow to that question and I feel that I need to start over again? Okay.

The basic question is this: Will the Premier be taking his own minister's advice and scrambling to the nearest buy-early and buy-save event here in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Personally, I thought the question worked and the flow was there. I just want to be clear about that.

There's been a lot of information of late about the HST and its implementation coming on July 1. One of the things I wanted to do was to just remind Ontarians about the 83% of goods which are not subject to any tax changes. The following is just a partial list of those things which remain unchanged as a result of the HST: groceries, prescription drugs, municipal water bill, luggage, child care services, books, children's clothing, children's footwear, adult clothing, child car seats, cars, car repairs, home maintenance equipment like lawn mowers, snow blowers, sprinklers and the like. There is no change of any kind when it comes to the taxation of those kinds of items.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Minister of Revenue is suggesting that paying upfront for gym memberships, summer trips and theatre subscriptions is going to save Ontario families big bucks. Does the Premier agree that his minister's sage consumer advice sounds like a lot like an admission that the HST, as New Democrats have said all along, is going to cost Ontario families more each and every day?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've always been pretty straightforward about this. There is going to be an increase on some items, but we've also indicated that we cut personal taxes as of January 1 this year. We've indicated that one of the most important reasons why we're going ahead with our package of tax reforms is to create 600,000 more jobs.

When you talk to Ontario families, they'll tell you that not only do they want to ensure there are jobs for themselves today, they are also prepared to do whatever it takes to make sure there are jobs for their children and grandchildren tomorrow. So this is a long-term investment in a healthy economy, one that will support our schools, our health care system and jobs for our families. We think it is worthwhile to pursue that kind of an enterprise.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, unfortunately for Ontario families, people can't stockpile gas for the car. They can't prepay heating bills for an eternity, or get next

month's haircuts for the kids today. Since the revenue minister's advice to families seems shallow at best, will the Premier finally admit that his unfair HST hit is going to really hurt unsuspecting families in Ontario at a time when they can very least afford it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Not only have there been independent reports telling us this will create 600,000 more jobs over the course of 10 years and produce \$47 billion more by way of investment in new business, but there's also another independent report, and I think the title says it all. It says, Not a Tax Grab After All. It points out that for middle-income families and low-income families, they will come out at about the same level, all told.

What we will not do is adopt the NDP policy, which was adopted in the province of Nova Scotia, to increase the tax by another 2%. We think that Ontarians are paying enough by way of taxes. We're prepared to go ahead with the comprehensive package of tax reforms because it will result in 600,000 more jobs, something that I know Ontario families deeply support.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Earlier this year, Timmins residents were shocked to learn that their community would be losing hundreds of good-paying jobs. Despite being profitable, Xstrata announced that it would close its Kidd Creek copper and zinc smelter and refinery. The smelter is the most modern in Canada, but next month Xstrata is going to be moving production, and those good jobs, to Quebec. What does this say about the Premier's plan to create jobs and prosperity in the north?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is a very unfortunate development for Timmins. I've had the opportunity, together with a representative of my honourable colleague's caucus, to meet on two occasions on this particular issue, including one where we brought the two sides together to see if there might be any basis for a change of heart on the part of the investor here. There was not.

We are now working with the city of Timmins. I am pleased to report that just recently, we provided \$225,000 to pay for a feasibility study of the smelter site located there, to explore ways to continue to support jobs and activity and see if there's anything at all that is possible in terms of what we might use that particular facility for. So we will continue to find ways to work with the people of Timmins, notwithstanding this difficult circumstance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We're joined today by some of the workers affected by Xstrata's closure. They're part of a broad coalition that includes municipal leaders, small business owners and organized labour. The coalition wants the Premier to intervene and ensure that resources extracted from Ontario are used to create jobs and prosperity in Ontario. Will the Premier join the fight to save these good northern jobs, or will he shrug his

shoulders and effectively say, "Too bad, so sad," to the people of Timmins and the surrounding region?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to assure my honourable colleague and the folks from Timmins who are here today that we have, in fact, given this particular option serious consideration. I'll tell you why we can't do it. There is no province in Canada that has a law banning the export of raw ore, and I'll give you an example of why. Three quarters of the iron ore used in Ontario steel mills comes from outside Ontario. It comes from Labrador, Quebec, Michigan and Minnesota. There are 6,400 Dofasco jobs in Hamilton and 3,500 Essar jobs in Sault Ste. Marie that rely on imported ore. There's a tremendous amount of trade going back and forth when it comes to ore, and we cannot afford simply to pass a law saying we are not going to accept it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador certainly has some lessons that he could probably teach this Premier, because you know what? Alarm bells have been going off for years and years in Ontario. When trees are cut down, too many of the logs, and the value-added jobs, are shipped out of Ontario, and now Xstrata says it will gladly extract our resources while handing out pink slips to hundreds of our workers.

The Premier can sit idly by as Ontario's natural resources are shipped elsewhere for processing or he can stand up and ensure that they are used here to create good, local jobs and long-term prosperity in northern Ontario. Which is it going to be?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We currently process in Ontario minerals mined in Quebec, BC, Manitoba, Newfoundland, the US, Peru, Chile and Australia. I want to quote CAW Local 599 president Dennis Couvrette. He said, "Mining companies in Ontario have always exchanged mineral resources between neighbouring provinces, in fact we continue to import metal concentrates from around the globe and transform them into pure metal in our smelter and refinery in Timmins."

We cannot cut ourselves off from the rest of the world. To do so would be to compromise our economic strength and to eliminate so many jobs—thousands of jobs—in other parts of the province. We cannot pursue the particular solution put forward by my honourable colleague.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty Liberals have had over a week to get their story straight on their plans for the sex education curriculum. First they said they consulted, then they said they did not. Next, they said there was one curriculum, then, in response to reporters, admitted there was a second one being drafted for the Catholic schools. Yesterday, the Premier said that he had not read the curriculum. Then, minutes later, he said that he had.

Instead of this confusion and guessing, why have the Premier and his education minister not arranged for a

briefing from the bureaucrats or even talked to the former Minister of Education?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy to have the opportunity to address the question. I would offer to the former Minister of Education a briefing so that you would understand exactly how the one curriculum in Ontario is delivered in the four publicly funded systems.

Let me tell you about what is in our physical and health education curriculum. In grade 1, we teach our children why people need food. We also talk about the food groups and Canada's Food Guide. In grade 2, we talk about the importance of physical education and how to improve their heart and lung capacity.

The honourable member has indicated that this is an issue of importance. It absolutely is. I think that we are doing some excellent work in the physical and health education programs in our school—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Premier again: I'm not quite sure how the minister can answer for the Premier, because this is all about the confusion that has reigned in the province of Ontario now for over a week about what this government is planning to do with the changes that they are making to the sex education curriculum, and their lack of posting the information in order that all parents in the province would know what was going on. It has become very embarrassing recently. In fact, we've seen some of the ministers leaving scrums and not wanting to respond to the questions they're being asked.

Why is the Premier of this province not aware of what is going on when it comes to this very sensitive issue, which has contributed—

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This has been a very important issue. I would say to the people of Ontario, we certainly have heard from them that they very much appreciate that the Premier has listened to them. That is why we have committed—and information is in our schools—that we will look forward to implementing that part of the physical and health education curriculum.

The revised part that deals with physical and health education: That's 90% of what has been developed. The 10% that deals with sex education: We look forward to putting in place a plan that will engage parents and families on this important issue. What the people of Ontario and parents do understand is that there has been one curriculum for physical and health education in the province of Ontario. That continues to be the case.

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MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the coalition members who've met with you on

two occasions now asked you to become their champion. We asked you to work with us and with Xstrata in order to determine what the cost factors are that are making their decision to leave Ontario. Our question to you is simply this: Why were you not prepared to intervene in the case of Xstrata, but you're certainly prepared to intervene in the auto sector, which was able to save some jobs as a result?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: If only to reconfirm what the Premier said earlier, too, this is a devastating announcement that took place, in terms of the impact it will have on Timmins. I think it's so important to point out the involvement of our government in trying to work with you, with the coalition. Certainly, the Premier had a number of meetings. He met with the global CEO of Xstrata, Mick Davis, and Ian Pearce, the Canadian president, as well.

Obviously, in the meeting with the coalition, I think the request was, "Can you help, Premier, to pull together a meeting between Xstrata and the coalition to at least look at the opportunities that are there?" The Premier, of course, was able to do that as well.

There is no question that, indeed, this continues to be a very, very difficult situation. I look forward, in the supplementary, to speaking about why, perhaps, your private member's bill may be a problem for workers all across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I go back again to the same point. We were very clear in what we've asked the Premier and your government to do, and that is, if Xstrata has got cost issues, namely, electricity prices and meeting environmental regulation, then we ask them to put that on the table and for the Premier to do his job. And that is, to ensure that in the end we are able to deal with the issues that Xstrata see as problematic here in Ontario, and that we are able to save the thousands of jobs that will be lost as a result of this closure.

So I say to you again, there is still time. Is your government prepared to work with us and work with Xstrata in order to deal with those cost issues so that we're able to save those jobs in Timmins for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I am certainly more than conscious, as is the Premier, as is our government, about how devastating this decision has been. We want to work with the community, and are continuing to do so. We did make an announcement related to funding for alternative uses of the site. There is absolutely no question that the meeting that took place was to take a new look, one more look, at whether or not Xstrata would change their position. Clearly, they were not in a position to do so.

I think it's so important to point out that the fact is that to take measures such as supporting your private member's bill would be a challenge in terms of imperilling thousands of jobs all across the province of Ontario. I

think we would be opening up a situation where, indeed, there would be a trade war that could take place.

The long and the short of it is, we'll continue to work with you—I will—and we appreciate your involvement. It's been a positive experience in that sense. I welcome the coalition here to Queen's Park, and we'll look forward to continuing to work together to help make Timmins and the community surrounding Timmins prosperous.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. An important issue among my constituents is access to quality health care, and it continues to be an issue. They want good-quality care for their loved ones, they want it close to where they are and they want it when they need it. It's crucial that we continue to strive to improve the ability of Ontarians to access quality care without always having to enter the local emergency room.

As the minister knows, community health centres across the province have been filling that gap by providing excellent care for families around the province. In my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, the Woolwich Community Health Centre and its satellites, the Wellesley Township Community Health Centre and Linwood Nurse Practitioner Office continue to do great work under the direction of Denise Squire.

Could the minister update the House on the progress being made with community health centres across Ontario—

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member from Kitchener–Conestoga is absolutely right. Community health centres are an extremely important part of our health care system. They achieve high-quality patient care when the emergency room isn't the best choice.

Today we're celebrating the opening of the newest community health centre in Ontario, in Woodstock. This community health centre will provide the people of Woodstock a very high-quality, reliable source of health care that's a real alternative to the local emergency room.

In coordination with the opening of this CHC, all CHCs throughout the province are proclaiming the last Friday of April to be Community Health Day. I want to wish all the community health centres the very best Community Health Day and I want them to know how much we appreciate the extraordinary work—

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I am pleased to hear that our government is focused on providing Ontarians with significant health resources within local communities. I know that my constituents of Kitchener–Conestoga will also be pleased to hear this.

Community health, as the minister pointed out, is an important aspect in providing quality care to all Ontar-

ians. It's an important aspect of local care and allows patients to avoid emergency rooms for minor conditions.

In light of Community Health Day, could the minister please describe what the government is doing to provide Ontarians with important community-based care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sure the people in this Legislature will be happy to know that our investments have supported the largest-ever expansion of community health centres. In fact, there are now 103 community health centres or satellites operating or under development across this province. As a result, CHCs are now serving 75,000 more Ontarians, bringing the total to approximately 330,000 Ontarians who are receiving their health care through community health centres. They are a vital piece of our plan to improve access to health care in this province.

We've also provided funding to community health centres to carry out other programs that enhance the capacity of people to stay independent as long as possible in their own homes—\$507 million in community health services; funding for assistive—

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

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is for the Premier because I know that he'll be very concerned about what's happening with our schools.

I have a letter from the central CCAC confirming that 12 months ago there were 449 children on the wait-list for speech-language pathology in the York region public and Catholic schools alone, and that today there are more than 1,000 children on that wait-list. These are children who are struggling with speech-language disorders, which can have serious long-term consequences without timely intervention.

Can the Premier tell us why more than 1,000 children in York region are being denied essential speech-language therapy and why their parents are being told they have to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to talk about this important issue. Ensuring that children across the province have timely access to preschool speech and language is something that every community agency that my ministry funds—for example, the Ontario Early Years, the Toronto Preschool Speech and Language—it's an important service delivery model. It helps those children in their earliest years, to ensure they get the help they need. I have seen first-hand the incredible work that's done in community organizations.

At the same time, as we look to see that our kids will be in all-day junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten, we know that the education system will be called upon to take up the continued work for kids in the schools. I know that the Minister of Education, as our two minis-

tries work very closely together to make sure there's a continuum of services for kids zero to four and—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: This is absolutely bizarre. The Hansard record will show that the minister didn't even hear the question.

I'm talking about children, more than 1,000 on a wait-list in York region alone, who are not getting speech-language therapy. Here is what a therapist says:

"I will have eight clients in my caseload this May, compared with 25 that I had at the same time last year. Many of my colleagues are in a similar predicament and are wondering why the referrals have suddenly stopped."

We're wondering that too. Therapists are not getting the referrals to treat children. Children—more than 1,000—are not getting speech-language therapy. I'd like to know from the minister: Why are these children being kept on a wait-list and what will she do about it?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I guess the question is somewhat rich, coming from someone who was on the other side of government when those services truly did not receive additional support.

Since 2003, we have increased funding for preschool speech and language by up to 40%. With that funding, we have been able to expand the preschool speech and language program to serve an additional 7,000 children with complex special needs each year.

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As you might have heard earlier this week, we announced that I'll be working closely with Dr. Charles Pascal to look at all of the services that we provide children from zero to four, to find a way to ensure that those services are best delivered, get out to the front lines and respond to the issues of need in each community.

I look forward to speaking to the member to learn about the specific circumstances that exist in his community, but I can tell him that we are—

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

CURRICULUM

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Promotion de la santé. Can the Minister of Health Promotion tell us what age she thinks is appropriate to teach kids about body parts, including penis, testicles, vagina and vulva?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We have a physical and health education program in our schools. It was in our schools when the Conservatives were in government, when the NDP was in government. It's a program on which we have worked co-operatively with educators and with families. Those terms, the correct names for body parts, are presented to children in the primary grades. The Fully Alive document that I have with me, one that has been in place since, I believe, 1990, perhaps when the

honourable member's party was in government, would use those terms in grade 1.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to go back to the Minister of Health Promotion. This is a health promotion question. The minister's mandate is to help Ontarians to lead healthy lives. New Democrats believe that comprehensive health education taught by professionals in the classroom is crucial to the health and well-being of children and youth. Education is our best tool in preventing sexual abuse and sexually transmitted diseases and delaying sexual activity.

Does the minister agree with the Premier's decision to back off teaching kids about healthy relationships and the facts of life? How is this going to help them lead healthier lives?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This is a very important issue, and that is why already in our curriculum we deal with those very important subjects: bullying and abuse, use of cigarettes, the effects of alcohol; also with respect to cyber-talking and online gambling, and about dating-based violence, as well as racially based violence and how to prevent it. So we have those topics in our schools right now.

We want to do more work with parents and with families. We want to improve on the material that is being provided to them right now in our schools. We're going to take the time and we're going to talk to more parents about this so that families will be confident that the information their children are getting in schools is age-appropriate and prepares them well for the world that they're going into.

TAXATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Farmers stand to benefit significantly with the implementation of the harmonized sales tax. The March edition of Ontario Grain Farmer ran an article that talked about the benefits farmers will enjoy under the harmonized sales tax. The article states that the corporate income tax rate for farm income will be cut from 12% to 10%, and it states that it is estimated that farmers will save 39 cents per acre per year under the HST.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington won't stand up for his constituents and ask this question on behalf of the landowners in the riding, so I will. Minister, what will the HST mean for farmers?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my rural colleague from Northumberland. Under a single sales tax, farmers will be able to claim input tax credits on all of their business inputs—everything from tractors to hay balers to combines. This means farmers will be able to claim input credits for a number of important things they are currently paying provincial sales tax on, including trucks, office equipment, freezers and all-terrain vehicles. This will save them money. Importantly, this money is predictable and bankable.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has long said that Ontario farmers pay at least \$25 million in provincial sales tax that would be fully recovered by farmers in Ontario if they were treated like farmers in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec. On July 1, they will be. By moving to a single sales tax, we are saving farmers money and levelling the playing field with farmers elsewhere in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. During his bid to win the leadership of the Conservative Party, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington stated, “You know, we can all recognize that there ought to be some efficiencies and efficacy with a single bureaucratic administration of the retail consumption tax,” and others in the farming community agree with that member.

The Ontario Farmer reported that Henry Stevens, the president of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, stated, “Agriculture’s supposed to come out ahead,” to the tune of an estimated \$30 million, based on 2007 numbers. That’s an average of \$600 per farmer.

And Bette Jean Crews, a constituent of mine and president of the OFA, said their research shows—

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Minister, farmers on the ground know that the HST is going to benefit the agricultural sector. Will the minister—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: Farmers are going to save time and money through a far simpler, more streamlined sales tax system. They will deal with one set of rules instead of two, with one set of auditors rather than two, one set of paperwork rather than two, one government rather than two.

Farms, as businesses, would benefit from our significant cuts to business taxes for large and small enterprises. The HST is part of a comprehensive tax package that’s supposed to make sure that our tax system is competitive in the 21st century so that our farmers are creating 21st-century jobs. They are so very happy that we’re cutting not only large corporate tax but also small business tax, and for most of our farmers the key benefit is eliminating the small business surtax. We’ll be the only province in Canada to eliminate this tremendous drag on business. This will empower our farmers and give them something that is both predictable and bankable—

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

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Ontario’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which has been surveying the student use of addictive substances since 1968, reports that 60,000 students in Ontario now smoke contraband tobacco, as do half the smokers in the province. Those 60,000 young people are now part of a criminal network that supplies cigarettes at \$15 a carton, tax free, as oppos-

ed to the regular \$60 to \$80 a carton. This is unprecedented. Nowhere else in the world does this occur.

Why on earth would the McGuinty government allow 60,000 students to get hooked on illegal tobacco?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Let us be very clear. Those people who produce, sell and purchase contraband tobacco are stealing from their neighbours. Those of us who pay our taxes end up subsidizing those who feel that they don’t have to pay the tax. We’re very clear about that.

I’d like to explain to the member exactly what we’re doing. There are a number of things that we’ve been doing, working in conjunction with other governments, First Nations, municipalities and police enforcement, to eradicate the scourge of contraband tobacco in this province.

It is important for us to first of all set that public expectation, which is so key. There are people trying to hook our children with cheap cigarettes and we will not accept that. That is why, just in the last few years, convictions have tripled, seizures are going up by more than 50% a year and our take on those—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I didn’t ask you the question.

Sixty-thousand students buy illicit tobacco from the trunk of a car, no tax, no ID requested; access to anything money can buy—drugs or guns. Nowhere else in the world has government lost control of half the tobacco market. Is this political correctness in the extreme? What are you people afraid of? Why—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Municipal Affairs, I’ve reminded him of that language before. Withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Which one was that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I just heard someone say it’s bigoted over there and that’s not withdrawn?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I will withdraw the comment. I hope others withdraw their comments.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just the unequivocal withdrawal, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have given an unequivocal withdrawal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind all members that, yes, there are times in the course of question period where things do get heated, but we do need to be conscious of language that is used. I direct that to all members.

Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: You have lost control of half the tobacco trade in Ontario. People do not understand why

any government would allow this to occur. Why are you allowing 60,000 students to smoke illegal tobacco?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm quite surprised by the member who has asked me this question. I distinctly remember the following quote from the member: "In my view, the jury is out on second-hand smoke.... I have never seen a coroner's report indicating it as a cause of death."

I understand that this is an issue that is of importance. I understand that in his riding, the federal government has spent a lot of money to get rid of tobacco and that it has doubled, but this is what you need to know: We have redoubled our efforts, at our ministry, working in conjunction with the RCMP, the OPP, the federal government and the US government. We are redoubling our efforts to eradicate the scourge of contraband tobacco. It is not an easy job. There is much money to be made by those who will purvey cigarettes to our children, but we will not rest until we eliminate the scourge of contraband tobacco.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Light rapid transit in Hamilton would bring huge benefits to a struggling city: reducing commute times, cleaning the air, sparking economic activity and getting athletes and spectators to the Pan Am Games. The government has cut \$4 billion from the \$11.5 billion allocated to Metrolinx. My question is this: Is this going to stop Hamilton's light rapid transit dream dead in its tracks?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very happy to say to the member opposite—and I think she knows this—that on April 1, 2009, the Premier announced that Ontario is moving ahead with the rapid regional transit plan, and that \$3 million is included in that plan to plan for Hamilton. The board of Metrolinx has approved the Hamilton BCA, and I want to thank the city of Hamilton and Metrolinx for working together.

The announcement that was made in the budget—I think the member opposite knows—was very specific about some projects that were being dealt with in Toronto, that those specific projects needed to be stretched over a longer period of time. The conversation with Hamilton is ongoing, and we look forward to a good transit plan for the city of Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I fear that the Premier and this minister simply don't get how transformational LRT can be for the city of Hamilton. We know that badly needed transit lines in Toronto are being mothballed. Hamiltonians are understandably worried that their city's light rail plans are going to meet a similar fate. Hamilton can't go ahead with light rapid transit without provincial approval and funding. If construction doesn't start very, very soon, light rail lines won't be ready for the Pan Am

Games. So my question remains: Will the Premier guarantee that Hamilton's LRT money will flow this year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that the benefits case analysis that was done by Metrolinx looked at a number of options and, obviously, we have to look at what is most viable. The city of Hamilton is working with us on that. We have to look at all of those options. We've committed to moving ahead on a transit plan for Hamilton.

I think what the member opposite needs to do is not engage in scaremongering, because this government understands that transit is extremely important for the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. That's why we are moving ahead. That's why the work continues to be done. That's why Metrolinx is working with the city of Hamilton. We're going to move ahead, and I think what the member opposite should be doing is working with us and working with her community to make sure that the right option is chosen.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, now that spring is here and the school year is almost finished, many young workers are beginning their search for summer jobs. In my riding of London-Fanshawe, young people are already out and about, seeking employment to help them pay for tuition fees and other expenses. But although a summer job is something that many young people look forward to, the flip side is that our young workers can face workplace hazards.

I know that your ministry is concerned about worker health and safety in general. Can you tell us what you're doing in order to make sure all the new workers are in good shape and are not going to face those difficulties when they find their jobs?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'm so pleased that the member has asked me this very important question about our young workers.

As I've said frequently in this House, safety is paramount to the Ministry of Labour and to our government. It may interest the member and his constituents to know that I recently announced the launch of our new and young worker health and safety blitz. For the third year in a row, my ministry will be conducting a blitz across Ontario that will focus on workplace safety of young and new workers.

I was honoured to announce this blitz at the sixth annual GTA simulcast event and luncheon at Victoria Park Collegiate Institute in Scarborough. The event was put on by a great group, the Our Youth at Work foundation. They're doing an excellent job of helping to educate young people about workplace safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I know my constituents are glad to hear this minister speaking in order to protect them when they find a job at a workplace, and I know that the minister and his ministry are working very hard to create

a mechanism to protect the young workers in the province of Ontario.

I know I heard that he launched a blitz to protect the workers, but is there any other mechanism in place in order to protect the workers? Also, is his ministry doing their best in order to find a way to make sure that all the students who get jobs in the summertime can protect themselves? Can you tell us, Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I thank the member from London–Fanshawe for the question.

All of our health and safety blitzes consist of targeted, proactive enforcement campaigns where inspectors go into workplaces to focus on prevention or specific hazards. In this case, our inspectors will be checking to make sure that new and young workers are properly trained, oriented and supervised; that they meet the minimum age requirements that are in legislation; and that they are protected by safety measures to prevent injuries.

In addition to this blitz, we're also teaching our young workers about workplace health and safety in school, before they get a job, and have made a health and safety curriculum mandatory in all our grades.

We also have a designated website called WorkSmartOntario, as well as a young worker portal on the ministry's website, which makes occupational health and—

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

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Health. Being without a family doctor in rural Ontario, as you can imagine, is a very stressful situation experienced by far too many people. Your Health Care Connect program was supposed to help orphaned patients find a doctor. As it is, someone moving to my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke must orphan themselves from their current family physician just to get on the list with Health Care Connect. Surely, the intent of the program was not to create more orphaned patients.

Minister, this needs to be fixed. Will you commit to doing so?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member opposite for the question. It gives me a chance to talk about Health Care Connect, which is a very innovative and highly successful program.

Health Care Connect is a way that people who don't have a family physician can get attached to a family physician who is taking new patients. It has been very, very frustrating for patients looking for a physician to phone and phone and phone. Now, there is one place they can go to, Health Care Connect, and get attached to a physician who is accepting new patients.

We've had tremendous success. In fact, at the Erie St. Clair LHIN, I attended an event where they wanted more awareness of the program because they knew they could do better. There were physicians prepared to take patients.

It's a highly successful program, and I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, she's singing the praises, but there are obviously problems.

New constituents of mine, Richard Newcombe and his spouse, Linda, moved to Pembroke from Ottawa. They hoped to find a family doctor in Pembroke. They were shocked to find out that in order to even be on the Health Care Connect list, they had to give up the family doctor they had in Ottawa. In essence, they had to orphan themselves in order to be considered.

1130

Minister, this is a glaring weakness in your Health Care Connect program. This amounts to forcing someone to abandon the lifeboat in hopes that the Queen Mary may come along. Wouldn't it make more sense that the program require you to give up your family physician only after securing the services of another?

Minister, would you commit to correcting this oversight in your program?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Attaching people to primary health care has been a very, very important initiative of this government. I'm very happy to say that over 900,000 more Ontarians in fact have access to primary care now than when we took office. Health Care Connect has been part of the solution in connecting people to family doctors.

Because we have achieved such success attaching people—in fact, there are parts of this province where one of my colleagues told me that doctors had set up in a mall; they were trying to attract new physicians. This would have been unheard of in 2003.

As we continue to really build the foundation of health care in this province, I will take the member opposite's recommendation under advisement: As we attach the unattached, then maybe it is time to turn our attention to those who are already attached.

LABOUR RELATIONS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. J'd like to quote from Hansard: "The Premier has committed that the government will not hire replacement workers to perform the tasks of unionized employees involved in a work stoppage...." This is the right thing to do. This commitment from our Premier shows an understanding that the use of replacement workers is wrong and that no good comes out of scab labour.

Why, then, is the McGuinty government so sheepish about bringing in a law that would ban replacement workers in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. On this side of the House, we understand how important the collective bargaining process is. We understand that collective agreements are the most productive agreements, the fairest agreements, the most

stable agreements for everyone. At the Ministry of Labour, our focus is always to work with the parties to bring them together to get an agreement like that done.

We do that through our mediation and conciliation team, and we have a tremendous record. We have the best record we have seen in the province of Ontario in the last 30 years. Over 97% of our collective agreements get done without any work stoppage. They get done by having the parties work together, find that common ground and get an agreement done. That's what we'll continue to do—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: One doesn't exclude the other. You can still have good bargaining, but for that 3% where it falls apart, you can have stronger laws.

On October 8 last year, the Liberal caucus voted down Bill 86, which would have banned replacement workers in this province during strikes and lockouts. Every Liberal member who spoke quoted statistics from the same single source that predicted doom and gloom if the bill was passed. I spent much time reading academic papers and articles on the subject, and the overwhelming evidence does not support that doom and gloom. It points to shorter and less violent strikes, decreased stress for all involved and improved relations between unions and employers, who can then focus on real bargaining issues, which is what the member was talking about.

It is the law in Quebec and British Columbia, and successive governments did not change the law after they came to power. Will the Premier or the minister take this issue seriously and—

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

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Our government has done much to restore balance to labour relations in the province of Ontario, and the record speaks for itself. As I mentioned, in the past few years, approximately 97% of all negotiations have resulted in settlements without any work stoppages. In 2009, for example, 1,981 settlements were achieved in Ontario without strike or lockout.

I have to say that I feel this is due in large part to our Ministry of Labour mediation team. This is a team of highly skilled and extremely professional individuals who go into the workplace to help the parties—to help labour, to help the employer—so that they can get these productive, stable, fair agreements done.

What those settlements translated into in 2009 was that almost 600,000 employees worked through negotiations without losing a single day of work due to a strike or lockout. This is an outstanding—

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

TOURISM

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. For the past several weeks now, the Canadian dollar has been near parity with the Amer-

ican currency. This gives Canadians more purchasing power and greater incentive to travel abroad. However, communities across Ontario depend on tourism, especially those at or near border crossings such as my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. Whether you're in a border community or not, Ontarians depend largely on tourism, which contributes immensely to Ontario's economy. As previously mentioned, our businesses are already concerned about the negative impacts of the proposed increase to American passport fees and the impact this may have on tourism in Ontario. This, coupled with the potential decrease in domestic visitors, is a constant challenge. Minister, what actions are you taking to ensure that our tourism economy remains strong and viable?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Sault Ste. Marie for the question. There's no doubt tourism faces many challenges, including the high dollar. But our government is up for the challenge. Tourism generates \$23 billion to our economy, supporting 300,000 jobs. They support us in building a strong, more competitive economy by attracting both jobs and investments. Since 2003, we have invested in our tourism agencies over \$500 million in operating funding and over \$100 million in capital funding. Our most recent budget brought \$40 million in annual funding to support tourism. We have invested another \$25 million over each of the next two years to support the development of regional organizations. There's more to do, but our government is on the right track.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. David Oraziotti: As the minister has referenced, tourism contributes over \$23 billion annually to Ontario's GDP, supporting more than 300,000 jobs. This can be in part attributed to the increase in Ontarians travelling within the province and Americans crossing the border. In a recent report, the Canadian Tourism Commission noted that US travellers, mostly from border states, are particularly sensitive to currency fluctuations. Ontarians and Americans make up approximately 98% of the tourism in our province. The strong Canadian dollar makes it more attractive for Canadians to travel abroad and Americans to stay closer to home, a trend not supportive of continued growth in Ontario's tourism industry. Minister, can you explain what our government is doing to sustain and expand our tourism industry?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. Expanding Ontario's tourism market is a top priority of this government. Our investments speak to that. Since 2003, we have invested almost \$700 million in our tourism agencies. As well, Ontario is expanding into new markets by increasing our presence on the world stage. And over the next several years Ontario will be on the world stage again and again as we welcome the G8/G20 this summer, the International Indian Film Academy Awards next year, and WorldPride 2014. How about the Pan American Games in 2015? This type of exposure is vital to showcase Ontario to the world. We will seize these opportunities to show potential visitors that there is truly no place like this.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to offer an apology to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I appreciated his withdrawal of the comment. There were comments made that I should have called at the time. As he knows, I do not have the ability to retroactively ask a member to withdraw a comment, but I do offer that apology to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome students from James Cardinal McGuigan Academy who have joined us here at Queen's Park today, along with their teacher Mr. Pulcini.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome in the Speaker's gallery Bliss Baker, Dainora Juozapavicius and Lois Mahon.

Welcome to Queen's Park today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to ask all members to join me as we take this opportunity to say thank you to this wonderful group of pages for the great job they've done for us. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Revenue concerning students using illicit tobacco. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Newmarket-Aurora has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services concerning speech-language therapy. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to acknowledge and welcome representatives of the national governing council of the Baha'i Community of Canada, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, and members of the Baha'i Community of Ontario, who are with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome striking workers from Port Colborne and Sudbury who are, as we speak, coming into the Legislature to support the proceedings this afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POLICE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to draw the Legislature's attention to the very important event that's happening this coming Sunday, May 2, and that's the ceremony of remembrance for our lost police officers. It's at the Ontario Police Memorial just on the other side of the street at Queen's Park Circle.

This year, we have five inductees on to the memorial wall. I want to read their names in case this opportunity doesn't come up earlier next week. It was a very difficult year in the police community in Ontario. As I said, we lost five police officers: OPP provincial constable Alan Hack on July 6, 2009; Ottawa Police Service constable Eric Czapnik on December 29, 2009; RCMP superintendent Douglas Coates, January 12, 2010; Peel Regional constable James Ochakovsky, March 2, 2010; and OPP provincial constable Vu Pham, March 8, 2010.

It's important that we recognize the fact that the Ontario Police Memorial Foundation puts this event on each year. I'd like to thank the vice-president of the OPP Association, Jim Christie.

I'd encourage all members of the Legislature to try to get out, if they possibly can, on Sunday to honour those men and women who have given their lives in the line of duty for us.

JOHN PAUL THE GREAT FAMILY CENTRE

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have a statement on behalf of St. Augustine of Canterbury. Recently, I had the privilege to attend the grand opening of the family centre named after John Paul the Great. This wonderful project is the combination of a vision to provide adequate facilities to meet the ever-growing demands of the needs of our community.

I commend Father Daniel Mentasana, who has spearheaded his team of dedicated and compassionate helpers to provide activities in the centre such as after-school programs for children; spiritual retreats; assistance to the poor, sick and elderly; defence and promotion groups for life; family mission outreach; family and youth weekends; and cultural and arts presentations. Their after-school programs are not just a place for children to be entertained, but offer a safe place to learn to appreciate authentic values and ethics, especially with regard to God, life and the family.

Adults attending the family centre will find a place to strengthen support and counsel families in areas such as marriage, domestic violence, substance abuse and how to foster intergenerational communication.

I'm very proud of the outstanding work Father Daniel Montesana and the parishioners of St. Augustine of Canterbury have accomplished. They will now be able to assist more families, youths, single parents and new Canadians in our community. They are indeed transforming the church into a second home.

OLIVIA ROSS

Mr. Norm Miller: I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate Olivia Ross, who has been awarded the Provincial Women's Hockey League's top goaltender's award.

Olivia is only 17 years old, a resident of Huntsville, and plays for the Mississauga Junior Chiefs. She helped make her team overall winners of the regular season. Her record this season was remarkable: 42 wins and only two losses. Her humble attitude toward winning this achievement was a model for other athletes, as she attributed a great deal of her accomplishment to her teammates and put the success of her team ahead of her own.

Olivia began her love of hockey playing road hockey at home with her brother, and she now has her eyes set on continuing her winning ways for a university team. She has already won championships around Ontario, including an Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations championship, and won a bronze medal at the Ontario Women's Hockey Association tournament.

No doubt, one of the highlights for Olivia was playing against Team China as they prepared for the Olympics. China was ranked seventh overall in the world at the time, and Olivia helped her team win that game 4-1.

I want to congratulate Olivia Ross on her outstanding performances and achievements, and I wish her luck in her future endeavours at university and in the game of hockey.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Michael Prue: On April 25, I had an opportunity to go to my adjacent riding of Scarborough Southwest. There was a demonstration there by the Concerned Citizens of Quarry Lands Development against the proposal to build 1,455 units on vacant land. This is adjacent to the Beach. Many of my residents were out there; some 300 or more people attended.

The issue isn't just about what is going to be built on that land, but the paucity of the Planning Act, because that approval was given in 1968 in conjunction with the building of the Scarborough expressway, which of course never happened. Some 42 years later, somebody plans to develop on those lands, using a 42-year-old planning approval.

Under the building code, you can only build for exactly one year from the date of the issuance of a

building permit, but there is no limitation on the Planning Act. Therefore, you have something happening here which I don't think is right at all.

There need to be limitations on the Planning Act and development, and it needs to clearly set out a time frame. If building does not take place for a period of some five or perhaps 10 years, then new planning approval should be sought and accepted.

The government needs to change the law so that people aren't building on 42-year-old plans. The community demands it.

GLENN KIFF AND LINDA WAYNE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Today I rise in the House to acknowledge the tremendous innovation and creativity of two local London business owners who have turned a negative situation into a positive one.

Glenn Kiff and Linda Wayne, co-owners of East Village Coffeehouse in London, were having their shrubbery and plants stolen outside their place of business. They took advantage of that unfavourable situation. The two reached out to their community and requested that citizens donate unwanted plants to the coffee shop, and if Londoners were interested in these plants, they were more than welcome to come and take them home. This would not only encourage beautifying the neighbourhood, but it would also encourage a sense of friendship and community within the neighbourhood.

1310

I would like to congratulate both Mr. Kiff and Ms. Wayne for such an innovative and inspiring response to what typically ends up as a negative ordeal. Not only were they able to solve this problem in a constructive way, they were also able to benefit their community and their environment. I commend them both, and I wish them great success in the future for bringing the community together and turning a negative issue into a positive one.

PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to read into the record today a letter from a pharmacist in my community, Bryan Hastie, who is an independent pharmacist. His wife is also a pharmacist. They are going to be very negatively impacted by the proposed reductions to pharmacies, and certainly we would see a reduction in front-line care to patients. He writes:

"Mr. Premier,

"I'm a pharmacist. My wife ... is a pharmacist. We have" two children, 10- and seven-year-old boys. "We don't have a big pharmacy;" we have a little one. "Last year our little pharmacy allowed me to take home an income approximately one third of that of a staff pharmacist employed at any Shoppers Drug Mart....

"I know that if these funding cuts your government has announced go through, it will cripple my business....

“You have attempted to portray this issue as being a fight between the government and ‘big pharmacy.’ That’s not what it is at all. The biggest chains will survive.... However, one half of all pharmacies in Ontario are small family-owned businesses like mine. Your poorly conceived and short-sighted cuts will cripple us and many will close. Small businesses closed and families thrust into crisis. Patient will have less choice about where to access their pharmacy services, those services will be reduced....”

Please reconsider.

BAHA’I COMMUNITY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Allah-u-Abha. Today is the ninth day of Ridvan, a 12-day festival observed by Baha’is around the world. It marks the declaration of the prophet and founder of the Baha’i faith in 1863. His Holiness Baha’u’llah announced that he is the latest in a series of divine messengers that have appeared throughout human history. His essential message was one of unity. He taught the oneness of God, the oneness of the human family and the oneness of religion.

For Baha’is, these 12 days are a spiritual springtime, a time of rejoicing. This also marks the beginning of the Baha’is’ administrative year. On the first day of Ridvan, Baha’is elect their local spiritual assemblies, a consultative body that serves their communities.

Every year during the Ridvan festival, Baha’i delegates in 184 countries gather in national conventions to elect their national spiritual assemblies. On April 30, Canadian Baha’i delegates will meet in Toronto to elect and consult with their national spiritual assembly.

His Holiness Baha’u’llah’s teachings have attracted more than five million followers around the world. They live in more than 100,000 locations and come from nearly every nation, ethnic group, cultural, professional, social and economic background. Some 12,000 Baha’is live in Ontario.

The Baha’i community of Canada hosted the reception at Queen’s Park today to celebrate Ridvan. Please join me in wishing them a festive and happy Ridvan.

POLISH CONSTITUTION ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: May 3 is of special significance to citizens of Polish ancestry, because they will be celebrating the 219th anniversary of the Polish Constitution. This Polish Constitution guaranteed, for the first time in history, a great deal of personal freedom, and it separated the executive from the legislative power and the judiciary. It probably was the example for the French Revolution.

This May 3, the anniversary is of special significance. Normally, the occasion of May 3, Polish Constitution Day, is of a joyous nature, but this year, as all of us know, the May 3 celebration will be marred by the recent tragedy three weeks ago of the air disaster killing 96 high

officials of the Polish nation, including the president and his wife.

The Canadian Polish Congress is now planning a special event, and a number of proclamations were issued. Members of Parliament here in Toronto are invited to participate in: (1) a march will take place after 11 a.m. church from the St. Casimir’s Church on Roncesvalles down to the Katyn monument on King Street West; (2) the Polish flag-raising ceremony will take place right here at Queen’s Park, to which all members are invited.

To the Polish people who are here today to listen to this presentation, I say:

Remarks in Polish.

EARTH DAY

Mr. Ted McMeekin: In honour of Earth Day this year, I spent two days visiting schools handing out over 3,000 white pine seedlings to public school kids. It may be a bit hokey—and, yes, I know that people sometimes tell me I’m a bit hokey—but I don’t know when I’ve enjoyed myself more. You know that feeling, Mr. Speaker.

Kids instinctively get it, maybe because they’re small growing things themselves. They have a better intuitive understanding of how important it is to plant and nurture seedlings. None of us should kid ourselves that a few seedlings more or less are going to change the world, but a few ideas planted in the right young minds may do just that—or the right older minds, for that matter. I’m proud that Al Gore has called the McGuinty government “the greenest government in North America.”

I want my children, my grandchildren and my grandchildren’s children to enjoy the natural beauty and quality of life that we currently enjoy. I know our government shares this belief. That’s why we’ve acted on the greenbelt; that’s why we’re eliminating coal generation; that’s why we brought in the Green Energy Act; and that’s why we’re working aggressively to plan action to tackle climate change.

As Earth Day approaches next year, I’m going to try to take every single day that I have the opportunity to ask myself: What am I planting? I suggest and ask other members of the assembly to do the same thing.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to welcome some guests: Bob Sirlow, Lou Sirlow, Frank Puopolo, Mark Zannitti, Mike Terrell, Rob Leveille, Jasmin Ralph, Diana Pestaj and James Russell. Welcome to Queen’s Park today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): The Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows.

Pursuant to standing order 60, your committee has selected the estimates—

Interjection.

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

I think that was the quickest dispense ever.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOWERING ENERGY COSTS FOR NORTHERN ONTARIANS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE POUR LES ONTARIENS DU NORD

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit / Projet de loi 44, Loi mettant en oeuvre le crédit pour les coûts d'énergie dans le Nord de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: During ministerial statements.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (REPLACEMENT WORKERS), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (TRAVAILLEURS SUPPLÉANTS)

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 45, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1321 to 1326.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Horwath, Andrea	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramali, Khalil
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted	Sousa, Charles
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Moridi, Reza	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gélinas, France	O'Toole, John	

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

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Dickson, Joe	Klees, Frank
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The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 32; the nays are 3.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The purpose of the bill is to restore the provisions that were incorporated into the Labour Relations Act by the Labour Relations and Employment Statute Law Amendment Act, 1992, and subsequently repealed by the Labour Relations Act, 1995. The purpose of the provisions being restored is to prevent an employer from replacing striking or locked-out employees with replacement workers. The bill allows replacement workers to be used in emergencies.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NORTHERN ENERGY CREDIT

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am pleased to rise today to introduce the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act. This was a key proposal presented in our 2010 budget. The McGuinty government's five-year plan to open Ontario to more jobs and economic growth was

laid out in our recent speech from the throne. Our 2010 budget moves that plan forward in a fair and balanced way. Our plan supports job creation and enhances programs and services that Ontarians value, including education, health care and skills training.

Today, I'm speaking about a new initiative from the budget that is the focus of this bill, the northern Ontario energy credit. We are proposing a new, permanent northern Ontario energy credit that would help eligible low- to middle-income northern residents with their energy costs, as they are generally higher in the north.

Northern residents aged 18 and older who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence would be eligible for an annual credit. A single person would be eligible for a credit of up to \$130, while a family would be eligible for up to \$200. This includes single parents.

We estimate this credit would benefit about a quarter of a million families and single people, or more than half of northern residents, providing about \$35 million in assistance in the first year of implementation.

It would be available across the north to eligible residents in the districts of Algoma; Cochrane; Kenora; Manitoulin; Nipissing; yes, Mr. Miller, Parry Sound; Rainy River; Sudbury; Thunder Bay; and Timiskaming. People living on northern reserves who incur residential energy costs would also be eligible for the credit.

To help those who need it most, the credit would be income-tested. This means it would be reduced for a single person with an adjusted net income of over \$35,000 and eliminated when his or her income exceeds \$48,000. It would be reduced for families with an adjusted family net income over \$45,000 and eliminated when their income is more than \$65,000.

As noted in our recent budget, in order to provide timely assistance, we propose an interim method of payment for this year. Eligible northern residents would apply to the Ministry of Revenue to receive the credit, which would be delivered in two instalments: first, in November 2010, and the second in February 2011. For subsequent years, this permanent credit would be paid quarterly.

I'm proud to say that the McGuinty government's Open Ontario plan is making great strides in lifting the province out of this recession and making Ontario's economy more competitive for when the global recession is over.

I ask the honourable members to support this legislation so that we can move forward and help Ontarians in the north.

FIRE RANGERS

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to ask members to join me in recognizing this year as the 125th anniversary of Ontario's fire rangers.

Forest fires have long been an important factor on Ontario's landscape. Fires are neither good nor bad. They only become so as they relate to human values. In fact,

the province's vast boreal forests are a fire-dependent ecosystem.

The government of the day back in 1849 became concerned about the impact of forest fires in Ontario, but the forest rangers themselves were not appointed until 1885. Jointly funded by the government and the forest industry, the first Ontario rangers patrolled large areas of forest during the burning season, generally the warm, dry summer months.

In those days, settlers often used fire to help them clear land for cultivation, inadvertently causing destructive and often deadly fires. This was the case for the most devastating fire in Ontario's history: the Matheson fire of 1916. It burned 2,000 square kilometres and claimed an estimated 223 lives.

Our rangers helped put out that fire and many others. They also warned settlers, forestry workers and landowners about the dangers of being careless with fire, and they encouraged the government of the day to pass the Forest Fires Prevention Act in 1917. This legislation helped frame and guide our modern fire control system.

In the intervening years, fire rangers have helped us improve our fire control techniques, our understanding of fire dynamics and the types of technology we use and the ways we regulate fire.

Our fire rangers are now better equipped, better trained, more knowledgeable and better supported than those in 1885. Today's Ontario fire rangers have a well-deserved international reputation as highly trained and experienced fire managers and firefighters.

Each year, the ministry employs about 200 four-person fire ranger crews at 38 strategically located fire headquarters and attack bases across the province.

While fighting forest fires is a vital and rewarding job, it's not for everyone. The physical demands are heavy and the work can be exhausting. Rangers live in a tent in the bush for weeks at a time during the summer, cooking their own meals after a hard day's work containing fires.

The training is both challenging and demanding, and it takes a special individual to qualify for the program. But those who do make it say it's one of the most rewarding and satisfying jobs out there.

In addition to protecting Ontario's families, communities and private property from forest fires, our fire rangers have been deployed to many other locations. Just last year, over 700 Ontario fire rangers were sent to help British Columbia and Alberta fire crews with their difficult fire season, and our fire rangers have also helped many US states over the years.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women who serve our province as fire rangers. It is my pleasure, on behalf of the McGuinty government, to thank all of Ontario's fire rangers, both those serving today and those who have gone before, for helping protect our province since 1885. Our dedicated and hard-working fire rangers deserve our thanks. I'd like to ask all members and all Ontarians to take some time to think about their contributions over the past 125 years.

NORTHERN ENERGY CREDIT

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity, in a couple of short minutes, to respond to the introduction of the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act, 2010. Even though this is a finance bill, I'm sure our energy critic will have some comments to do with the bill as well.

It certainly is the case that the McGuinty government has made a mess of their energy policy, and I would argue that everyone deserves a reduction in their energy bill.

Just yesterday I was on the phone to a constituent from Parry Sound who was asking me questions about why his energy bill is going up so much. I had to say to him, "Do you know what? I'm sorry but all the news is bad." This is good news for the residents of Parry Sound, although if he goes just a little south and happens to be in Muskoka, it won't apply to residents of Muskoka.

However, I had to say to him, "Do you know what? I know your bills are going up, but it's getting worse." The Ontario Energy Board just approved a 10% increase that you haven't seen yet. The HST is going to be coming into effect on July 1, and that's another 8%. So we're up to 18%. Then we have this new green tax that is sort of being brought in through the back door. It's \$57 million. I note from yesterday's Toronto Star that a watchdog group is challenging the government on that one.

They say, "The Consumers Council of Canada has filed a motion with the Ontario Energy Board challenging the levy, saying it amounts to an illegal tax." They go on to say, "Warren said the levy is bad policy as well as bad law. 'These burdens are all really in essence taxes, and they're regressive taxes,' he said. 'They're levied on consumers on the basis of the volume of electricity they use, and not on the basis of their income.'" So that's another addition.

Of course, we have the smart meters, which mysteriously are causing people's energy bills to go up despite the fact that time-of-use pricing has not come into effect. But when time-of-use pricing comes into effect, it's going to mean another substantial increase to everyone's electricity bill.

It will be a couple of years before we see the effect of the Green Energy Act, and for sure—absolutely, definitely—that's going to mean substantial increases in energy bills across the province, reflecting this government's policy of buying high and selling low, and having ratepayers pay for that through their energy bills.

This is a small help for northern residents only. I think all residents are going to need assistance because of the energy policies of this government.

I will let the other critic take over now.

FIRE RANGERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Natural Resources, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, on the 125th anniversary of Ontario's fire rangers. I'd like to begin by congratulating all those

men and women who are part of the Ontario fire rangers, both present and those who have served Ontario in the past.

I picked up on a couple of things the minister talked about. Last year, with the huge fires in British Columbia, it was actually kind of a proud moment to see that we sent so many men and women to BC to help them with those tragic fires that caused so much damage across all of British Columbia. That's the name they've grown and the kind of reputation they've developed, not only in Ontario, but across the country, and at times they've even been in the States to fight fires, to help our American neighbours as well.

I also wanted to point out to the minister one issue that came to my attention from a fire ranger who is a gentleman in my riding. His name is Tom LeBlanc. He has been a fire ranger for the last 25 years. He developed a number of cancers and has tried to fall under the categories of the presumptive legislation that now applies not only to professional firefighters in Ontario, but also, now, to our volunteer firefighters. I'm not quite sure whether he qualifies yet or not, and if there's one thing you can do on this anniversary today, it's to look into any of the fire rangers who have worked with the ministry for years and make sure that they can be covered as well, because it has had quite an impact on his family, and he has had a difficult time. I wanted to bring that up when I saw I had an opportunity to respond today to the 125th anniversary.

1340

In summary, we're pleased to celebrate this day with them. It's an important anniversary in the history of Ontario, particularly northern Ontario, where they do so much of the work. Again, I congratulate them on the 125th anniversary.

FIRE RANGERS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am going to respond to both items as critic.

I just want to start off on the 125th anniversary of fire rangers. I want to join, along with Andrea Horwath and the rest of the New Democratic caucus, in celebrating 125 years in Ontario of excellence when it comes to the work that the Ministry of Natural Resources has done through fire rangers and other programs that are in place in order to make our communities safe and in order to try to do what needs to be done when there are forest fires in Ontario.

We are second to none—the minister knows that well; it's probably the first briefing she got when she got her job as Minister of Natural Resources. Ontario leads the way around the world when it comes to the science and technology and the practice of not only fighting forest fires, but being able to predict and mitigate before fires even happen. Some of those technologies are quite amazing once you look at what they are doing.

We just want to say, on behalf of the New Democrats here at Queen's Park and across this province, a thank

you goes out to the fire rangers who have been around for 125 years, and to the Ministry of Natural Resources in the work that they have all done.

NORTHERN ENERGY CREDIT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I also want to take an opportunity to speak to the bill that was introduced by Minister Duncan, the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act. Well, tell it to the Xstrata workers. Boy, that did a lot of good. Here we are. The government finally decided to do something on energy, and I'm not going to say you did nothing; you've moved forward with a 25% reduction on the industrial rates for those companies that can apply and get accepted for this particular program. But when we had Xstrata at the table with the Premier, the question was put directly to Xstrata: "Will this help you make your decision to stay within the city of Timmins?" And the answer was a resounding no.

Clearly, it's a step in the right direction. I'm not going to say this is bad. But clearly, the government has not gone the distance that it needs to go to deal with the issue of cost of energy in northern Ontario.

There are a number of things that are going to become even more problematic. We know that there is an application now in order to get a 10% increase on hydro rates this year. The HST will kick in on July 1, putting another 8%—for a total of 18%—on people's hydro bills. So you save 25% if you're one of the lucky ones, but you get tacked on 18%, which means that 25% is fairly negated.

But there's the whole other issue of the global adjustment on Ontario hydro bills. I look at companies such as Tembec in Kapuskasing, Xstrata in Timmins—if they were still operating, and hopefully they will be—and other companies that are large utility customers of Ontario hydro in the province of Ontario—the bills are starting to increase and they will continue to escalate as a result of the global adjustment.

The global adjustment is how the government has decided to pay for all of the energy projects that are currently being constructed in the province of Ontario: the refurbishing of our nuclear reactors, the Niagara project, the green energy that's coming in place—all of which are good things, but the way we're deciding to pay for this is to tack it all in one shot on what's called the global adjustment. That has an effect of increasing hydro prices not only to the consumers but to the industrial users in the province of Ontario. If you think you're paying a lot for electricity now, take a look at where you're going to be a year from now because of global adjustment.

I know that in the case of Tembec in Kapuskasing, it has increased their hydro bill in one month by \$1.8 million. Whereas last year, the global adjustment was basically negative—it was neutral, I should say—they have increased this year in the month of February—the month of January—by \$1.8 million. That's an additional money they've got to pay for hydro to operate their mills.

What it also means is there's no longer an incentive for people to save energy because what you save on one hand you end up paying in the global adjustment.

The government has a very strange policy about how they approach energy prices. There was a time when electricity was seen as one of the competitive advantages to attract and retain large manufacturing in the province of Ontario. How did Xstrata set up their smelter/refinery? Because of the provincial policies at that time that made Kidd Creek do it. How was it made affordable? We were able to provide electricity to companies like Xstrata at cost plus the recuperation of cost for new expansion etc. that needed to be done.

The result was that Ontario's hydro rate, compared to the rest of North America, was most competitive above all. We had the lowest hydro rates in the country and certainly the lowest hydro rates in North America. So it made it possible to make those kinds of investments and to look at the longer term to be able to survive.

This government's hydro policy, quite frankly, is disastrous. At the end, Xstrata is only the tip of the iceberg, because electricity prices are slowly moving people out of the province of Ontario.

PETITIONS

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just before I start petitions, there were two petitions that were not approved today. I just want to remind members on both sides of the House that I'm not about to see us get into a battle of duelling petitions in this place. Let's keep these petitions so that they're not making accusations at an individual member or a position of a party.

I'd just ask members to be conscious of it, and we will be monitoring them.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that my petition has been certified by the table. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I support this petition.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition that has been given to me by Mr. Jack Fava and the Symington Avenue association about stopping unlawful firearms in vehicles—that’s previous Bill 56—and I’m delighted to read it to you.

It’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it says:

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned citizens, strongly request and petition the” Parliament “of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2009, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful firearms in our communities.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign this petition and send it to you through page Andrew.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf my constituents in the riding of Durham. Specifically, a couple of the first signatories here are well-known and well-respected pharmacists in my riding. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even more store closures;

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

“Stop the cuts to front-line health care and our pharmacies now.”

This is signed by George Tadros and Mark Borutskie. I’m pleased to sign it, endorse it and support it, and present it to Mitchell, one of the pages, on his last day.

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REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas a company’s resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

“Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with Harry on his last day.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Joe Dickson: This is a petition for lowering drug prices.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

“Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and

“Whereas some members of the opposition have sided with large corporations to preserve the status quo rather than make prescription medications more affordable for Ontario patients by supporting the proposed drug reforms;

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

“That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government’s legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications.”

I will attach my signature to it and pass it to page Max.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly from the good people of Westport, and I should make mention of Paul Hellier, the owner and pharmacist at the Village Pharmacy in Westport. He has done great things there with physician recruitment. It says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty

Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

The “cuts will:

“—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and week-ends;

“—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

“—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I agree with the petition, will affix my name and send it with Carrington to the table.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury, Nickel Belt and Port Colborne, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the strike at Vale Inco mine, mill and smelter in Sudbury and Port Colborne has been going on for too long and showing no chance of settlement; and

“Whereas the strike is causing hardship on the 3,300 workers, their families, the communities and the businesses and contributing to a significant net drain to the economy; and

“Whereas the resumption of production with replacement workers has demonstrated an unwillingness to negotiate a fair collective agreement with the workers and has produced undue tension in the community; and

“Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers; and

“Encourage both parties to negotiate and reach a fair settlement.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Darcy, also on her last day.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I do have one more petition, which I have received from the consumer federation of Canada here on Charles Street in Toronto. It’s to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services. It read as follows:

“Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

“Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

“Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars; and

“Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one’s good credit rating;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 7, which passed the second reading unanimously” in March 2010, “be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

“(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form protecting our vital private information such as SIN and loan account numbers” and other numbers.

“(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

“(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

“(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate.”

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to sign this petition, because I certainly think it’s worth it. By the way, I’m going to send it through you. The lovely lady’s going to give it to you—that is, Georgina.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

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

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

“—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and week-ends,

“—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

“—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I agree with that petition, and I will sign it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Algoma–Manitoulin, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under" certain conditions...; and

"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" are "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Tara, also on her last day.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: This petition is also from pharmacies and customers. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario depend on the convenient, accessible advice and services provided by their community pharmacies; and

"Whereas Ontarians want to ensure their pharmacists are there when they need them; and

"Whereas patients can talk to their pharmacist after work, when they can't get to their doctor's office or when their doctor's office is closed; and

"Whereas Ontarians [want] assurances that their pharmacy will continue to be able to provide valuable health services in their community," face to face;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to please not make cuts to the neighbourhood health care community pharmacies provide."

I am pleased to sign and support this and present it to Darcy, one of the pages, on her last day here at Queen's Park.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly that reads as follows:

"Whereas residents in Leeds-Grenville do not want the McGuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes...; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I will sign the petition and will send it to the table with Georgina.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the weekend where you can last take advantage of buying things before the HST comes into effect. I have a petition here which reads as follows:

1400

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas, by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity;" Internet service; "haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

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

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I am pleased to sign and support this and present it to Khaleel on his last day at Queen's Park. He has done a great job, too.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEALTHY LIVING SAINES HABITUDES DE VIE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's a privilege to rise to present this private member's resolution on Ontario vital stats, that the government of Ontario encourage Ontarians and initiate programs to know their vital numbers: cholesterol levels, sugar, iron, weight, body mass index, waist circumference and calcium status; and that the government of Ontario encourage Ontarians and initiate programs to know their cardiometabolic risk.

Ma résolution est sur les statistiques vitales des Ontariens et Ontariennes. Le gouvernement de l'Ontario encourage les Ontariennes et Ontariens et initie des programmes pour connaître leurs statistiques vitales, notamment, le niveau de cholestérol, le sucre, le fer, le poids du corps, la circonférence de l'hanche et l'état de calcium. Le gouvernement encourage les Ontariens et Ontariennes et initie des programmes pour connaître leur risque cardiometabolique.

Les principes : les docteurs estiment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Qaadri moves private member's notice of motion number 23. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's a privilege to present the Ontario vital stats resolution, as I have just cited.

Cette résolution est basée sur des principes fondamentaux. Par exemple, les docteurs estiment qu'entre 10 % et 40 % des conditions médicales majeures restent non diagnostiquées pendant longtemps. Par exemple, les diabétiques au Canada ont cette maladie en moyenne cinq ans avant qu'elle ne soit diagnostiquée.

This particular resolution with reference to Ontario vital statistics is based of course—I hope—on sound medical and scientific principles. For example, doctors estimate that about 10% to 40% of major medical conditions remain undiagnosed for too long. For example, people with diabetes in Canada have the disease, on average, for five years before it is actually diagnosed. Similarly, approximately five million Canadians have high blood pressure, but only about 45% of them have actually officially been diagnosed. As a general principle, as you will appreciate, early diagnosis leads to earlier cure, faster resolution and, of course, better outcomes for patients. But Ontarians are not benefiting as much as they should from these particular principles of early awareness and early intervention.

I'm also pleased to report to this chamber that I will be joined today in the debate from the government side by my honourable colleagues MPP Kular from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, MPP Ramal from London-Fanshawe and MPP McMeekin from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale.

I'd also like to introduce, not only to you perhaps, Speaker, but also to Ontarians, a term that is gaining currency within medical circles, and that is known now as the cardiometabolic risk. I think it's important for all Ontarians to understand—and for patients and physicians to engage in this particular conversation—what we as physicians are increasingly referring to as the cardiometabolic syndrome. And that is this: We are learning that many illnesses and conditions are not isolated, are not just single problems. Instead, many conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure and stress, actually aggravate, provoke and accentuate each other. This grouping, this cluster of conditions which act and worsen each other is what we call the cardiometabolic syndrome. And to appreciate what I'm saying, it's that I think for too long conventional western medicine, not really

engaging in the holistic approach, has been chasing blood pressure, sugar, stress, insomnia or increased heart rates as isolated, independent conditions. But we as physicians are learning that that is not the optimal approach; that we must approach this as an overall package deal, as it were, as what we call now the cardiometabolic syndrome.

Why is this important? As I say, it's a package, and patients who have this particular syndrome are at much higher risk for many, many serious conditions. As you'll appreciate, the number, the proportion of Ontarians—indeed Canadians and, by the way, particularly Americans—is increasing in this area for many, many different reasons: sedentary lifestyles, excessive screen time, the outbreak of obesity right from very early ages and many other aspects. This puts people at much higher risk for things like heart attacks, strokes, complications of diabetes, and even sudden cardiac death.

We must try to address all aspects of CMS—as the official abbreviation is—or the cardiometabolic syndrome, because of course, as you know, any resolution and any medical terminology must have a self-respecting acronym, so CMS is the one that we put forward. It's not enough, for example, to chase only high blood pressure or only high sugar levels; we must instead try to offer solutions and medications that offer a global benefit, a holistic benefit to the whole person. And that may involve, as it should, much more than simply prescribing medications, be they generic or brand name, but engaging not only the patient, educating them about the entire lifestyle, but even engaging the entire family and maybe the spouse, and perhaps even society at large. I think all of us in our various spheres of influence need to bring best practices to bear in this area. Otherwise, the benefit of treating only one condition at a time may in fact be nullified, cancelled out or diminished as another condition is allowed to get worse.

For example, the list of conditions that mutually reinforce each other is always literally and figuratively expanding. It includes obesity. Fat in the abdomen is dangerous. It acts—and this is probably relatively new information even for physicians out there—like an independent endocrine organ that makes chemicals that accelerate many problems. This is in fact what I like to refer to, as I'm explaining it to patients or other physicians in presentation, as the cardiometabolic soup: the collection of chemicals that abdominal fat pours out that worsens, accelerates and triggers things like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, sugar diabetes and so on. Remember, abdominal fat is metabolically, chemically active and dangerous.

High blood pressure. This, as you'll appreciate, is a silent, ticking time bomb. One of the problems in high blood pressure patients, in hypertensive patients is what we call the activation of the blood pressure control system in the body called the RAAS, or the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system. When this system is activated, people are at an accelerated risk for heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure and so on. But we can measure these things. We can track these things. We can

monitor these things over time. And I think it's important, as patients get into the realm of potentially developing high blood pressure—or even if they have it—if their family members have had these conditions or members of the family have actually had heart attacks or strokes and similar conditions, those are the very group of people who need to come to attention.

1410

Elevated cholesterol: hugely important, of course, as cholesterol is, as a building block of atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries—that's hardening of the arteries, Speaker, not hardening of the categories, which of course is something that happens sometimes here in this chamber. That's essentially, as you'll know, pipes getting blocked. The specific abnormalities include making the bad cholesterol, or LDL cholesterol, even worse—we've got to lower that; and elevating the good cholesterol, or what's known as HDL cholesterol, because that is actually protective. Of course, there are many aspects and sub-aspects with regard to cholesterol.

Diabetes, as you'll appreciate, is a massive epidemic and continues to be so, not only in Ontario but beyond. Unfortunately, as physicians, we're seeing patients who we thought had to be in good and appropriate vintage years, in middle age—whatever middle age means now, whether it's 40, 45, 50 or later—earlier. Now we're seeing patients in their 20s who are getting these conditions. Formerly we thought they would have at least a 20-year lead time.

Several of these chemicals that the abdominal fat pours out make your body essentially ignore its own insulin, which is of course the regulatory hormone for sugar in the body. Obviously, as physicians have fancy and billable words, that's called insulin resistance. Essentially, your body resists the effects of its own insulin, so sugars stay high and patients therefore open themselves up to many complications, which include diseases of the heart, kidney, eyes, nerves, blood vessels and cells, and even protein spilling out from various organs.

Essentially, if I can summarize it in a way that perhaps even our pages are going to appreciate, as it is their last day, basically when you have elevated sugar, your blood, instead of being watery, turns to various levels of pancake syrup. If you have pancake syrup floating around in your bloodstream, of course it moves sluggishly; it moves more viscously, if I can use that word; and of course it begins to cake out, to actually crystallize. Just as you have a candy-coated apple, you're going to have a candy-coated or sugar-coated heart, kidney, eye, nerve, blood vessels and so on. You can imagine the implications that would have, on an ongoing basis, as you essentially incubate that situation for years and years.

One of the things that's very important along with having this excess amount of abdominal fat is that it promotes what we call a pro-inflammatory state. That means the body essentially engages in friendly fire. It gets angry. The immune system goes into overdrive and attempts to remedy the situation but actually makes

things worse. For example, many cells and chemicals in the body are meant to attack outside invaders like debris and bacteria, but unfortunately, when the system goes into overdrive, the defences begin to attack the host. That's what we call the self-inflammatory or pro-inflammatory state.

The other thing that's extremely important, and that I think physicians are perhaps just recently waking up to, becoming alert to, is the idea that cardiometabolic syndrome is not just a bad sugar number, a bad cholesterol number or a bad blood pressure number, important as those may be. These actually have very significant effects on the mood, on an individual's outlook, on their energy, on their ambition. For example, it is becoming clearer that it affects energy levels, and it may in fact be setting patients up for either mild, medium or severe depression. Mood effects, of course, happen for many causes, but hormones, such as things like testosterone and estrogen, are actually also negatively impacted by the excess amount of abdominal fat.

All of these together are the cluster of conditions, the cluster of issues, that we, as physicians, now are referring to as the cardiometabolic syndrome.

There was, for example, just to make the point clearer, a very important book that began to synthesize this idea of a grouping of conditions. It was released in the United States and was called *Diabetesity*: a contraction between diabetes and, of course, obesity, and essentially that clustering of effects that goes on.

Heart disease, in its broader sense, still remains Canada's number one killer. For us as legislators, as representatives of our constituents on the ground, and of course for those of us who have the opportunity to frame, shape and influence health policy not only in Ontario but of other jurisdictions that continue to look to Ontario for leadership, it's important that we know about these issues, particularly when we're referring to Ontario's vital statistics with reference to cholesterol, sugar, iron, weight, body mass index, waist circumference and calcium status, all in an effort for Ontarians to realize their cardiometabolic risk.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to support the motion that has been put forward by the member for Etobicoke North. He is a qualified physician, and I think the resolution regarding Ontario's vital statistics and the importance of people being knowledgeable about those statistics is very important because I think for a long time now we have been trying to shift the focus of health care to prevention and health promotion. It's very important that people in the province of Ontario focus on that, as opposed to sickness.

It's also very important that people start to assume greater responsibility for their own good health. In order to focus on your own good health and preventing disease and promoting good health, people need to know some of the facts. This particular resolution does encourage Ontarians to initiate programs and, really, that they should

know their own vital numbers: their cholesterol levels, their sugar, their iron, their weight, their body mass index, their waist circumference, their calcium status.

The member has talked at some length today about the government of Ontario encouraging Ontarians and initiating programs in order that people would know their own cardiometabolic risk. He did explain, I think, in great detail, what that means.

I think it's interesting, and some of the stats that he shared with us certainly indicate, that doctors are now saying that 10% to 40% of major medical conditions are simply remaining undiagnosed for too long a time. If we had known earlier, obviously some of the serious consequences of these conditions could have been avoided, and individuals could be enjoying a much better quality of life.

I think one of the diseases where we've seen a great deal of increase in the numbers of people who are suffering and, of course, as a result, some of the unfortunate consequences that go with it, is in diabetes. There are simply too many people suffering from diabetes who could have been diagnosed on average, apparently, maybe up to five years before. As well, it says that we have approximately five million Canadians who have high blood pressure, but again only 45% of them are being diagnosed.

It is important that people take responsibility for their own good health, that they do what they can and the government supports them in obtaining information about their own vital numbers, because early diagnosis always leads to an earlier cure and the prevention of a chronic condition; it also allows for a faster resolution and, of course, at the end of the day, much better outcomes for patients.

So we have to do a much better job in the province of Ontario. We need to see leadership from the government. But again, people need to assume personal responsibility in order to have the best health possible.

Now, I'm not going to go into the cardiometabolic syndrome. I think the member did a great job in explaining what it was; the fact that some conditions, unfortunately, have an impact on one another. He talked about the fact that obesity, fat in the abdomen, is dangerous; and, increasingly, we are seeing more and more people who are diagnosed as being obese. I'm going to come back to that if I have time.

He talked about high blood pressure being the silent ticking time bomb. Again, we know that people then have an elevated risk of heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure and so on. He talked about the impact of the elevated cholesterol levels. Again, we know that that results in plaque accumulation and hardened arteries etc. And, of course, he did go into some description of diabetes and what happens to the body. Again, if we don't diagnose that early, we know that there are heart problems that are going to result. The brain can be impacted, and other parts of the body as well. Promoting inflammation: This can result in cardiovascular problems. He talked about some of the mood effects. I guess, at the

end of the day, his presentation did emphasize that these were some of the leading items of the cardiometabolic syndrome. We need to be aware of that.

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It was stressed that heart disease is still Canada's number one killer. It can be prevented, but a lot of people are simply not getting the message. It is important that people learn what the signals are, that they take appropriate action, that they be tested, and whatever the physician would recommend for them to do as a consequence they would do in order that they can protect themselves.

If we take a look at the issue of diabetes—which is, I think, sometimes still somewhat poorly understood—it can have many serious consequences. When I was Minister of Health, this was one of the diseases that we saw that was going to increasingly have a negative impact on the quality of life of people of the province of Ontario. If it's left undiagnosed, it—and even when it's diagnosed, depending on how much responsibility people assume for responding to the disease—we see kidney disease; we see, sometimes, the need for amputations; and there's also visual impairment. But it is very, very serious, and people need to understand the risks involved.

The other new statistic that people increasingly are talking about is waist circumference. This is kind of a new vital sign. When you pick up magazines and newspapers, people are increasingly talking about how much fat you have in your abdominal area. Sometimes that's referred to as the “beer belly,” “love handles” or “tire in the stomach,” but they are now increasingly saying that the amount of fat that you have in your abdomen is a major predictor of any future diseases that you might have. So it's important for people to understand what is considered normal and then to take a look at where their waist is and be able to identify if they are overweight. I think one of the greatest threats that faces us today in Canada, in Ontario and in North America is the increasing number of children we see who are obese. Obviously, there is a need to take action.

Another issue—and this is more for women—is the whole issue of preventing and treating osteoporosis, which is really important. This is knowing what your calcium levels are because, if they are inadequate, this can predispose people to a huge range of bone problems, including osteoporosis, which is simply a thinning of the bones. It seems to impact people, in particular, over the age of 50.

I applaud the member for bringing this forward, and certainly I support his resolution.

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

Mr. Kuldip Kular: It's my pleasure to join the debate on the private member's resolution on Ontarians' vital stats, brought forward by my physician colleague the honourable member from Etobicoke North. Let me say at the start that I'm truly supporting this resolution.

As a physician, I know that in general, early diagnosis of any disease leads to an early cure. Early diagnosis

leads to faster resolution of the disease and leads to better outcomes for the patient. I feel that it also leads to better health care delivery.

Many physicians agree. As has been talked about by the honourable member from Etobicoke North, 10% to 40% of major medical conditions remain undiagnosed for some time. A prime example is that it takes almost five years before people come to be fully diagnosed as diabetic. Osteoporosis is another example. It takes some time before the patient starts to feel the symptoms and consequences of osteoporosis.

So I feel this is a very important resolution. If passed, this resolution would help Ontarians, as they can benefit by knowing their own vital stats and their own key medical numbers. The honourable member from Etobicoke North has talked very clearly about all the vital stats mentioned in the resolution and also about cardiometabolic syndrome.

In the short time I have, I'm going to be speaking only on two important vital stats that he mentioned in his resolution. The first is iron. Iron is very, very important for the hemoglobin level in your body. It is very important to have adequate levels of hemoglobin in your blood, which helps with oxygen saturation. If your oxygen saturation is not sufficient, your body is literally starved of oxygen. When people are anemic—about 5% to 10% of Canadian women are anemic—they don't have high enough hemoglobin in their blood; they don't have high enough levels of iron in their blood. So when they have anemia—the most common type of anemia is iron deficiency anemia—they feel fatigued, weak and short of breath. If they understood the level of iron they should have in their body, they would try to get adequate levels of iron supplements.

I think this is a good resolution, and I ask all members on both sides of the House to support this resolution so that people can be very well aware of their vitals to have a healthy lifestyle.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm happy to respond to the member from Etobicoke North, and I respectfully acknowledge that he is a medical doctor. I believe his ethical purpose here is very much supported by all members.

Former Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer responded adequately on our behalf, but I do want to say that today the idea of personal responsibility in terms of health is important, and that means a really wide working relationship with your physician.

It's funny: I was out of the House for a few minutes, down to the public hearings on Bill 16, the budget bill, and the room was full of pharmacists, all outraged about the approach of this government, really the attack on patients, consumers and customers who are going to have their services exposed and potentially reduced in the name of the government bill. It's ironic, and it's no disrespect to the member here. It could not have been any more comfortable for him as a physician trying to prescribe the right drug at the right time for the right

reasons, and I'm sure he is a partner with the pharmacists. The pharmacists themselves are health care providers, to the extent that they take, I guess, four years of pharmacology. There are two or three doctors here today who probably know the amount of pharmacology studied by family practitioners; probably a number of hours.

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I think it's important, when you look at the number of tests that you're looking at—the body mass index is one that I'm familiar with. I've just had that. I have some work to do in that category. It's all related to disease, and chronic disease is the fastest-growing component of health care expense.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that's epidemic in proportion. The number of people who are diagnosed with case 1 or case 2 is actually depressing, really, and it is a function of diet. It's a function of eating and drinking in moderation.

Almost everyone here of my generation—some may not be as sick as I am, but the point is that almost everyone here would have some exposure to a medication that's supposed to be working in your favour. That, for instance, would be cholesterol and taking some medication for that, even if it's a five- or 10-milligram dose. I had a little contest with my doctor. I said, "Gee, I just want the diet. I eat oatmeal. I don't eat sugar. I don't smoke. I don't drink very much." I'm sort of saying, why can't we do these things with natural processes?

So doctors and their tests are very important, and I think personal responsibility in health care is also important.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted and honoured to stand up and speak in support of the resolution by my colleague the member from Etobicoke North, my seat-mate. No doubt about it, I'm lucky: I sit beside a doctor and I'm married to a doctor, so when I get into trouble or have some kind of issue, I go, when I'm here, and ask my friend and when I'm at home I ask my wife.

It's very important to recognize this issue in the House. I think he's brought to us a very important issue, which is to encourage the government to encourage Ontarians to initiate a program to know their vital numbers for cholesterol, sugar levels, weight, calcium and many other things. It's important. As he mentioned—I was listening to him carefully—when he talked about obesity, diabetes, sugar levels and blood pressure, all these elements, if we are able to diagnose them early, I think we will be able to solve problems or create some kind of mechanism to lower the impact on patients before the problem escalates and becomes a permanent problem. Also, the damage will be greater and it will be difficult and expensive to cure and solve.

I think it's important to bring these issues, as he mentioned. As elected officials in this place, our duty and obligation—especially as a doctor, I think his ethical duty and responsibility—is to create awareness and send a

message across Ontario, and also to encourage the government and this place to adopt a method, a policy, to help Ontarians from getting into trouble in the future.

Again, the member from Durham was talking about pharmacists. I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the presence of two prominent Ontario pharmacists: Michael Nashat and Hesham Abdel Sayid, who came specifically to listen to Dr. Qaadri speak about this important issue. They know that the pharmacies in Ontario, especially independent pharmacists, are connected very well with the community. They keep advising the community on a regular basis on many different issues. As you know, when you go to a doctor they might prescribe a medication to you, and then you go after to the pharmacy and the pharmacist explains to you how you use those medications: what's the best method to use them in order to keep yourself healthy; how to use the medication in a professional manner, without hurting yourself; and how to get the benefit from the medications.

So to the member from Etobicoke North, I want to congratulate you for bringing this issue to us and educating us, on a regular basis in this place, about the best methods that we should use, how we can educate Ontarians about their lifestyles, and the vital importance for the people of Ontario to know exactly what kind of health status they are in in order to cure themselves or protect themselves from further damage.

Again, I want to congratulate the member. I wish that all the members in the House, from both sides, support this resolution, because it's important to create a health mechanism to lower the impact on our health care costs and to keep our population healthy and in good shape. So again, thank you for allowing me to speak.

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

M^{me} France G  linas: It's my pleasure to add a few comments to the motion by the member from Etobicoke North.

It reads as follows: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should encourage Ontarians and initiate programs to know their vital numbers: cholesterol levels, sugar, iron, weight, body mass index, waist circumference, calcium status and to know their cardiometabolic risk."

I would certainly vote in support of this motion. This is something that goes very much in line with what the NDP has been talking about for a long time, what we call the second stage of medicare, keeping people healthy.

We have a health care system in Ontario that we can all be proud of. There's room for improvement, but we have a very good health care system in Ontario. People have to realize that the system is there to treat people once they're sick. This is what it does. But there is much work to be done to help to keep people healthy and keep them from developing sickness and disease in the first place.

If you look at the statistics, the four pillars of health promotion have to do with a healthy weight—and

certainly this motion talks to this. It talks about your weight, your body mass and your waist circumference—I have a hard time with this word. *Circonf  rence de la taille*—it comes out a lot easier. Waist circumference is what I'm trying to say.

The second pillar of health promotion, after healthy weight, is healthy eating. You have to look at the type of food that you eat, and some of the numbers in his motion talk to this. When you talk about cholesterol levels and sugar and iron, they're directly related to a healthy diet. A healthy diet will allow most people to keep their cholesterol in check so they don't have to take medication.

We also talk about stopping smoking. This is another pillar of health promotion. It's not specifically covered by the motion from the member from Etobicoke North, but it's certainly heading in that direction.

We also talk about stress. Stress has multiple consequences, like poor health, for people. Here again, it goes in the same direction as what the member has been talking about.

We hear and we read in the news often that the cost of health care is escalating. We now have a \$42-billion health care budget. We're looking at 48% of every dollar of expenditure being spent on health care. But the part of this that is there to help people stay healthy is very small.

The member talks about issues where the person can and should make a difference. We all have a role to play. Your health care provider, being a nurse practitioner or a physician, can help you, but at the end of the day, much can be done by people themselves. We all have a responsibility to keep ourselves healthy. A part of keeping ourselves healthy has to do with knowledge about oneself. I would add to the list that is there that you should know how many minutes of exercise you should do for your age group and make sure that you meet those targets.

On Monday of this week, Active Healthy Kids Canada released its report showing that only 12% of the kids in Canada and 14% of the kids in Ontario get the recommended amount of exercise. This is also something that people should take responsibility for. Exercise, fitness, is one of the key pillars of health promotion. It would help keep each and every one of us leading healthier, more productive lives and, at the same time, help curb what we call this steep, rising cost of our health care system.

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We also learned through this report that not only are the kids not doing enough exercise, but opportunities are not offered to them. If you ask the kids if they want to be active, 74% of them say yes, according to the study, but only 12%—14% in Ontario—get to be active. The government has to start putting a lens to the policies that go through, what I would call a "determinants of health" lens, so that the next time a municipal government gives out a licence to build a new neighbourhood, it makes sure it has a sidewalk.

If you have a sidewalk, then new parents with a stroller will go for a walk. This will have a direct impact

on their weight. It will have a direct impact on their body mass index, on their circumference, which I have such a hard time with, and probably on their calcium status as well if you drink a little bit of milk after your walk.

If you build your neighbourhood with sidewalks, older people will also go for a stroll. It will help keep people healthy that way. But when the opportunities are not there, when you live in a neighbourhood that has no sidewalks, that means that people go directly from their house to their car to wherever they're going.

It's the same thing with neighbourhoods that don't have parks for people to play in. Here in Toronto, most people live in apartments and high-rises. If you don't have access to a park, it's pretty hard for kids to be physically active.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I am sitting here listening very intently to this fine presentation, but I believe there may not be enough people in this Legislature to have a quorum to listen to it. So I would ask the Speaker to check.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask the table if we have a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Nickel Belt has the floor.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I may not have a large audience, but I have a captive one, and they're listening very intensely.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: That's why it's so important to have a large one, too. It's an important speech.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would hope so.

We were talking about other ways. If you look at the opportunities offered through the Ministry of Education, right now kids get 20 minutes of physical activity a day. This is not enough. Little kids need at least two hours of physical activity every day. Primary school kids need at least 90 minutes of physical activity every day.

We would certainly like schools to make it easier for groups to use the school grounds and facilities so that we can use those facilities that belong to the people of Ontario to keep our population healthy.

The government also has a role to play. It's important that all of them work together to achieve some of the data that the member would like us to focus on.

The other one I wanted to focus on is the one linked to healthy eating. The member says that you should know your vital numbers when it comes to cholesterol levels, sugar, iron and calcium. Those are directly linked to healthy eating.

The first thing I'd like to bring forward—because whenever I have the opportunity, I do—is my private member's bill Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating. This was a private member's bill, and all it does is ask for calorie labelling on menu boards so that basically, when you go to any of the big restaurant chains, whether it be McDonald's, Subway or whatever, not only would you see the name of the sandwich; you would also see the calories within.

This is not something avant-garde. This is something that happens in 32 states in the United States, and this is something that has been in front of the Legislature of Ontario for over a year now. Unfortunately, it got erased when we prorogued.

Those are the little steps that make it easier. To give you an example: If you go to—we'll leave it nameless—a restaurant, a lot of people will say, "Oh, they have a tuna melt. I'll take tuna, because it's fish. Omega-3: It must be good for me." Did you know that a tuna melt has 1,280 calories? When you compare this to a normal sandwich, a normal sandwich has about 350 to 375 calories. So here, because the information is not available, people think they are making a healthy choice by choosing the tuna melt, when really they are making a disastrous choice, because the number of calories is way too high. This is often half to three quarters of your calorie intake for the day. It will have a direct impact on your waist, believe me, and it will be on the expanding side of your waist, to the point where, if you go to the States now, with the same restaurant chain, the sandwich is not there on the menu board any more. It's not there because once people started to see it, they made healthy decisions for healthy eating. Those are small steps that don't cost the government anything and that would help to improve those vital numbers.

Right now, this information is available, but it's available either in a pamphlet under the desk someplace, it's available on your way to the washroom or something like this. The way we have it in Ontario, one out of 1,000 people uses that information to make healthy decisions. Once it's on the menu board, it's one out of two; every second person uses that information to make a healthy decision, a healthy choice for healthy eating.

I see that my time is running out. I fully support the direction this member is taking to help people take responsibility for their own health, to help people know some of their vital statistics. You're certainly welcome to talk to your primary care provider—your nurse practitioner or your physician—about it, but at the end of the day, it is your responsibility and you should know what it is so that you can monitor it and you can make sure that it stays within the healthy range. I will be supporting the motion from the member.

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

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the honourable member from Etobicoke North for bringing forward this very important initiative. The member from Nickel Belt has trouble with the word "circumference." I have trouble with the whole concept of circumference. I've been a poster child, I can say with some truthfulness, until recently, for poor health.

I discovered a while back at a community health clinic that I was a diabetic. There was a young man there who was afraid to get his finger pricked with the needle, and somebody said, "Oh, MPP McMeekin isn't afraid to get his blood sugar checked," and it came back at 28—Dr. Hoskins, 28. I was feeling tired. I had been feeling tired

for a while but was ignoring it. I just figured it was the job here running me down. Right? It can run you down. You can be tired from overworking too.

It has been said that good judgment is based on experience and experience invariably on bad judgment; or, as Mum used to say, “If you’re smart, learn from your mistakes; try not to make the same mistakes twice.”

Having been touched personally with the issue of diabetes, I take testing of all of the measures that the good doctor mentioned far more seriously now. I’m not on any more of these fad diets; I’m quite happy to lose a pound a week instead of 10 pounds in a couple of days. It’s about style, about how you eat and how you take care of yourself. Certainly the cardiometabolic risk that the good member from Etobicoke North mentioned is significant. We need, in response to that, to be making the kinds of lifestyle changes that we know in our heads are the right thing to do. It’s tough. I’ve got to tell you, it’s tougher at 62 than when I was an athletic 35 and playing soccer all the time and in karate class and all that sort of stuff. It’s tougher at 62, but it’s important. There’s never a wrong time to do the right thing. Right? Anyhow, I wanted to say that.

Unfortunately, many Ontarians are unaware of just how important their cholesterol levels, sugar, iron, weight, body mass index etc. are. I think there’s much to be said for the old adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” I think that monitoring one’s health, taking that as a personal responsibility, is really quite critical if we’re to survive and thrive, which, on a good day, is what we all want to do.

1450

I’m a type 2 diabetic; I really have to watch very carefully things like circumference and diet. I blood test sometimes several times a day to make sure I’m on track. It’s helpful for me now to be doing that, and hopefully not too late in my life. I want to suggest that we need to try to imagine the time, money and stress that could be saved if people could simply practise early intervention by knowing their vital stats and by making sure that they are on top of that.

Our government has taken a number of initiatives on the health promotion/educational front, and those are important. I think the initiative that is being taken by the honourable member today certainly stands in that category.

Another measure the good doctor didn’t mention, and it’s probably not directly applicable here, is PSA. Some people debate about PSA testing, but if you’ve got a baseline, I’ve discovered—your PSA doesn’t necessarily have to be high, but if the increase is dramatic, you go and you get tested and sometimes you get bad news.

So I support the good member from Etobicoke North, and hope and expect everyone else in this House will as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for debate has expired. The honourable member, Mr. Qaadri, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Of course, I thank my various colleagues, MPPs Kular, Ramal and McMeekin, et vous

aussi, madame Gélinas, représentante de la circonscription de Nickel Belt, pour votre soutien et aussi pour avoir souligné la terminologie « circonférence de la taille ».

I, of course, thank former Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer, whose always gracious remarks are partisan when necessary, but not always necessarily partisan.

And even to you, sir, MPP O’Toole from Durham, for your, let me say, wholehearted if occasionally strained support as well: I welcome it.

I would just like to very briefly not only acknowledge the support of this House, but look forward to the implementation on the ground. I wanted to very briefly just re-emphasize the idea that we should engage in the conversation. I hope Ontarians grasp this idea of cardiometabolic risk, the idea that this is a package deal, a clustering of conditions. Physicians are not just waiting now for patients to be diagnosed, by the way, with diabetes, but with pre-diabetes; not with hypertension or high blood pressure, but with pre-hypertension. We need to access patients and their bloodstreams in order to optimize therapy as time goes on.

Again, very briefly, there are particular numbers—for example, things like waist circumference, waist measurements—and a piece of new information that they are out there teaching physicians is that these numbers, these cut-off numbers, differ depending upon ethnicity. There are different numbers, different cut-off zones, for European, Caucasian, South Asian, Chinese, Japanese, South-Central American, Middle Eastern and so on. I would encourage all patients, all Ontarians, all Canadians to learn those numbers.

Iron—something on the order of about 5% to 10% of patients in Canada of both genders are iron-deficient.

I welcome the support for the government of Ontario to move forward on this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We’ll vote on Mr. Qaadri’s ballot item in about 100 minutes.

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DES PETITS IMMIGRÉS BRITANNIQUES

Mr. Brownell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to proclaim British Home Child Day /
Projet de loi 12, Loi proclamant le Jour des petits
immigrés britanniques.

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on Bill 12, an act to proclaim September 28 in each year as British Home Child Day, and to share with my colleagues a story that few Canadians know anything about. It is a story about cour-

age, strength and perseverance. It is a story of Canada's British home children.

At the outset, I would like to introduce descendants and friends of these home children, descendants whose ancestors came from the Quarrier's home in Bridge of Weir, Scotland. We have here today Sandra Joyce, whose father, Robert Joyce, was at Quarrier's; Sandy and Victoria Drysdale—Sandy's father, James Drysdale, was at Quarrier's home; June and Keith McKey—June's mother, Christina Myles, and uncle James Myles, were at Quarrier's. I really want to thank June for providing the little Bibles given to your mother and uncle as they left Glasgow.

We have Lynda Burke, along with her brother Fred Wardle and his wife, Susan. It was Lynda's and Fred's mother—her name was Catherine McCallum. They were at the Bridge of Weir's Quarrier's orphanage.

Also we have friends here. We have Grant Bridge and John Hynes, and they are Friends of the British Home Child.

Between 1869 and 1939, about 100,000 children were sent to Canada from Great Britain, many of them to work as farm labourers and domestics in homes in Ontario and across Canada. These were the British home children, boys and girls anywhere from six months to 18 years of age.

They were part of the child emigration movement. Most of them came from orphanages or other institutions, such as the Maryhill Industrial School in Glasgow, Scotland, an institution known to my grandmother.

For a variety of reasons, the children were sent to Canada, particularly Ontario, as we were a growing economy and in need of labourers. Officials believed these children would be better off in a new land, with fresh air and wide-open green spaces.

Most of the children were transported by British religious and charitable organizations. For the most part, these organizations believed that they were doing a good and noble thing for the children, who were worse off living in poverty in Great Britain.

In reflecting on the home children of Ontario, we think about the work of Dr. Thomas John Barnardo, the energetic founder of the Barnardo's Homes that placed 30,000 children in Ontario. We think of Maria Rye, who brought the first group of British home children to Canada in 1869 and housed them in a refurbished jail near Niagara-on-the-Lake. We remember the Annie MacPherson Home, originally opened in Galt, Ontario, in 1871, then moved to Stratford, Ontario, in 1883.

James Fegan was the founder of Mr. Fegan's Home for Boys in North Buckinghamshire, England, and in other communities throughout England. He had a distributing centre at 295 George Street, here in Toronto.

To my family, William Quarrier is remembered as the founder of the Orphans Homes of Scotland, having sent over 7,000 Scottish children to Canada from Quarrier's Village at Bridge of Weir, just outside Glasgow, between 1871 and 1938.

It was from Fairknowe Home, Quarrier's receiving home in Brockville, Ontario, that my grandmother Mary

Scott Pearson and great-aunt Margaret Scott Pearson, were sent out as domestics in Ontario homes.

As for my grandmother, she was just 42 days shy of her 14th birthday when she arrived as an orphan at Halifax, Nova Scotia, aboard the S.S. Hibernian, on September 28, 1891. After spending some time in cottage 10 at Quarrier's Village, her sister, Maggie, departed from Greenock, Scotland, aboard the S.S. Pomeranian four years later, in 1894. Fortunately for these two young orphans, they were to be reunited in eastern Ontario before Maggie departed with her husband to homestead in Manitoba.

The story of the British home child is one of challenge, determination and perseverance. Many home children faced adversity; most were able to overcome it, but it was by no means easy. The British home child faced considerable challenges, and some experienced tremendous hardships. They were susceptible to mistreatment because their living conditions were not closely monitored.

Arriving in Ontario with their worldly possessions tucked into little wooden trunks, siblings were often separated upon their arrival, and many never saw each other again. This is an important part of their story that deserves to be told.

In further research for this presentation today, I discovered that an outstanding Canadian author, Jean Little, did just that. She told the story of the British home child in her *Dear Canada* book titled *Orphan at My Door*, a book that received the CLA Book of the Year award in 2001.

Described by many as a national treasure, Jean Little allows young readers—and those not so young, I might say—an opportunity to step into the life of Victoria Cope, through the diary pages that she began on her 11th birthday, in 1897. The family took in a home child, an orphan from England, to help with the housework. A small, quiet 12-year-old girl named Mary Anna Wilson enters Victoria's life, and her diary pages relate stories of hardship and determination: a deceased mother, separation from younger siblings and determination to find a family. Jean Little has cleverly woven fact and fiction and has certainly helped to educate young minds to the trials and tribulations of the British home child.

1500

The story of the British home child does not end with an arrival in a new land. Due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children did endure, and most of them went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contribute immeasurably to the development of Ontario.

While the British home children were underprivileged and suffered from unfortunate circumstances, they endured, and almost all of them who came to Canada remained in Canada. They grew up to raise families of their own. They contributed to our country's economic growth and prosperity. They helped to cultivate our country's values and defend our country's freedom. More than 10,000 of them fought for Canada in the First and Second World Wars.

In a February 23 email to me this year, Carol Elder mentioned the service to country by her grandparents:

“Both of my maternal grandparents were home children who came at very young ages to Canada through Dr. Barnardo’s home. My grandmother was a toddler when she arrived, and I know that she and my grandfather endured many hardships and things they never spoke about to me.

“They arrived in rural Ontario and worked on farms, taking care of children and doing housework starting at a very young age and lasting until it was time to serve in World War I.

“I was horrified when I read accounts of home children and realized some were servants and slaves, and I know Canadians aren’t aware of this at all. It’s a well-kept secret, partially because our grandparents were too ashamed to be home children and many did not have good experiences, so never talked about it. Canadians need to know this part of our history and how hard it was for these children to endure all that was expected of them as ‘home boys’ and ‘home girls’ and what they had to do just to survive.”

Canada’s British home children are part of our country’s history. They are part of our heritage. They represent a part of our past, and their descendants—these people in the gallery today—represent a part of our future. Their stories are ones that need to be taught in our schools.

Today, it is estimated that 12% of Canada’s population is made up of British home children and their descendants. They represent more than four million Canadians, and the number continues to grow. Yet there are many Canadians who still don’t know the story of the home children. They are not aware of the hardships they suffered and the sacrifices that were made. They are not aware of the tremendous contributions that British home children made to the social and economic fibre of our great province.

In a letter to me just a few short weeks ago, Kathy Crowhurst, of Stevensville, Ontario, writes:

“My father was one of the children that were deposited on Canadian soil, many years ago. I have an aunt, but I have no idea where she is located or if she has a family.

“I fervently believe that Canada grew into the country it has become because of these children. Through desire or necessity, they came with hands willing to help, not hands out looking for assistance.

“My father was instrumental in forming the local fire department, the local school board and, with others, an early form of social assistance. If anyone was ill, injured or unable to work, local farmers, of which my father was one, would donate a sack of potatoes, root vegetables, along with packages of meat, until the person was back on their feet.”

Kathy Crowhurst concludes her remarks to me with these words: “I agree with your recognition for a day to be established to honour the men and women who helped

create the Canada that so many enjoy today, and take for granted.”

Many Ontarians are not familiar with the story of acceptance, the desire for home children to be accepted into families and lives of Ontarians. Since introducing a similar bill to Bill 12 in this Legislature on February 18 this year, I have received many letters and emails from Ontarians. Ron Baker of Cornwall, Ontario, in my riding writes:

“My father, Edwin Matthew Baker, was a British home child.

“As was common with home children, he never spoke of his past, and job one when they arrived in Canada was to eliminate their accents and all vestiges of England. This my father did.

“Always interested in my family’s history, my search began in 1970 with a letter to the Boston registry office and the Gibbs Home. Boston indicated they had nothing, and the letter to Gibbs Home was returned. So my search stalled for many years.

“This fact, that my father was a home child, was only discovered by me in August 2008 when I, by chance, Googled “Gibbs Home” because I had an old, torn envelope addressed to my father at the Gibbs Home in 1940. To my surprise, I came upon a site to which I asked a very general question.

“I received an answer from Sarge and Pauline Bampton, home children representatives in Quebec. They informed me that they had records of my father’s stay in the Gibbs Home in Sherbrooke, records of his arrival in Quebec and, in fact, had his original ‘wooden footlocker’ in their shed with his name stencilled on it.

“My father had rid himself of the box at the first farm he worked at in 1928. It remained there until 1998 when it was passed on to the Bamptons and then to me in 2008.”

In letter after letter and email after email I received messages from descendants of home children that told of hardship and sacrifice. Some of them were very hard to read because of having to read about situations of abuse.

In conclusion, we, as provincial members of Parliament, have the opportunity to change the lack of knowledge about the contribution to Ontario by British home children. We can help tell their story. We can proclaim September 28 the day of the British home child in the province of Ontario. We can give Ontarians an opportunity to learn about their past and collectively recognize the contributions of Ontario’s British home children and their descendants.

This year, Canada Post will issue a stamp commemorating home children. As well, the federal government has proclaimed this year, 2010, as the Year of the British Home Child. Here in the province of Ontario, I encourage my fellow parliamentarians to join me in officially recognizing September 28 as British Home Child Day.

As I speak to the folks in the gallery, it was my pleasure last September to accompany these folks over to the orphanage at Bridge of Weir, Quarrier’s Village, as we learned, as we discovered, as we understood the sac-

rifices these people made, and also to understand the contributions that were made to Ontario by the descendants. I want to say thank you to the descendants we have here for the work that you have done and for the encouragement you've given me to have this day proclaimed.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I am pleased to join my colleagues and rise in the House to speak in support of Bill 12, which proclaims September 28 each year as British Home Child Day.

I want as well to welcome the people in the gallery who have come today to listen and to watch the debate.

My riding of Leeds–Grenville is just next door to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Because of the nature of this place, we sometimes don't often agree on issues, but I am pleased today that I will be supporting his bill. There are probably some times on this side of the House when maybe he does support some of the issues that we champion and I know in my heart that some day he'll reciprocate his support for something I'm looking for.

Bill 12 has a great significance to me, not just personally and to my family, but also in the riding I represent, Leeds–Grenville. You see, my wife Deanna's paternal grandfather, Sidney Roberts, was a British home child. He came to Canada as a seven-year-old boy with his older brother John, who was nine. They were part of a group of children aged seven to 19 on the Dominion Steamship Line that departed from Liverpool on July 30, 1908, bound for Montreal. They were then shifted to Ontario and Deanna's grandfather lived in Woodstock. He lived with a farm family, but he was never adopted.

Sidney's mother died in childbirth and he was the youngest of 11 children. The family was separated and some of the children remained in England, some went to Canada, some to the United States and some to Australia.

My late father-in-law, Dave Roberts, who was a great fan of this place—he watched the legislative channel intently when it was provided; I know now some of the satellite companies don't provide it. I know he would have been very happy with my election on March 4 and if he was alive today he would be watching the legislative channel and be proud to have his father's name mentioned with such a wonderful bill, Bill 12.

As well, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Mr. Brownell, mentioned the receiving house in Brockville, Ontario, in my riding, that his grandmother and his great-aunt were sent from as domestics. The home is located in my riding and I would like to take a few moments to speak about it. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the Brockville historian Doug Grant for providing me with some historical information on the Fairknowe Home for Scottish orphans that is now known as the Fairknowe Apartments, at 6 Fairknowe Drive in the city of Brockville.

I've known Mr. Grant for many years, and I commend him for his assistance and also for the work that he's

done in my riding to preserve and promote history in the area.

1510

I know that I can't use a prop, but I do have some historical documents that Mr. Grant has provided me. I'm sure that the people in the gallery have seen some of the pictures that have been in the history books of the Fairknowe Home, but I have in front of me a picture—it's an amazing photo, dated 1897—that was taken at the side of Fairknowe, the Quarrier home for orphans in Brockville. It was a large group of mostly girls that had just arrived by ship and railway from Scotland, and there's a small group of boys dressed in dark suits with white collars.

“The organization run by William Quarrier, the Orphan Homes of Scotland, purchased this large house in the east end of Brockville in 1888 from Amelie and Harry B. Abbott, the previous owners. Abbott had been the vice-president and managing director of the Brockville and Ottawa Railway while living here. Earlier, from about 1847 to 1871, it had been the home of Caroline and George Crawford, the original owners.”

I'm told that the taking of a group photo like the one I have in my hand was a tradition when a new group of boys and girls arrived. The adults who are pictured do include William Quarrier and his wife, Isabella, although I understand from talking to some historians that some of the people in the document remain unidentified.

In later years, the Fairknowe Home was operated by Claude Winters, who was its superintendent, and operations of that facility closed in 1934, when the property was sold to Dorothy and Arthur Hardy. It's interesting to note that some of the early work of the children's aid in Brockville was, for a time, carried on at this home on Fairknowe. The property was ultimately subdivided for housing in 1934. The remains of this once elegant home can still be found on Fairknowe Drive, as I mentioned; it's an apartment building. There's really nothing recognizing what had happened at that facility. There wasn't much other than some of the books that have been published and some of the writings that I had the pleasure of getting from Mr. Grant.

I should mention that a section of the old Brockville cemetery contains a large monument with the names of a number of children who died here, in my riding in Brockville, while under the care of the Quarriers.

I also want to take a few moments to mention a meeting I had in my Brockville constituency office on April 16. Donna King from Brockville visited me about Bill 12 and introduced me to the details of the life of Walter Wilson, who passed away in 1979. I've known Donna King for a long time through her daughter Darlene. I have been friends and I worked in the Recorder and Times with Darlene's husband, Jeff Lawson. Donna's husband, Wayne, is the deputy chief for the Elizabethtown-Kitley fire department. My sons spent a lot of time with one of the Lawsons' sons. They have two boys, Dane and Drew, and I know they played hockey together.

It was just a wonderful meeting I had with Donna as she was lobbying me to support Bill 12 and talking about Walter Wilson. He was originally named Walter Collett. It was amazing, some of the possessions that Donna still had—significant possessions from Walter’s life. She had his certificate of education from Dr. Barnardo’s Homes in London, England, and she has the original Dr. Barnardo’s trunk which was given to each student for the transportation of all their possessions. She also showed me a picture of a personal medallion which had “For Good Conduct and Length of Service” from Dr. Barnardo. Donna also had Walter’s army records, including a notification of a change of name, which actually took place in the field of battle in Italy on December 26, 1943, where Walter changed his name from Walter Collett to Walter Wilson. Donna was very, very interested. She had a number of documents.

The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry should know that she did quite a lot of research. She had a number of newspaper clippings. I believe there was one from the Toronto Star commending the member opposite for his work. She was very, very excited. I had with me, at that meeting, the letter from Mr. Brownell asking for my support for the bill, so I think she was very surprised that I knew about the bill. But I really appreciated meeting with her and learning a little bit more about Walter’s life in Brockville. He was a former employee of the corporation of the city of Brockville.

I’m pleased to join with my fellow MPPs to tell the story of the British home child. I applaud the member opposite for his private member’s bill proclaiming September 28 as British Home Child Day in the province of Ontario.

I want to echo his comments about Canada Post. I’m glad that Canada Post will be issuing a stamp commemorating home children, and it is very fitting that the federal government has proclaimed 2010 the Year of the British Home Child. It is important for us to give Ontarians an opportunity to learn from their past and for all of us to recognize the contributions and sacrifices of the British home child. I appreciate that some of their descendants are here today to join in this event.

It was a tough life for some of these orphans, and certainly their story needs to be told. Again, I want to applaud the member opposite for bringing this bill to the floor of the Legislative Assembly today.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to rise in support of this motion. I want to let the proponent know that we, as New Democrats, will support this. We think this is, as they say in the business, a bit of a no-brainer.

The unfortunate reality is that our history has sometimes taught us how not to do things. We’ve seen a different day today, compared to the 1800s and early 1900s, in how we treat each other as people, and more importantly, how we treat kids. Unfortunately, far too many of the British home children that were sent to Canada in order to find homes for them, given the

circumstances back home, ended up in some homes that, quite frankly, were less than stellar as we would say, where children were abused in multitudes of ways that in the end didn’t lead to anything productive when it came to their experience.

I think that for us, as the Ontario Legislature, to recognize that that is the fact and that is what happened, and that we want to do something in order to recognize that pain and that suffering, is a good thing but also a bit of a celebration, because not all of these children were treated badly, and we have to also put that on the record. A number of families did provide positive experiences for those kids who came into Canada, worked on the farms and did the work they did as British home children, and all—those who were unfortunately often abused and those who were not—ended up becoming very productive members of our society. I think we need to celebrate that.

I think it says something about the human spirit, and that is that in the worst, most adverse conditions, the power of the human soul and the power of the individual are sometimes beyond explanation. People can live with some of those experiences, grow strength from them and decide that this is not the type of life they want to live, and certainly not the life they want other people to live, and gain from that experience, from what they’ve lived, an opportunity to give back to society what they think it should be as an experience for somebody going through very similar circumstances.

So you look at the contributions of the British home children as a result of those experiences, both negative and positive. They’ve come back into our society and repaid this country—far more than we probably deserve considering what happened to them—in the fields of art, science, work, labour, business, and the list goes on. And yes, even provincial and federal politicians come from those experiences, and have contributed to what Ontario is today. I think it’s also incumbent upon us to recognize the valuable contribution these kids gave to society, not just as children, but more importantly as they became adults and started to become full members of our society.

It is unfortunate, as was mentioned by the member who sponsored the bill, that far too often the kids would end up having to settle in some home somewhere, and somehow or other they had to forget their heritage. They had to forget who they were. They had to stop speaking with a British accent and become Canadian. I think that something we’ve learned, probably over the last at least 30 to 40 years, is that that’s not necessarily the right thing to do. A country and a people are better when they know where they come from, are proud about who they are and are able to live in a country called Canada in a way that they’re able to also find room to say, “I’m proud, I’m British, I was born in Britain, I’m English. I have heritages. I’ve got traditions. I have particular accents that are different than others,” and we should celebrate that, because, at the end of the day, that’s what I think makes Canada such a unique place in the world: that we have, over the last 40 years, very much changed

our policies when it comes to how we become more tolerant and very much so become much more a multicultural community.

1520

We know that immigration in Canada, by and large in the beginning, was mostly English and French, and eventually other European stock, but over the last 30 or 40 years we see people from all points of the earth. As we look at our country now, as we look at our province and we look at our cities and towns, we've become stronger. Was it hard at the beginning? Obviously. Nobody likes change. Everybody resists change. Everybody—I shouldn't say "everybody," but most people would rather things stayed the way they are. But as British home children have contributed to the fabric of Ontario and Canada, we are learning from that experience that if we allow others to live in our country and to express themselves as who they are, as a country, as a province and as cities and towns, we are a much, much stronger place.

Again, I want to say to the member who sponsored this bill: job well done. We will be supporting you. I just want to repeat, because I know my colleague the member from Nickel Belt wants to speak to this as well, that we recognize that the hardships and the sadness that unfortunately far too many kids experienced as a result of the treatment they had from their foster families, the people they came to live with, were beyond description in many cases and, quite frankly, as somebody said early in debate, a lot of people who have gone through it would rather not discuss themselves, as a result of the experience they had. We also need to recognize that there were a lot of kids who did come and have a very positive experience. We did have families out there who tried to do the right thing.

On behalf of New Democrats, we want to support this bill and we encourage its passage as a motion.

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

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to rise in support of the bill of my partner from Stormont-Dundas and South Glengarry.

The practice actually started in 1618, when 100 children were sent to Virginia. Often children were kidnapped from Scotland, and they were used for labour shortages in the British colonies. That practice continued until 1757, when it was exposed. The Children's Friends Society was founded in 1830 in London. The Society for the Suppression of Juvenile Vagrancy was identified, and the first group of children was sent to the Cape of Good Hope and Swan River in Australia, in the colonies, in 1832. In August 1835, 230 of those children were shipped to Toronto and to New Brunswick.

The main pioneer of child migration was actually the Scottish evangelical church. That's when the anger actually started with Annie Macpherson, her sister Louisa Birt, and the Londoner Maria Rye. They were appalled by child slavery and the abuse of those children in the matchbox industry. So, in 1870, they purchased a very

large workshop. They called it Home of Industry, where they fed and they educated the poor children. Some 500 children were trained and sent to Canada into these distribution homes that my colleague spoke of in Belleville, Galt and Knowlton.

It's absolutely amazing, when you consider the number of children. It is estimated that over 350,000 children were sent to the colonies in all of this time. What did happen, as well, was that in 1874 the London Board of Governors decided to send a representative, and his name was Andrew Doyle. The reason was because there were rumours of abuse of these children. In fact, and I'm going to quote from his report: "Because of Miss Rye's carelessness and Miss Macpherson's limited resources, thousands of British children, already in painful circumstances, were cast adrift, to be overworked or mistreated by the settlers of early Canada, who were generally honest but often hard taskmasters."

The British House of Commons set up a ruling. They put in place a committee, and they decided to investigate, but in fact they did nothing. Believe it or not, this practice continued until 1960. Until 1960, this practice actually continued. As I indicated, they identified, from that first 100 children in the colony in 1618, 150,000 children were dispatched over those 350 years—amazing.

Today they say often we should learn from history or we are doomed to repeat it. I think today of the British home children and what they must have gone through and I think of the child soldiers in Africa, who too are kidnapped from their families. The difference is that instead of a sickle or scythe in their hand, they are given a gun. But they too were taken, as they were in Europe. A lot of these parents believed their children would be in an orphanage. They didn't know they were being shipped across to the colonies; they had no idea. Not all of these children were homeless. They had parents, just parents who couldn't afford to care for them, so they put them where they thought they would be fed and educated, and yet they were actually abused and abandoned—amazing.

The other thing that's very amazing for me is that although there has been an apology by the Australian government, our Canadian immigration minister then, Jason Kenney, said, "There's no need for Canada to apologize for abuse and exploitation suffered by thousands of poor children shipped here from Britain starting in the 19th century.... The issue has not been on the radar screen here, unlike Australia where there has been a long-standing interest. The reality is that, here in Canada we are taking measures to recognize that sad period, but there is, I think, limited public interest in official government apologies for everything that's ever been unfortunate or (a) tragic event in our history."

Well, I disagree, and I'd like to think that my colleague's member's bill will actually make a difference to the families, to the descendants. There are, indeed, times when apologies are important, because as a Canadian, as a person who represents a constituency, my constituency needs to know that our history has not been spotlessly clean, that in fact there are circumstances where we need

to step back and say, “I’m sorry” and to ensure that this abuse does not continue in any other part of the world today as it did in the past so that we can, in fact, learn from our experiences.

I think this is an important part of what we’re all about. It’s a teachable moment that you have given us, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and I hope that all of us in the House will, in fact, think this through on how we can take it to our constituency and share this time with all the members of our constituency, so they too will know what, in fact, a British home child is and why we need to make a difference today so that in fact there will be a difference tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for bringing this motion forward. Like my colleague the NDP member from Timmins–James Bay said, we will be supporting the motion. I will start with an apology: Until this issue was brought forward in the Legislature, I knew really very little about it. It’s through the effort of the member that I discovered a part of our past that I think none of us can be very proud of.

As the speaker went on and as we did a little bit of research, you realize the tough time that those children went through. First, it doesn’t matter how poor your mom and dad are; they are your parents. They are your mom and dad, and you had to leave them behind. You were leaving them behind and going on a ship. I can just imagine how scared those children must have been, with a bunch of strangers, without having their parents around, going to a land that they knew nothing about, meeting with people who had weird accents, if they spoke their language at all. That must have been a very, very scary time for all of those kids. Then, as you start to dig into the issue and realize that this was not done one off—350,000 children were taken away from their parents or sent away, until we had a few good people who came to the rescue and tried to help those kids. The circumstances that we know about, and I think that motivated the member to put this motion forward, were that those kids were not treated well. They were, as has been said, treated like cheap labour and slave labour on farms. I’m sure that in the late 1700s and early 1800s—and even, I learn now, up to 1960—in centuries past, life was hard and everybody had to work hard. But those children didn’t just pull their share; those children were used as slaves. There’s something fundamentally wrong when you hear those words put together. How many ships came over, I have no idea, but it must be many, many to bring that many kids over.

1530

I want to support the Anglican Church and the people within that church who took those kids under their wing and tried to help them as best they could. But it also shows a failing. All of the governments that were there and all of the adults that were there failed those children.

The member from Etobicoke Centre—sorry, I know you by name, not by riding—certainly mentioned that those horrors, unfortunately, are still happening to this day. She points toward the child soldiers. There are many children around the world right now who are living this. In French we call them *les talibés*: they are kids who have been abandoned and then picked up by people who use them for their own benefit and not for that of the child.

I sit on an international panel for women, and we decided as a group to look at people trading. I didn’t even know what that meant, but it was a subject that interested the other women on the panel that I sit on. Then I realized that there were over 2,000 women and children who came into Ontario illegally. Those stats were from two years ago, from 2008. Over 2,000 women and children were brought mainly to Ontario, illegally, to be used in the sex trade, the drug trade and to be maids and babysitters for people in Ontario. I guess, as the member said, we have a hard time learning from our mistakes. What happened there was a mistake. What those children endured is something that shouldn’t have happened. We’re thankful that their descendants are here with us today in this Legislature so that we can pay tribute to them. You have lived through—and your ancestors have lived through—horrendous beginnings, but I hope you will help us learn from our mistakes so that we never, never do that again, not in Ontario and not anywhere else. You are stories of survivors; a story that’s worth telling and a story that’s worth sharing, so that as we become aware of those shameful parts of our past, we learn and we dedicate ourselves: Never again.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am also very pleased to be able to speak to this private member’s bill introduced by my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. As has already been mentioned, this bill, if passed, will proclaim September 28 of each year as British Home Child Day. I strongly support this bill for reasons that will readily become apparent. For you see, the story of these little immigrants, known as British home children, is also the story of me and my family. Next Tuesday, it will be 99 years to the day since my grandfather, Alfred Charles Hoskins, and his brother William left the Port of Liverpool, England, on the SS Tunisian steamship bound for Quebec City. My grandfather was 15 years old, his brother just 14. Their mother, we learned later, had died of measles when they were still toddlers and their father succumbed a few years later to tuberculosis.

Both were born in Islington, then a poor district of London. When their father became ill, they were sent to a nearby workhouse and, shortly thereafter, as was mentioned, transferred to Miss Macpherson’s Home of Industry and put to work.

As had been the practice for decades, and would be for decades to come, Annie Macpherson’s homes for orphans and paupers, along with the Thomas Barnardo homes and countless others, provided the child substrate for an immigration policy that subscribed to the view that

these unfortunate children would find moral and economic salvation in rural Canada. That is to say, it was the practice at the time that orphaned and, more often, simply the children of poor parents were rounded up and shipped—100,000 or more in all—to Canada. Tens of thousands were also sent to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

In the case of Canada, they were deployed as labourers in farming communities right across the country but primarily here in Ontario. So after arriving by boat to Quebec City, the two boys, Alfred and William, were brought to Ontario. My grandfather, Alfred, was placed on a farm in Norwich in southwestern Ontario where he was put to work milking by hand some 40 cows a day for a fellow named Nelles. He was treated well, became of age, married a girl from Brantford, joined the Salvation Army and had three boys, starting with my dad, who's watching today, William Hoskins, Bill. My dad was born in 1929 and the family moved to Simcoe. Alfred, my grandfather, went to work for Borden's Dairy and, some 30 years later, yours truly was born.

Now, despite already having lost both parents, grandpa and his brother William were separated when they were brought here to Ontario, despite coming across on the same ship. William, or Uncle Bill as we knew him, was sent to a farm just outside of Fergus. World War I followed soon after and Uncle Bill enlisted. I actually have his attestation papers where he enlisted.

I should give credit, actually, to the National Archives of Canada, as I feel like we have a bond here. The descendants who are here of home children give credit to the National Archives. There's a wealth of information about home children on many sites, but the National Archives have made a real effort to put all of this information online, so I was able to actually see the ship manifest for the ship that they came across on and the attestation papers I mentioned when my uncle enrolled in World War I.

After he enrolled, he was deployed to France and was among those gassed at Ypres, it seems during the battle of Passchendaele. Despite his injuries, he returned safely to Fergus. He married and was the foreman in the sheet metal division of a washing machine factory for 45 years.

Many of the children sent to Canada as British home children faced tremendous challenges, including horrible abuse, poverty, loneliness and malnutrition. My grandfather and great uncle, despite being separated, were among the lucky ones and were treated well by supportive families.

Home children faced and overcame enormous obstacles and challenges, contributing so much to this country's culture and its economy. I'm proud that my great uncle was one of more than 10,000 British home children who fought for Canada in the First World War.

Now, a few years ago, my father, Bill, and I travelled with my mother, Jean, back to England, where we combed through the archives of the Macpherson home where my grandfather and his brother had stayed as

orphans. We visited the street where the two boys were born, and no doubt we have countless relatives in England whom we will never know.

Today, it is estimated, as has been mentioned, that more than 10% of Canada's population is made up of British home children and their descendants. And I am one of those many descendants, and I'm proud to stand in this Legislature today in support of this bill.

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

Seeing none, Mr. Brownell, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would, first of all, like to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville, the members from Timmins–James Bay, Etobicoke Centre and Nickel Belt, and certainly the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, for their support and encouragement of this bill.

1540

When I presented this bill on February 18, I was sitting way down there. I remember the Minister of Health Promotion coming over and having a wonderful chat with me about the bill that I was presenting. I didn't think that it would receive the coverage that it did, especially from James Coyle in his article in the Toronto Star, but we heard stories this afternoon, and especially the stories from the member from Leeds–Grenville, who discovered—and I met the member on April 16 in Kemptville, Ontario. We were at the same function. He commented and told me how excited he was that he was going to visit the individual in his riding who had all these artefacts and stories and whatnot. I could just see the excitement in his eyes. I'm delighted this afternoon that he was able to impart that here in the Legislature.

When I presented here on February 18, I had no idea that anyone sitting in the chamber, any member, was connected to this story of the British home child. I felt that with the numbers we had in Canada, the number of children who came over and the number of descendants there could be, there possibly were others. I was absolutely thrilled when Dr. Hoskins, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, approached me and said that he had a story to tell. He has a story of a grandfather who, 99 years ago next Tuesday, left Great Britain.

When I stand here today, having had these little Bibles presented to me, and when I open these—I can't lift them up and show you, but when I opened those Bibles and saw that Christina Myles left with her Bible on June 6, 1914, and James Myles, her brother, on March 6, 1915, that's the history; that's the story of courage, determination and perseverance that we all want to talk about with this bill.

I encourage all members to support it. Let's have September 28 of each year as British Home Child Day in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Brownell's item in about 50 minutes' time.

MINING AMENDMENT ACT
(RESOURCES PROCESSED
IN ONTARIO), 2010
LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MINES
(RESSOURCES TRANSFORMÉES
EN ONTARIO)

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to amend the Mining Act to require resources to be processed in Ontario / Projet de loi 36, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines afin d'exiger que les ressources soient transformées en Ontario.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I first of all want to take the time to thank all those people who weathered the ride all the way from northern Ontario to be with us here today. We have a number of people who were on the bus last night in order to be here for this debate. On behalf of all Ontarians and the people from where we come from, I want to thank them for taking the time to do so. I think it was extremely important, and we should give them a hand for having done that journey down here.

I would also want to indicate that the mayor of the city of Timmins is here, Mayor Tom Laughren, who has been a strong supporter and advocate working with the coalition, as we call it in the city of Timmins. He is with us in the members' gallery. Along with him is the president of our coalition, Dennis Couvrette. Earlier, we had Charlie Angus, the federal member of Parliament, who has also been a big part of what we have been doing.

We all know the story: Xstrata decided that they were going to close down. Why? Because they can; it's as simple as that. There are three copper smelter refineries in Canada: the one in Manitoba, which is shutting down this summer; the Xstrata refinery and smelter in Timmins, which does copper and zinc; and then the one in Quebec. What's happened is that Falconbridge owns two, and they decided to make more money with one. So they announced last December that they would be shutting down the smelter and refinery for both copper and zinc in the city of Timmins.

I want to put this in perspective. This is like the city of Toronto losing 35,000 to 40,000 jobs when you compare it by ratio to what it means to not only Timmins but communities like Smooth Rock Falls, Iroquois Falls, Matheson and others, whose residents commute in to this facility every day to go to work. It is a facility that adds value to copper and zinc, which is very important when it comes to what we always try to do, and that is to promote value-added products in the province of Ontario.

We have asked our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, to be our champion, the champion of the coalition. We asked him, "Sit down with Xstrata, sit down with us in the coalition, and let's look at the issues and why you want to leave. You be that champion. You help us along in

order to identify what the problem is so that we can fix it and keep those jobs here."

Yes, the Premier did meet with us, and for that, the coalition and myself want to thank him. He actually had two meetings with us—one with the coalition and the second one with Xstrata—but he stopped short of what we wanted, and that was to be that advocate, to be that champion.

I just remind people: The auto sector has gone through something quite similar. It was not a long stretch of the imagination to understand why the government of Ontario moved to try to deal with some of the issues in the auto sector. We're asking for no different in northern Ontario. The copper smelting, zinc and nickel refineries of this province are going to need help, and if you can't fix the problems at Xstrata, which I believe can be fixed, what does that mean for the rest of what goes on?

Let me talk now about the bill and simply what the bill does. Currently, section 91 of the Mining Act says that if you're a mining company and you're extracting ore in the province of Ontario, if the ore is to be processed outside of Canada, it must only be by ministerial permission. Simply put, if you have ore that you want to process outside of Ontario—for example, De Beers, which sends 90% of Ontario diamonds into Europe, has to have the permission of the government, the minister of mines, to do so. All I am proposing in this bill is to change the word "Canada" and put the word "Ontario," so that any ore that is to be shipped outside of the province of Ontario would have to have the same ministerial permission.

I listened to the government in question period today and earlier and to some of the comments they've made, both in the media and in discussions I've had with them. They say, "If we pass Bill 91, we're putting up trade protection. We're going to be making it impossible for ores that come from other places in the world to come to Ontario." Give me a break. The act already has the same provisions now that it would have if you pass the bill that I'm putting forward. The ore that goes into our steel mills in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie by and large comes from outside of Canada. Section 91 of the Mining Act is the same provision that I am proposing: Ore is allowed to come in.

As well, we have ore in Ontario that is already shipped out of Ontario. We know, for example, that the Victor diamond mine, which started up a couple of years ago, is shipping 90% of their diamonds to be processed in Europe. I would like it to be better than that and higher than that, but they have to get ministerial permission to send those diamonds out. So for the government to argue that this bill will prevent the shipping and transference of ores between Ontario and other jurisdictions—they don't understand the makeup of the mining industry and certainly don't understand what's in section 91 of the act now.

All I'm asking for is a simple change: We replace the word "Canada" with the word "Ontario." We use exactly the same language as is currently in section 91, but we replace those two words only.

That is the important thing. Why we want to do this is very simply this: Why would we not, as Ontarians, want to add value to those ores that are extracted from Ontario or the trees that come out of our forests? Why would we not, as Ontarians, say, "These are natural resources that belong to all of Ontario, and we should benefit from those natural resources in a positive way"? Why should we allow the Xstratas of this world to say, "We're going to come in and we're going to mine the ore out of the ground or pull the trees out of the forest and we're going to ship them outside of Ontario to be processed somewhere else"? Does that ore belong to those companies? Do those trees belong to those companies? No. They are the property of the people of Ontario, and we should take the time to make sure that we are able to process them in Ontario in order to add value to those products so that Ontario can benefit from the natural resources we have.

We are lucky in this province. We are blessed with much in the way of natural resources. Why should we not, in this province, want to make sure that we benefit from those natural resources that come from Ontario?

Are we proposing something that is different or new? I heard the Premier today say, "There's not a jurisdiction in Canada that does that." Have you talked to Danny Williams lately? When the Voisey's Bay mine was being started up, the company said, "We will mine the ore and we will put it into concentrate, and we're shipping it out of Labrador to be smelted and refined outside the borders of Labrador and Newfoundland." What did Danny Williams say? "Absolutely not." He says, "Those are the natural resources of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the value-added jobs will happen here in this province or you will not mine the ore."

1550

Where's our Danny Williams here in Ontario? Where's the Premier who is prepared to stand up and say what Danny Williams has done, what Alberta does, what British Columbia does, what countries in South American and Europe do, and Australia and others? That is that we control our natural resources in the sense of being able to make sure that they benefit the people of those jurisdictions.

Just recently in the paper, about two weeks ago, there was a story out of the Alberta tar sands that China wanted to buy up some of the tar sands. They wanted to buy it to get the feed oil to process in their own refineries. What did the government of Alberta say and do? They said, "Absolutely not." The oil that comes out of the tar sands of Newfoundland will be processed in—excuse me; Alberta—will be processed in Alberta.

Boy, I have to have that glass of water, don't I?

So if it's good enough for Danny Williams, it's good enough for Alberta, it's good enough for the province of Quebec, it's good enough for Nova Scotia, why is it not good enough for us?

I say to the government across the way that we should at least have this debate. You should allow this bill to pass at second reading so that we can refer this matter to a committee, have a full discussion when it comes to the benefits of this act and move forward to do what is right.

I say again, my friends, these natural resources in the province of Ontario are there for the benefit of all. They're not there just for the benefit of the companies that extract those natural resources.

We need to ensure, as Ontarians, that those natural resources, as they come out of the ground or out of our forests, are added value here in Ontario so that the economic might that once was Ontario continues.

You need to also understand here in the Legislature that a large part of our GDP comes from northern Ontario, and from where? Our natural resources. Mining and forestry are important parts of what is the economy of Ontario. Toronto is a financial capital. One of the reasons is because it is where you raise money when it comes to the mining industry in the world. The biggest centre for raising money for mining in the world is here in Toronto.

We all benefit when it comes to those natural—thank you. My health critic here is helping me out. My God. We all benefit from the activities of mining and forestry, and we should be doing all that we can in order to facilitate that value-added products are made from those natural resources that come.

To close, in the last two minutes I have: We still have an opportunity with Xstrata to do what is right. The refinery and smelter is not going to be ripped down any time soon. Yes, they're announcing that tomorrow is the beginning of the closure of that refinery and smelter in Timmins, but it's not too late. If we can get the Premier to do what we've asked him to do, and that is to get Xstrata at the table so that we can deal with the issues that they say are the reasons for them leaving, I'm confident that we can turn this around. If you can't turn around Xstrata, and Xstrata succeeds in closing and ripping down the smelter and refinery, there will never be another smelter built in Ontario; there will never be another smelter built in Ontario. This has been said by our mayor, Tom Laughren, and it has been supported and agreed with by Xstrata.

It was shocking the other day, when we were at the meeting with the Premier, the last meeting that we had. Xstrata basically admitted that the Ring of Fire that the government touts so much and wants to put forward as the saviour of the economy of northern Ontario—that none of the value-added process, when it comes to refining and smelting, is going to be done out of those ore bodies that are part of the Ring of Fire.

So I say to the government across the way, this is not just about Xstrata and the workers at Xstrata. This is about all of Ontario and about how we're able to benefit if we ensure we have proper policies that say the ore and the resources that come from the province of Ontario, we need to add value to them, and if there are good reasons why they have to go, you need ministerial permission to be able to do so.

This is not radical legislation. It is exactly the legislation that we currently have on the books in the Mining Act, under section 91. All I'm asking is that we change the word "Canada" to "Ontario."

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 36, which would require minerals that are mined in Ontario to be processed in Ontario.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge that it's really heartbreaking in any town to see a business close, to see people laid off, to see people losing their jobs. Although the perception of Guelph is that it's a university town, in fact the biggest employment sector in Guelph traditionally has been as a manufacturing town, in particular, most heavily, auto parts and also assembling in the area, which means that my town has been very hard hit by the downturn. We've also seen plants closing: one, WC Wood, which is a family-owned firm that manufactures freezers and refrigerators. If you own a chest freezer, it was probably built in Guelph. That company went bankrupt. All the people who worked there, some for multiple generations, lost their jobs.

So I do have some sense of what has been happening in Timmins and the pain that families there are feeling and of the fact that the member for Timmins is truly trying to help his constituents, as he ought to be. But for the rest of the members in this House, we do have a responsibility to look at the larger picture. I do actually agree with the member from Timmins that it isn't just about Xstrata in Timmins; we need to look at the implications for more people around the province than just this one particular situation.

As the member described, what the law currently says in essence is that minerals that are mined in Ontario must be processed somewhere in Canada unless there's ministerial permission to go elsewhere. The member, I also agree, is quite accurate when he talks about the importance of mining to the Ontario economy. From the data that I've got, it looks as though there are 22,000 jobs in mining and 50,000 in fabrication and processing of the minerals and ores that are mined. When you then look at the mining equipment and service sectors for all that mining and processing, that's probably something in the order of another 25,000 people. If you look at the employment of aboriginals, which I know is an issue that is near and dear to the member from Timmins because he also represents James Bay, the mineral sector, in fact, is the largest private sector employer of aboriginals in Canada.

We stand out in Ontario as being a huge portion of the mining that goes on in Canada. Nickel, gold, cobalt, copper, salt—in Goderich—cadmium, selenium, barite—the list goes on. Ontario's economy is significantly impacted by what happens in the mining sector. In fact, one estimate I've seen, looking at 2008—and data is always a year or so out of date—is as much as \$9.6 billion, almost \$10 billion of the economy, and that's obviously going to have varied with the recession. A huge impact—that's acknowledged. But that impact isn't just in Timmins, so we need to look at the big picture.

The big picture says that Ontario's mining sector is interrelated with the rest of Canada. If you look at who we process, what our processing and smelting business is, in Ontario we're already processing minerals and ores that are shipped from Quebec, from British Columbia,

from Manitoba, from Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as from out of country: from the United States, from Peru, from Chile and from Australia. The question is, if we were to say, "Minerals can't go out," what would be the impact if we kick off a trade war and the other provinces and other countries retaliate and minerals can't come in?

1600

If we look at the impact here, if we look at the smelting of nickel, almost 100% of the nickel that is mined stays here to be smelted; 85% is actually refined here. But if we look at what is actually going on at Xstrata's smelter in Falconbridge, near Sudbury, represented in part by the member from Nickel Belt, which employs 317 people, 40% of the nickel being smelted at Falconbridge comes from Quebec and 10% of it comes from Newfoundland and Labrador.

If we look at the iron ore that is being smelted particularly at Dofasco in Hamilton or in the riding of my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie, three quarters of it comes from outside Ontario. Three quarters of it comes from Newfoundland and Labrador, from Quebec and also from outside the country, from Minnesota and Michigan. That's 3,500 jobs in the Soo and 6,400 at Dofasco, where the members from Stoney Creek, Hamilton and Welland are obviously impacted, in terms of those jobs.

When we look at the impact, we have to look at the impact on the economy of Ontario, which is ore coming in and being processed in Ontario. Yes, some is going out, and that is truly unfortunate. But this is not the time to be setting off a trade war.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much for the opportunity to say a few words on the bill that my colleague the member from Timmins–James Bay has before the Legislature today in private members' business.

I want, first of all, to pay my regards to the members of the coalition who are here today, workers who are here today and the mayor of Timmins, Mr. Laughren, who is here today. It is their hard work, in co-operation with Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins–James Bay, that has gotten us to the point where New Democrats are actually putting solutions on the table once again, where New Democrats are telling the government it's time to wake up and smell the coffee in terms what needs to happen to make a real difference in terms of keeping good jobs in the province of Ontario.

What does that look like in this particular case? It looks like this private member's bill, which is a bill that simply makes an amendment to the existing Mining Act, changing the word "Canada" to the word "Ontario." But the effect is not simple. The effect is that the good jobs, like the 670 jobs at Xstrata, would be kept in Ontario, where the ore that is pulled out of the ground in Ontario will be processed at that smelter in Timmins.

I have to say I was there on a very cold day last week, Wednesday morning. It was nice and warm here in

Toronto, but I've got to tell you that standing on the side of the highway outside that plant with many of the people who have come today to hear this bill be debated was darned cold. But what was colder was the hearts of the people there, because they know that their government has turned its back on them and doesn't seem to care that these 670 jobs are going to be lost. Why do I say that? Because they—the coalition—actually sat down with the Premier of this province and had a discussion about what could possibly happen to save these jobs; the company was there too.

What did I hear just today as well as last week? I heard utter disappointment and anger. Why? Because in that meeting the Premier decided to sit on his hands and not provide a single—not a single—ray of hope, not a single thought of something proactive that could be done to save these jobs. That is dismal in terms of performance of the Premier of this province: happy to turn his back on these workers, on the opportunity that is still there but will not be realized any longer unless they're prepared to do something, and they can do something today. They can do something today. They can pass this bill, put it into committee and make sure that there is opportunity not only for the current workers at Xstrata but workers in the future. We need to make sure that the resources that we're pulling out of the ground in this province are creating good, decent, value-added jobs for the people of this province. It's a pretty simple concept.

We had people on the front of the lawn today talking about a totally different issue, the issue of scabs, which is an issue that's huge in another northern Ontario community, Sudbury. But part of what was happening out front was also the discussion about this very bill that we're talking about now. People out there were rallying. They were rallying, asking for their government to start doing something to help the workers in this province. Anti-scab legislation was part of it, but the other part of it was getting some acknowledgment that the government does have a role to play in keeping good, value-added jobs here in Ontario.

I am proud of Gilles Bisson, the member for Timmins–James Bay, and I am proud of my New Democratic Party colleagues here in the Legislature who are putting ideas forward. They're challenging this government to actually do something to help the workers in northern Ontario. Go and visit northern Ontario and see the communities that have literally shut down, that have halved their populations. Why? Because there are no jobs for them anymore. Why? Because the government refuses to take a strong stand. The government refuses to have a backbone and do the thing that's right for the people of this province.

I have one last thing to say on this issue, and that is on the prospect that we have potential in this province, perhaps, around a new mining opportunity that the government mentioned in its budget with great fanfare; it's called the Ring of Fire. We've all heard the Ring of Fire ad nauseam around here, but what we're not hearing are

some of the warning bells that are currently going off when, in meetings like the one with Xstrata, companies like Xstrata say that there's not going to be any processing and refining of whatever is pulled out of the ground, that chromite, from the Ring of Fire. Why? Because the government doesn't have the backbone to make sure that those minerals are processed here in Ontario. Xstrata is saying, "You're not going to have any more of it." Smelting, processing—forget it; it's not going to happen in the province of Ontario, not unless this government is prepared to make sure that it is.

Let's not pretend that 10 years down the road we're actually going to have more jobs in northern Ontario. Let's not pretend that somehow the aboriginal communities, the First Nations communities around the Ring of Fire are actually going to get some benefit from those mines—maybe enough to pull the stuff out of the ground, but certainly not the good jobs that are supposed to go with the minerals that are coming out of there.

I have to say that not only is this government doing a bad turn for the people of Timmins and the surrounding area who work right now at Xstrata, but they're doing a bad turn for the future of mineral extraction and mining in the province of Ontario if they're not prepared to grow that backbone, stand up and take the proper stand, which is that it's not just about pulling stuff out of the ground and it's not just about cutting down forests. It's about making sure that those resources create long-term, good jobs for communities in northern Ontario and across this province.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured to enter the debate on Bill 36, An Act to amend the Mining Act to require resources to be processed in Ontario, which was introduced by the member from Timmins–James Bay.

I listened to him carefully, and I also listened to my colleague the member from Guelph outlining the position of the government of Ontario. Also, I listened to the third party leader speaking about many different issues, about the company not being supported by the government. I want to say for the record, for the people of Ontario, for everyone who's listening to us today, that the Premier and the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry met with the company on several occasions and tried to give them whatever support they needed, but they refused it because they decided that they're not going to change their minds.

I've watched the third party many different times voting against the government's record. I remember when we offered GM and the auto industry some kind of support, the third party stood up and voted against our mission. They said that it was a waste of money, and many different issues came along with that. But right now, we are lucky and we are privileged to see the GM company paying back the loan, which was \$500 million, and making a profit for the province of Ontario.

1610

To the people of Ontario and all the people listening to us today, I think our Minister of Economic Development

and Trade, the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry and the Premier won't spare any effort in taking advantage of any chance to save any company, any factory across the province of Ontario, to be protected, to be prosperous, to maintain the jobs they have in the province of Ontario if we see an opportunity, if we see any chance to protect them.

So again I want to say to the member from Timmins–James Bay, whom I respect a lot, that I listen to him carefully most of the time when he speaks. But it is not going to save a company when you create a border around northern Ontario or Ontario, because we in this province believe strongly in dealing with the rest of the provinces.

We talk about an Open Ontario. When we talk about Open Ontario, we don't mean to close the doors and tell the other provinces, "We cannot send you this mineral, we cannot send you steel, iron ore, copper or nickel, because we need it here in the province of Ontario." We cannot live alone. We live in a province, a part of a nation. We have to keep interactive with the rest of the nation, with the rest of the provinces, especially when we have a lot of companies in this province that depend a lot on different resources that come from Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta and different parts of country. They come here and give us the minerals and steel we need to continue producing in the province of Ontario.

Therefore, I think the most important thing is to create a strategy to enhance our ability to maintain jobs in the province of Ontario, not by closing the border and putting a big, huge fence around the province of Ontario and saying, "Yes, we produce it here. It has to be processed here; it has to be sold and bought in the province of Ontario."

We cannot live alone. In life, we give and take. That's why I don't believe for a minute that this bill is going to protect jobs. As I mentioned, the Premier and the minister met on different occasions with the company and with many different companies from the north, the south and the east, and we do our best to preserve jobs in the province of Ontario despite the cost.

I remember that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade sat down with the jam company from the Niagara Peninsula and offered them all the support they needed to keep the company open, but they refused because they had a different strategy.

The same thing in my riding of London–Fanshawe and also in the riding of the Speaker, where they have a Ford plant: We're working with this company on a daily basis to keep them in Ontario, but if head office decides to leave, what can you do? We can do nothing about it. We do our best. We give them cheap electricity. We give them tax support. We give them a free loan for many years to stay in the province of Ontario on one condition: keep jobs in this province. We did that in the past; we'll continue to do that in the future.

But I will have a difficult time supporting this bill to close Ontario. We cannot close Ontario. We cannot live alone. We are a part of a nation. We have to work

together. We have to sell, we have to buy, we have to interact with the rest of provinces, and I think that's why we will survive. That's why we keep prospering in the province of Ontario. All the records indicate that our direction, our strategy is working. I'm more than happy to support any jobs for the north any time of the day. We believe we cannot survive as southern people. We have to work together collectively as people from the north, the south, the east and the middle, because this is what makes Ontario stronger and vibrant.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased today to rise to speak to Bill 36, introduced by the member from Timmins–James Bay, and want to thank him for bringing it forward. Obviously, from the debate we've heard thus far, it's with the best of intentions.

The member says it is not strictly to save the 670 northern jobs at Xstrata, but that, in my mind, would be a good enough reason to bring this bill forward. That's what we're all elected to do: try to protect the best interests of the citizens we represent in our ridings.

However, I just want to point out that I think it's important not only to look at this bill, although it's not a major change, as has been said by some other speakers—I have the bill before me, and sometimes the comment is made that the bill was not read before we debate it, and I think that can happen to all of us. But today, you can read the bill rather quickly. The only operative section is number 1: "Subsection 91(1) of the Mining Act is amended by striking out the word 'Canada' and substituting 'Ontario'."

That's the change this bill is making, and obviously that's not a major change. It just means that presently they have to get permission to export raw product out of the country. Changing to the word 'Ontario', I understand, would just change it that now they would also have to apply if they're going to ship it outside Ontario—not to say that they couldn't do that, but they would have to justify why that needed to be done. I think that's a wonderful thing to put forward to help deal with keeping the smelter open.

However, we should not lose sight of the bigger issue that is clearly at stake here. We have to talk about the Ontario mining industry as a whole. Unfortunately, we have a government that does not understand that in order for the industry to flourish, certain conditions need to occur. This means not driving production cost prices up so high that local processing becomes difficult. Apparently, over the past seven years, jobs have not been the priority of the McGuinty government. For the almost seven years that they've been in office, this government has done more to scare investments away than to attract them. Mr. McGuinty's favourite tool is tax increases.

In the 2003 election campaign, Dalton McGuinty campaigned on the promise not to raise taxes, but in his first budget he introduced the single largest tax increase in Ontario's history. Similarly, Dalton McGuinty boasted about Ontario's low mining taxes. Ironically, the minute

the international company De Beers invested in building a diamond mine in northern Ontario, he slapped the industry with a surprise 13% diamond tax. Three years ago, in 2007, I filed a resolution that called on the Liberal government to repeal that industry-killing McGuinty tax grab. By increasing this tax without warning, Dalton McGuinty sent a message to the international mining business community. It said: "We don't want your investment in Ontario. If you invest in Ontario, be prepared; your tax rate could double overnight with no warning." It said to businesses looking to invest here that they can't trust the Ontario government. This is the type of investment and development climate that this government is creating. No single piece of legislation—as good as this one is—can fix these problems in Ontario's mining industry with such a hostile climate.

The honourable member from Timmins might remember that he spoke to my resolution, and he agreed that this government sent a clear message out to the investment community that Ontario is not a good place for them to invest, because the government is self-destructive when it comes to the mining industry. I applaud him for trying to keep the processing jobs in Ontario. I agree with the goal, but I think we need to accomplish it by creating favourable conditions, not just through legislation. This Premier has already done his best to kill the mining industry with red tape and harmful legislation. Those mines that he cannot dismantle, he has saddled with huge taxes and high energy prices.

In contrast, our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus have put forward a plan to help create jobs in Ontario. We believe that the way to encourage businesses to invest and expand in Ontario is to create a climate in which they can grow and prosper, to create a climate that allows them to be competitive, not just with other provinces but with businesses around the world. We have proposed reinstating the Red Tape Commission to reduce the number of redundant regulations that Ontario businesses have to deal with. We've also called on the government to create a one-year payroll holiday to encourage businesses to create new jobs and make it more affordable to hire new staff.

In contrast, the McGuinty government keeps creating more policies that force jobs out of Ontario. How can we blame Xstrata for pulling out of Timmins in order to save on skyrocketing refining costs in Ontario? The blame lies with a government that has been forcing up the cost of doing business in Ontario, such as the cost of hydro. This government is taking pride in its Green Energy Act, which makes the smelter unprofitable and will lead to 4,000 spinoff job losses throughout the province, in addition to the 670 direct positions in Timmins. Under the McGuinty government's Green Energy Act, producers of renewable energy are being paid rates as high as 80 cents per kilowatt, compared to the recent market price of 3.3 cents per kilowatt or the 4.5 cents the government-owned Ontario Power Generation gets for most of its electricity.

I support renewal energy, as does all the Conservative caucus, but its production should have some connection

to economic reality. Worse, he is tying the hands of successive governments by guaranteeing this shameful price for 20-year contracts. Only someone who is completely out of touch would expect business to invest in such a hostile climate. We know that this is an issue for many of our businesses, and I've heard from small businesses, farmers, greenhouses and people in the community who are all worried about our increasing energy cost.

Unfortunately, mining is only one example of an industry that is being affected, but it is one where the results of this government's policies are already being seen. It's clear that Dalton McGuinty doesn't know what he is doing with the mining industry, or may it be that McGuinty is still deciding after almost seven years in office whether he's even interested in developing the industry?

1620

In a news conference on February 11, Mr. McGuinty said, "In a highly competitive, knowledge-based global economy, we are not going to succeed in Ontario by pulling stuff out of the ground." But in his throne speech on March 8, McGuinty had changed his mind. His new message was that mining will save the northern economy. From the throne speech, we learned, "In 2008, northern Ontario became home to our first diamond mine. Your government will build on that success—particularly in the region known as the Ring of Fire." However, in the throne speech he forgot to mention that if a mining company chooses to invest in Ontario and create jobs, the McGuinty government has a habit of bringing in surprise taxes.

It's no wonder that investment is fleeing the province in droves. They don't know what Dalton McGuinty is doing. In fact, it seems Dalton McGuinty himself doesn't know what he's doing. He's raised energy prices significantly with the Green Energy Act, making the Xstrata smelter unprofitable. He has tabled Bill 191, which will cut off half the north from any mining or development. The Ring of Fire itself lies in this area, meaning it's not even clear if the mining would be legal. He has amended the Mining Act, but hasn't created any regulations for it. He allowed De Beers to build a diamond mine in northern Ontario, then slapped them with a surprise diamond tax.

Just 10 years ago, when Tim Hudak was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Ontario was the number one jurisdiction for mining in the world. Now it's number seven. Until we have a government that respects the valuable contributions that mining makes to this province and its economy, we will see more employers leaving the province.

Ontario can lead again, but only if the person in charge is a real leader—and presently, I don't think the leader is.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: This is déjà vu for me. Three years ago, I was sent to Ottawa to lobby for the steelworkers

about the hostile takeover of Falconbridge by Xstrata. We fought against the takeover because of the questionable company record of Xstrata in Australia. They bought out their competition in Australia, promised the world, got in there for two or three years, shut down that community, shut down that plant within three years and moved on.

Let's face it: This is all about profit. It's about cheap labour. It's about eliminating your competition. This is what this is all about, and it's happening in steel, it's happening in forestry, it's happening in mining. US Steel did the same thing in Hamilton. They locked the guys out for 13 months because they wanted to play with their pensions.

This is another example of what's going on in our industry, the erosion of our base industries. We do not have Canadian content. Falconbridge and Inco were fine, established Canadian companies for many, many decades, and they got taken over. Our whole country is being taken over because the federal government and the provincial governments are not standing up to these multinationals. The multinationals are coming in, they're trying to force people about their pensions, force people to lower their wages and their benefits, and if they don't, they pull up stakes and leave, or threaten to leave.

That's what's really going on in this country, and it's been going on for the last 10 years. I've witnessed it from city, from town, right across this country. It's happening here again. Xstrata is bullying, the same as Vale Inco—the same thing, bullying.

I'm telling you right now that this is just an example of the lack of our government standing up for Canadian citizens, for good middle-class paying jobs. They want people to work for nine bucks an hour and they want to eliminate their benefits and attack their pensions.

Let's take the forestry industry as well. Let's take Kenora: two mills shut down in Kenora by Abitibi-Bowater because of the hydro rates. Xstrata is the same thing. Why in Ontario are we paying three times as much for hydro as Quebec or Manitoba? I don't understand that. We've got Niagara Falls, for crying out loud. They pay less for electricity in some of the northern states and we have more capacity to produce electricity. I don't understand that.

It's all about the bottom dollar. It's about squeezing good Canadian jobs and it's about squeezing our north. Our resources are our resources. Our resources—as the member from Timmins–James Bay has stated, we produce here and we also manufacture here. Instead of bringing in ores from all over the place—which we do have in northern Ontario; we have untapped resources there. We've got trees going down the road past Kenora—where these guys used to produce this in the mills—driving by in trucks going to Manitoba or driving to Quebec. What's going on? I can tell you right now: It's the demise of our base industries in Ontario, and if we don't start standing up and having more Canadian content, and more protectionism for Canadian jobs and Canadian mining, forestry and steel, this is going to be an

endless trip for us. It's going to keep going down and down until we do something. I firmly believe that this is a step in the right direction. Protect our resources, protect our good-paying jobs and stop being bullied by multinationals. That's what is going on.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to start by saying of the member from Timmins–James Bay that there's no more vocal champion and committed and genuinely sincere person. In fact, in his remarks—I listened earlier on—he reminds me of Danny Williams himself, with his passion and his commitment to his constituency. I mean that in a complimentary way, because he's really taking a page out of Danny Williams, who stood up and fought the idea of processing in the province versus exporting the issue, and he did mention that.

In this bill, as my counterpart from Oxford has said, there's not a lot, but it is a study of accuracy because all it does is strike out the word “Canada” and substitute the word “Ontario.” What it does is, it forces a process of review, and I think that's appropriate. In fact, in that context I can certainly support it. At the same time, I fully believe in competition and “may the best organization win.” I guess that you could say elections are like that in some respects. To me, that's important.

Here's the idea. The perception here is the reality, and the reality is that the De Beers mine example that has been explained is a footprint for this government. All of their solutions are based on taxing: getting more of your money and trying to settle the dispute in some other area with the money that you pay. Their mistreatment of northern Ontario started early on. They've pretty well decimated northern Ontario. A lot of it would be based on the electricity policy as well and the rates here. But even to the point of admitting it in their budget speech—they admitted that they're going to have to cut the price in the north by 25%, which leads me to believe that the pulp and paper and resource industry, not just Xstrata, have been suffering under an unduly high and less competitive price for electricity, whereas, if you look at Quebec and other jurisdictions, Quebec and Manitoba, our bordering provinces have a much more competitive industrial rate. Ontario's rate is going to be higher; there's no question about that.

I think you really just have to look at the health tax, the HST, the failed electricity program—and I see the municipal leaders here today. They all know that the OMPF, the upload-download, is actually not giving you a cent. They're taking the OMPF money out. The member from Timmins–James Bay has mentioned that many, many times. Those communities are going to be hollowed out. This government says one thing and does completely the opposite. I'm very disappointed.

My colleague from Oxford mentioned Bill 191 and the Planning Act, and the restrictions and the encumbrances on northern empowerment are quite sad. If you look at the economy in the north, if you look at the budget, they've admitted they've screwed up. There's a special

plan in here. It's called the Open Ontario northern strategy. There really is a serious bottom line. The current McGuinty government was asked today and he said he couldn't do anything, and yet he can render the most significant increase on the health tax and the HST that we've ever seen in this province. He has the tools; he just doesn't have the courage or the plan to use them. That's what's most disappointing here today. The Premier is causing 650 families to lose their jobs and lose their income. It's quite sad to see a leader who admits he's been defeated. That's the whole issue here today, and I commend the member from Timmins—James Bay.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It kind of disappoints, saddens and really angers me to hear things from the members from the Liberal government who will say that to ask a company that is taking our natural resources to have a conversation with the Ontario government before you take our natural resources out of our province—those are not walls. What we're asking for is accountability from the industry that takes our natural resources before they take them out.

1630

If Kidd Creek was not profitable, they could maybe make a case. But the fact is that they don't have to be accountable to anybody. All they have to do is make a business decision, like my colleague says, that is solely motivated by greed, no matter what the effect, as catastrophic as it might be, on the city that they operate in. This doesn't come into the account at all. The only thing that counts is the mighty dollar, and if the mighty dollar says that there's a penny to be made by shipping our natural resources to any other province, Ontario will sit there and do nothing.

I don't call asking for accountability for our natural resources—this is not putting up trade walls. This is asking for accountability from the people who do business in Ontario from the resources that come from Ontario. Once those resources are gone, they are gone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Bisson has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all the members who participated in this debate. I want to pick up on points that were made earlier.

This is about accountability. All this bill does is say that if you're a mining operator in Ontario and you're going to ship your ore outside of Ontario for processing, you need to get ministerial permission. That allows a check and a balance to make sure that they make the case for why the ore has to leave in the first place. It is exactly what's in the bill now, except that we only do that when it's shipped outside of Canada.

I'm not proposing anything radical. I'm not proposing anything that's out of the ordinary. It's Ontario legislation. Take away the word "Canada" and put in the word "Ontario."

I say to my friends on the other side who argued, "This is about protectionism, and we're going to lose all

of the ore that comes from outside of Ontario because they won't ship here anymore for processing at our steel mills"—hogwash. Where do you think the iron ore comes from? It comes from outside Ontario. There's no iron ore mined in Ontario anymore since free trade. Most of it comes from the United States.

By the way, section 91 of the Mining Act would have no effect on them, because for Canada and Ontario, basically it would be the same provision. When you make these arguments that somehow or other this is protectionism, read your own legislation. What do you think you currently have in section 91?

I've got to say that, as a northerner, I was disappointed that the members of the Liberal caucus from northern Ontario didn't weigh in on this debate. They either have to have the courage to stand up and say, "I am in favour," or, "I am opposed." You can't try to play it both ways.

This is about public policy when it comes to the extraction of natural resources. We need to ensure that at the end, for those natural resources that are extracted from Ontario, the value-added is given here in this province so that we can all benefit from those activities across this province and build a better province on the basis of those resources.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired. Time to vote.

HEALTHY LIVING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 13, standing in the name of Mr. Qaadri.

Mr. Qaadri has moved private member's notice of motion number 23. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DES PETITS IMMIGRÉS BRITANNIQUES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 14, standing in the name of Mr. Brownell.

Mr. Brownell has moved second reading of Bill 12, An Act to proclaim British Home Child Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Brownell?

Mr. Jim Brownell: Speaker, I'd like Bill 12 referred to the justice policy committee.

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

MINING AMENDMENT ACT
(RESOURCES PROCESSED
IN ONTARIO), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MINES
(RESSOURCES TRANSFORMÉES
EN ONTARIO)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 15, standing in the name of Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 36, An Act to amend the Mining Act to require resources to be processed in Ontario. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1635 to 1640.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Fonseca, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Ruprecht, Tony
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Sandals, Liz
Best, Margaret	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Brown, Michael A.	Levac, Dave	Sousa, Charles
Brownell, Jim	Moridi, Reza	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Murray, Glen R.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Colle, Mike	Pendergast, Leeanna	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Phillips, Gerry	
Dickson, Joe	Qaadri, Shafiq	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 27, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 231, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 231, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to talk about a bill that started off with so much promise and ended up giving so little.

I listened with some intent to my colleagues from both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party who were actually in the same committee room that I was over a number of days, to hear them talk about what they had hoped or what was, in their view, accomplished during all of that debate and all of those deputations and all of the important topics that were talked about by people. Then I listened to what they actually think is contained within the body of the bill.

Before I speak, I wish to preface that I think there are a couple of good things in the body of the bill. Every bill has some good in it, and this bill is no exception. There are two things for which I commend this government—and two things only—contained within the body of the bill that will actually be an improvement to the current election law.

The first thing is that students can vote no matter where they are living in Ontario, so that if they are away at a university or college, they don't have to rush home on or about the election day in order to cast their ballot, with all the expense and all the time that that involves. When this was before the House at second reading, I believe I stood in this place and talked about my own experience, going back all those many years, in the fall provincial election of 1971. I was living with my parents at that time in the riding of Scarborough Centre and I was at Carleton University for my master's degree. I had to hop on the train the day before election day, come all the way back to Scarborough Centre, cast my vote and then go back the day after that in order that I could cast my very first vote. You see, I was 21. I was in university. I was studying political science; I was taking my master's degree. It was my first opportunity to cast a vote, and I was not about to miss it. But I wished that I could have voted there in Ottawa, during the Scarborough Centre election, because that's where I wanted to vote. I knew the candidates. I knew what I believed. I knew who I wanted to win; I knew who I wanted to vote for. But in order for me to vote there in Scarborough Centre, I had to physically be in Scarborough Centre.

It almost cost me my job at the time. You see, I was a teaching assistant as well, teaching political science to both a first-year university class and a second-year university class, and the professor of one of the classes called me to his office when I returned because he thought I had gone AWOL. I had left a note that I couldn't be there on election day in order to teach one of the classes in the evening, and that's because I had gone back to vote. When I explained to him what I had done, he asked me why I didn't vote by proxy, why I didn't do any of a number of things, but to me it was absolutely important to cast my ballot. So I am thankful that the government has allowed in this legislation that students can vote where they go to school, as well as where they live.

The second thing that I think is important, and for which I commend the government, that is contained in the body of the bill is the depoliticization of election-day workers. I do remember throughout my entire life that political parties would be asked prior to election day to submit lists of people who were favourable to them who could work as poll clerks, as DROs, as any number of workers on election day, within the bodies and the confines of the election process. And I do remember how that was done: The government in power would elect their half, and the people in the riding where you ran second to the government, if they won that seat, could put up the other half; if there was any left over, then a third party could have some of the nominations. This was important for election people, important for political parties, in the days before election finance reform came along, because people would have an opportunity to earn some money, and some of those people in turn would donate a portion of that back to the electoral process.

But we have gone far beyond that. We have a much better system of collecting monies. We have a much better system of rebates. The whole necessity of having people chosen by political parties to take these jobs that pay \$100, \$200 or \$300 for the day is no longer economically, socially or politically acceptable. It is a very good thing that this is about to be depoliticized, and again I take my hat off to the government for this second aspect of the bill.

But this is a very timid bill. It is weak, it is ineffective, it continues unfairness and it isn't going to do a whole lot to help the political process along the road of modernization. It continues to allow third party spending limits—it doesn't rein that in, so that a third party like the National Citizens Coalition, the families coalition or any of these other groups that can amass hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars are able to influence provincial elections. It does absolutely nothing to rein them in. I know that other provinces and the federal government are trying to do something about it, but this government in its wisdom has determined that it should not be part of this act.

It continues the reliance upon corporate and union donations, and we know that other governments around this country have said that this is not what should be done in a modern electoral system. We know, if you look at

some of the people who write books on this, that there is an undue influence by corporate Canada, by developers and by unions. There is that undue influence, to the point that provinces like Manitoba and Quebec and the federal government have banned this practice. We know that the city of Toronto, the largest municipality in the province, is banning this practice. But we have here a government in Ontario that doesn't want to look at that, that recognizes the inherent unfairness of the financial process around elections and just turns a blind eye to it and says absolutely nothing. It's fine by them. I guess that's because the cash is flowing in pretty well and they don't want to look out there and say, "Maybe that cash won't be there. Maybe ordinary people don't want to finance us because maybe ordinary people don't like what we're doing around issues like the HST. Oh no, we're not going to do that. We're just going to make sure that the corporate elite, some of our union friends and, more probably than not, the developers are going to come to our rescue." So there's nothing in this bill about that at all.

1650

They are totally leaving out whole sections around municipal elections. So even though there are minor reforms around allowing students to vote and the depoliticization of election day workers, nary a word is contained within this bill that deals with the municipal election procedure. And we know that next year is municipal election year. We know that the municipalities are asking for some form of reform around this issue. We know that the city of Toronto has come forward and begged this province to change some of the election laws to make them fairer. We know that the city of Vaughan, that city above Toronto, with all of the problems that they have, has advocated for electoral reform and is trying itself to reform it. They would welcome this province stepping in and setting ground rules for municipalities. We know that of the 440 or so municipalities left in the province of Ontario, literally all of them would welcome some form of electoral change, some form of tightening up of the election rules and the election financing rules—and yet there is nary a word contained.

When I listened to Mr. Sorbara—he's not a minister, but the member from Vaughan—who was in fact the lead for the government around this entire issue, he seemed to be nonplussed. The election reform, he said, was going to be minor. It was going to be agreed. It was going to be easy. It was going to be what was doable. And he did not want to step outside the narrow confines that I think he believed he had to reside within.

There was also nothing in the entire act that dealt with advertising by third parties, not only the expenditure of the monies but the advertising by third parties. And this is a giant loophole. We saw it in the last election. My friends the Conservatives spoke about it. The member from Halton spoke quite eloquently about advertising by third parties and the Working Families Coalition, which spent a lot of money to criticize the Conservatives on behalf of the Liberal Party of Ontario. I think the bitter-

ness he spoke with was palpable, that people understand that third parties are starting to have undue influence on our elections, so much so that other jurisdictions are dealing with it, but not the government of Ontario.

Those are all things that the government left out. What the government did not deal with—and I want to spend most of my time on this—was the whole issue of disability rights and the rights of disabled citizens to cast their vote in freedom and in the same way that people who are sighted, the same way that people who are mobile, the same way that people who do not have hearing impairments, take for granted. I sat there for four solid days, as did all the members of the committee, and watched person after person come into the committee room and speak to us about what they hoped would happen around accessibility issues. And we had some wonderful speakers who came in and talked to us. They told us about their own travails, their own difficulty in being able to vote.

We had Mr. Lepofsky, who I think was the lead for Ontarians with Disabilities, who came in and spoke brilliantly for 15 minutes, which was all the time allotted to him, about the difficulty that people who are disabled have voting. We had people on the telephone. There was a woman who was deaf-blind who talked about the impossibility of her voting at election time and how aids would assist her to cast her own vote so that she did not have to proxy someone to go out and vote on her behalf, so that she could actually go into a polling booth and vote for herself and what a liberating experience that would be for her.

We had Barbara Hall, who is the commissioner for human rights in Ontario, come and talk about the failure of past voting practices in Ontario and what we could, as a Legislature, do to ameliorate the conditions and change the law in order to allow people in wheelchairs, people who require aids in order to hear or to see—to make it better.

We had group upon group upon group come in and talk to us about their own personal experience. There was a gentleman who came in who was successful in suing the federal government and received a \$10,000 payment for not being able to vote, by pointing out that he had gone to the human rights authorities in Canada the election before and had outlined in considerable detail how he could not vote because he was in a wheelchair, how you had to go down a flight of stairs in order to cast your vote, how he had to get out of the wheelchair and go down on the seat of his pants down the stairs and drag himself into a place to vote. It was found that they had done him wrong, and they awarded him some \$10,000.

We had a candidate from the last by-election in Toronto Centre–Rosedale who gave us 25 or 30 full-coloured pictures of election day, showing all of the voting places that were not accessible to people in wheelchairs, all of the ones that had steps and not ramps, all of the ones that were covered with ice, all of the ones that had been changed at the last minute, taking them out of an accessible area and putting them into an in-

accessible area so that a basketball or a volleyball game could be played.

We listened to all of that, and at the end of all of that, I was hopeful that the Liberal members on the committee would want to do something for the disabled, would want to say that disabled Ontarians have every bit as much right to vote and participate in the electoral process as anyone else who does not have a disability.

We know that some 15% to 20% of all Ontarians have a disability. For some, it is a slight disability; for some, it is much more marked; for some, it's invisible, like those who are deaf; for some, it is clearly visible—if you are blind, if you are in a wheelchair—that you have that disability.

We need to start thinking about our citizens. A few years ago, we passed the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We passed it and it's not going to come into law for 25 years. I think we're five years into it now. But there it is: 25 years from now there are not supposed to be any barriers to the disabled, but this government is not willing to speed up that process for our disabled Ontarians.

On that behalf, I was hoping against hope to get some movement, and I had the member from Vaughan who had the lead and I had the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer from Willowdale, who was there, and they kept bringing forth changes that were minor. They did not satisfy any of the disabled community who were in the room. They were minor. They were grudgingly, in my view, given. In the end, I think they failed the disabled community very much.

Among my many portfolios of which I am the critic, one of them is for the disability movement here in Ontario. I take that job very seriously, to listen to disabled Ontarians and try to ameliorate their lives and their opportunities to do what the rest of us take for granted.

One of the fundamental things that they want to do is to be able to vote in an election. They want to be able to go into a polling booth and cast their own vote, not to take someone with them who can mark their ballot without them knowing what it is, but to actually cast their own vote and have it verified.

We know from experience in other jurisdictions, including other jurisdictions and municipal jurisdictions in Ontario, that this can be done. We know that a small little place like the town of Cobourg and the town of Peterborough have already set up those kinds of voting machines, understanding that the disabled citizens need to be able to mark their own ballots, so that even if you can't see, you can mark the ballot. You can push a button and the button will tell you who you voted for. You can listen to that and you can say that's acceptable and put your own ballot in the ballot box.

Isn't that something we would want for all citizens? They can vote themselves. They can understand how they voted. They can say that their ballot is correct. They can put it in the box and they can leave like you or I leave, knowing that we have cast our vote in a great democracy. But no, this government did not want to listen to that. They did not want to do anything.

1700

Time after time after time, the member from Willowdale, the parliamentary assistant, and the member from Vaughan, who had the lead on behalf of the government, kept talking about the expense. Everything was, "How much money is this going to cost?" Yes, it might cost some money, I acknowledge that, but what is the cost of not doing that? What is the cost to the disabled community that they have to forever after say that they are second-class citizens, that they can't cast their vote in the same way, that they can't go down a hall and vote, that they can't go down those stairs into a gymnasium in the basement, that they can't work on election day because there are no disabled washrooms and you have to be there for some 12 hours, even though they may be fully competent do the job? I listened. I listened to them and listened to them, and I think we all listened to them.

In the end, we tried to do something. We put forward some 30 recommendations. I am proud to say that on almost every one of the recommendations that I tried to put forward on behalf of the disability community of Ontario, my colleagues in the Conservative Party voted for them—I think with one exception. They voted 29 times with me and with the disabled community to do the right thing, and 29 times Liberals voted no; 29 times every single hand went up on every single issue to say that the disability community could not have equal access in times of election.

I just want to read what some of those motions were, what we tried to do. To my mind, I still don't understand why they wouldn't vote for it. They simply said, "No, it's not going to happen." They gave all of the authority over to Mr. Essensa. Mr. Essensa is the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario. In my view, Mr. Essensa does a good job. I was there on the hiring committee and I voted for him. I knew him from the city of Toronto before that. He did a good job in the city of Toronto as well. But that is not the issue. The issue is fairness to the disabled. The issue is not to leave it up to one person, who may or may not by whim do what is correct, but to put and enshrine in the legislation that every single disabled person has every bit as much right and all the rights that everyone else has: the right to go into a polling booth, the right to cast a ballot, the right to verify that ballot, the right to work on election day, the right to have access to the building itself and to the washrooms contained therein—all of those rights.

We put forward the following motions, every one of which the five Liberal members present voted against. I want everybody to understand. I'm going to read these and you're going to say, "How could you vote against that?" You're going to ask yourselves, those Liberals who were not there, "How could we vote against that?" I'll be darned if I know how they could vote against that, and perhaps some of you will ask yourselves that question.

We moved that the Election Act refers to Elections Ontario either posting information on the Internet or on a website to be required to be published in a fully

accessible format, and then there's a whole bunch of language which I don't understand, "W3C WCAG 2.0 Level AA or higher," and I understand that that's a format that is accessible to people who have disabilities. We asked that all of these things be put in a format so that the disabled could read them, could understand them. It was voted down. The government doesn't want this to be in a format that they can read.

The second thing we moved was that there could be no modifications unless Elections Ontario certifies that they are fully accessible to and barrier-free for voters and candidates with disabilities. Therefore, there could not be modifications in the place where people voted unless an Elections Ontario official went in and said that they were in fact barrier-free. That was voted down. Elections officials will not be able to go in and do that. Modifications can be made that actually turn some place that is barrier-free into some place that is not. This was very strange when the government all voted against this.

Then the next one came along. We moved that, no later than the scheduled 2015 Ontario election—that's not this one but the one after that—Elections Ontario have available to voters with disabilities across Ontario accessible voting machines which will enable voters with print disabilities the ability to independently vote in privacy and to verify their choice.

We know that these machines are available throughout North America. We know that they are used extensively in the United States. We know that they are used in the city of Peterborough and in the city of Toronto, we know they are used in Cobourg, and we know that they are pretty well tamper-proof.

The government voted this down. In the 2015—never mind the 2011 election, but in the 2015 election, there will be no such machines to aid the disabled. I don't know why the government voted against this, but they did, because they never gave any rationale at any time for any of these except that, "It may be costly."

We went on to request that Elections Ontario make public by a designated date its plans for technology after consulting on it with persons with disabilities. The government voted that down. They don't want to consult with the disabled community or to make public to the disabled community and others how technology might be used—voted down as well.

We went on to say that Elections Ontario be required to make public by accessible formats, Internet sites and the media, the availability and location of accessible voting machines, because, you see, the member from Vaughan said, "Maybe these machines are expensive. Maybe we can't have them in every polling station. Maybe we can only have them in two or three places in a riding so that people would have to go to those two or three places in a riding in order to vote because these machines, of course, may cost a few thousand dollars for the day and we can't be spending that kind of money just to let the disabled vote."

We asked that this information be made public: if there were only one or two machines available in some

urban ridings and the disabled were able to go from one location to another by cab or with family or anything else, that this be made independently known to them so that they would know where to go to vote so they didn't have to go down flights of stairs and they didn't have to go into places that were not generally accessible. The answer was, "No. You can't have that either. We're voting against this."

Again, I find it very difficult to understand why they don't want to make a list public. The member from Vaughan did say that it was the government's intention to try to do something for 2015, that there would be one accessible voting machine in every riding, but it would not be available on election day; it would only be available in the advance polls so that somebody in a riding could go to the advance poll and vote with this accessible machine prior to election day but not on election day. So, because there would only be one, people would have to know where it was.

When we pointed out to him that my riding in Beaches–East York, which is only about eight square kilometres—that's all it is; it's in downtown Toronto. It is a very tight and very small geographic area, and probably most of the downtown Toronto ridings or even GTA ridings are relatively easy to get around with public transit and relatively easy to get around in terms of the geographic size. "But what about ridings in northern Ontario?" we questioned. How are you going to be able to make these disability-type machines available to people in far-flung regions in Timmins–James Bay, Kenora–Rainy River, Thunder Bay–Superior North, Manitoulin? How are you going to make these people be able to use the machines? You can't just tell them, if they live in Attawapiskat, "Come and use the disabled machines in downtown Timmins." It's several thousand kilometres away by airplane. It's not going to happen. That's not what the intent was here; the intent was to make them generally available. The government shrugged its shoulders and said, "I guess, then, we're not going to do it."

We went on to talk about broadening the criteria for home visits, to remove barriers to the use of voters with disabilities where needed, and to remove the sweeping discretion given to Elections Ontario over who will receive a home visit. You see, although the government bill allows for home visits, it is the electoral returning officer in each jurisdiction who determines whether or not a person is eligible to have that home visit where a ballot and a ballot box are taken to them to allow them to vote. At the discretion of the returning officer, you may be told yes or no. If the answer is no, there is no appeal. What we tried to point out is the need to take away that discretion, so that if somebody requested it and believes they need it, it is made available to them. That too was shot down.

1710

We went on to ask for special ballot kits and voting procedures to enable voters with disabilities to independently mark their ballot in privacy and verify their

choice. It was intended as well that a special type of reading machine would be made available so that the voter would know they had voted privately and independently and would be satisfied by the time the returning officer left their home.

We went on to talk about other things that were really important: to require Elections Ontario to undertake research about voting accessibility and require that the results of their research be made public. You would think this was a bit of a no-brainer, because the Liberal members who were there said there was going to be lots of research done by Elections Ontario over the next few years, and I take them at their word that there will be. So we asked that that be made public. Do you think that was a hard thing? That was an impossible thing for the Liberals, to actually have it made public. They voted down this provision too. They can do all the research they want, but there is no provision within the law that it will ever be made public. The disability community shook their heads, those who were there, in disbelief that this government would not release the information, if it was collected, so that they would better be able to determine whether or not we were moving down that magic road, 25 years or 21 years from now, when the disabled community will have full access in Ontario.

We went on to talk about the research that the Ontario government is going to do to investigate options for ensuring election accessibility, that they should look at some of the experience in other jurisdictions, particularly and easily in the jurisdiction immediately to the south of us—that is, the United States. We know, after the disastrous election in the United States with the hanging chads and the election of George Bush and all the schmozzle in the Supreme Court and everything that happened, that there were many instances of disabled people in that country saying that they could not cast their ballot, that it was just too difficult, and that even if they cast their ballot, they don't know whether it was correct or what they intended to do with the ballot. They had no way of verifying it.

The American government took this very seriously, and they have made huge strides and modifications to ensure that the voting procedures are fairer, that they can be understood by the disabled community, that the disabled individual does not have to leave the safe confines of the voting booth until they verify themselves that the vote was as they intended. It does not cost the earth. It is being done now at reduced cost election after election, to the point that it is now well within the realm of possibility.

We merely asked that this government instruct Elections Ontario to go out and study the experience in the United States and include that in their report and make it available to the disabled community. The answer, unfortunately, as in everything else, was no.

We requested that Elections Ontario get funds to do their research. The answer was no.

We asked that there be a level access to a plainly visible public entrance to the building in which the voting

place is to be located, without a voter needing to ascend or descend any stairs. The answer was no. This is what you're doing—the answer is no. So if you show up and there's no marking and there is a set of stairs and you are in a wheelchair or a scooter and you don't know where you have to go, there is no requirement in the law that it be plain, accessible and without stairs. When that motion was made, five Liberals put up their hands and said no. Can you tell me why you would say no? I don't understand why you would say no. It would seem to me that's a pretty logical thing to put into law, that you don't have any stairs when you know that up to 20% of your population has some kind of disability, and that disability can just be a bad-sight disability that makes it difficult to go up and down dimly lit stairs; it can be a wheelchair; it can be any number of disabilities. The answer was no. I don't understand that.

We went on to say that there has to be level, unobstructed access from the accessible entrance to the building to the voting place within the building without a voter needing to ascend or descend any stairs. So, once you get inside the building, even if you could walk into the building, occasionally inside you are required to go downstairs. For example, you go into the foyer of a school and you vote in the gymnasium underneath. So we had to do both. You can't go up the stairs to go into the school and you can't go down the stairs once you're inside the school—same rationale, same answer from the government: No.

We went on to say that any doorway from the outside of the building and inside the building en route to the voting place within the building is sufficiently wide to enable a person using a mobility aid to pass through. We know that, thanks to technology, many people who otherwise would have to have a wheelchair or who would otherwise have considerable difficulty walking are starting to avail themselves of motor scooters, those little scooters you see all over the roads. You see them everywhere in Ontario. No matter what town or city I go to, I see people in those mobility scooters who get around. They go to do their shopping. They go to church. They go to doctors' appointments. They go to the bank. They visit their friends. They're in these little scooters. It is liberating to them. But they're a little wide, and you know that sometimes they can't go through some of the doorways. You've all seen this happen.

We simply asked that in setting up a building, renting a building or using a building, whether it be a church, a school or anything else, the doorway has to be wide enough to allow that scooter to go in and out. The answer was no—no.

Can anybody over there tell me why you would say no to that? The answer was no. So I guess if you show up in a scooter and the doorway is too narrow, you have the choice of getting out of the scooter, if you're able to walk a few steps to go wherever you're going—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no. The answer was no. So then we went on to say that, well, you've got a school

and you can't get the scooter in, so can you at least have a provision that the elector need not travel more than 50 metres on foot after entering the building to reach the voting place? So if you can't get the scooter in but you have a cane and you can struggle as best you can, can it at least be less than 50 metres away from the place where you can't get your scooter in to where you have to vote? The answer was no. They all voted against that, too.

We went on to ask for other things—and I'm standing here and I'm smiling because I'm looking at the disbelief on the faces over there about their own colleagues and what they vote for.

Mr. John O'Toole: Who was on that committee?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Sorbara was the lead, the member from Vaughan. The parliamentary assistant was the member from Willowdale, and the others took their instructions and voted as told.

Then we said that for those who have difficulty seeing, the voting place must have sufficient lighting to accommodate the needs of persons with low vision. We know there is a certain lux standard where people can see easily, and if the light is too dim, it is difficult for people to see. It is even difficult for someone who is sighted like me, who requires glasses to read, to see in low and dim light. Anybody who has glasses over there knows that's the case. If you don't have sufficient light and if the print is small, then it is difficult to read unless the light is turned up. It's one of the things you need to have.

So we asked that the Chief Electoral Officer ensure in any of the voting locations that the light is of sufficient lux and standard that a person even with low vision will be able to read the instructions and the ballots. The answer was no, that is not a requirement. It can be as dimly lit as you want. Liberals are all convinced that the dimmer it is lit, I guess, the better it is, because there is no standard and no requirement that the light be of a sufficient lux to allow.

1720

We went on to say that we would require the cabinet to review the regulations, when they eventually make them, after further input from the public, including Ontarians with disabilities, after the 2011 election. So we said, "Go ahead with the next election. Try all your stuff out. Listen to the general public about whether or not it worked. Listen to the disability community. See what recommendations they have. And then report after the next general election. If you're not going to pass any of our things, at least try that." The answer was, "No, we're not going to do that. We're not going to report. We're not going to have the cabinet report. We're not going to have anybody report. We're not going to listen to the disability community in any meaningful way. And we're not going to publish any results after the next election." That's what this government is all about.

Then we went on to ask for simple, simple, simple things: that there be a disability parking space, a temporary parking space like you see in every city. You see those little wheelchairs? All of the pages know where those wheelchairs are. You have to have a disability

permit to park in that parking space. We wanted a disability parking space set up at every major location where people come to vote, because very often, especially in urban areas, there are five or six or seven polling stations in each church or each—we're only asking for one disability space, so that if somebody shows up in a wheelchair or a scooter or with canes or whatever mobility things they have and they're disabled, they get to park close and come inside. On election day, put in a disability space to help. And the answer again, incredibly, was, "No. The disabled can park on the other side of the parking lot." There is no provision that allows the Chief Electoral Officer to put up a sign for the day that would designate that as a disabled space close to the door that would allow somebody disabled to come in and vote. I thought that was a pretty reasonable thing, but five members on the Liberal side of the committee didn't think it was reasonable at all. So we asked some more.

We asked that there be an election accessibility hotline during the six-month period before and on voting day for voters and candidates with disabilities to give feedback on proposed locations for voting places, and to give feedback and present inquiries on any accessibility programs; a hotline so that you could phone up, so you didn't have to go through the myriad of stuff and phone candidates and phone people who didn't know what they were doing, but a hotline, somebody who could pick up the phone and settle the problem leading up to and on election day. The answer was no.

We asked that the government review the proposed locations of voting places in light of the feedback that they received from this hotline and from other sources and to look at whether or not things could be done better. The answer was no. Five people voted no to all these.

We asked—this one really got me. There are only 107 returning offices in the 107 ridings in Ontario. Each one has a returning officer. Each one has an office located generally in an urban area. Even in a place like Timmins—James Bay, it's in Timmins. In my own riding of Beaches—East York in Toronto, it's generally on the Danforth. They try to find a location in a centralized location that is generally accessible to the majority of people. We asked that the returning officer's office in any riding be accessible, so that if you need to go into the returning office to file papers if you're a candidate, to get on the electoral list if your name has been left off, or any other matter that you have, we ask that it be accessible. The answer was no, no, no.

We asked that persons with disabilities, especially those who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, have a dedicated TTY line; you know how you can type in and ask questions and someone can type back to you? Very many people in the deaf community have a TTY line in their homes so that they can answer the phone and they can speak to people who are calling them. You have all had the experience, I'm sure, of using a TTY line—that every returning office have a TTY line for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. The answer was no. Five members stood there every single time and said no. So there is no

requirement in law that it be accessible for people to go in and no requirement that it be accessible so that people on a TTY line can phone in if they're deaf or hard-of-hearing.

We asked a very simple question, the next one—they were all simple—for those who are hard-of-seeing. We asked that the ballots be made a little larger and the print on the ballots be made larger. I explained to my colleagues, all of whom were wearing glasses to read the fine print like me, that if I forgot my glasses, I myself probably couldn't read the ballot. So could you please make sure that it's in at least a 26-point font, the name and the place where you put the X, so that people, even if they have glasses and they're not blind—they're not that impaired, but they need glasses—if they forget their glasses, could the ballot be made large enough with 26-point font or 28-point font so that it could be read by people without glasses, so that nobody would be put out when it came time to vote? The answer was no. You can't even have a ballot that's large enough to read without glasses.

I don't understand. You're going to have two minutes each; stand up and tell me why you would do this. You vote no to everything.

We went on. I asked another couple of simple things—that there be an independent survey of candidates and electors with disabilities, particularly the candidates. We know that we've had some excellent candidates in the past who have been disabled. We know that there is a member of Parliament in Ottawa who is disabled, and he does a very good job.

Interjection: A smart man.

Mr. Michael Prue: A very smart man, very capable. We know, those of us who have been around here for a while, that Gary Malkowski used to represent the riding of York East. He was deaf. He had a signer here. But he had to be a candidate before then, and what we were saying was that the candidates who identified themselves with some form of disability should be canvassed at the end of the election, and that there should be an independent survey of those candidates with disabilities on any barriers or difficulties they experienced when taking part in the election. The answer was no—don't want to know; don't care: "There's nothing we're going to do. We're not voting for that amendment."

I asked for another thing. I said, could there be a summary of any complaints or feedback received from electors or candidates with disabilities during the election regarding the accessibility of the election and any steps the government or the elections committee would take to fix that? The answer was no.

I asked for recommendations of any steps that needed to be taken to ensure that the next election will be fully accessible to electors and candidates with disabilities and, in fact, be barrier-free. All I wanted from that were recommendations that they would make, and that the government would be forced to either say yes or no or act upon them before the 2015 election. The answer was no.

I asked that the bill be amended to require that candidates select an accessible location for his or her

campaign office. Now, this was controversial, and I must admit this was somewhat controversial. It would have required the candidates from major parties in Ontario, those who were running full slates of candidates, to ensure that their office, out of which the campaign was run, was accessible, so that when they were choosing a temporary location, generally for four to six or eight weeks, they made sure that there were no barriers to entering the office and, wherever feasible and possible, that washrooms would be located on the first floor, so that people who were disabled and who wanted to participate in the electoral process beyond that of simply voting would have an opportunity, through the candidate of their choice, to go out and give some time, whether that was time on the telephones, time putting stamps on envelopes, time canvassing or interacting with the public who came through the door.

I thought that was a reasonable thing, but I do understand that of all the suggestions I made, this one might rankle some people because you were telling candidates what they had to do in an election. But I do think it's a fair thing and something that we should be striving towards. I do understand why some of the Liberal members might have said no to this, but I still think it is a good idea. They didn't tell me why they weren't voting for it, but they all voted no.

The next was that we would require each party and candidate to make available upon a request, without undue delay, their campaign literature in alternate formats, including large print, Braille and an accessible electronic format so that people who were disabled could understand what the candidate's message was going to be.

1730

Again, this is a little controversial but I don't think that hard. If the government said that this is the desire and the will that everything be accessible, then somebody on their election team would have to be able to print the literature in larger format. Somebody on the election team would have to be able to go down to the CNIB and acquire, in whole or in part, the campaign literature translated into Braille where it was requested. I do realize that this is an expense, but I also think that it's necessary. Something could be done under the election expenses act to make this a non-campaign expense because it may involve several hundred dollars which a candidate who is running close to the line was not counting on, but I still think it was a good idea. Every single Liberal hand said no.

I then went on to ask that in television advertisements, because they're all done by the parties, not by the individual candidates—the Liberal Party will run television ads, the NDP will run television ads, the Conservatives will run television ads, and in all likelihood, in the next election the Greens will run ads too; Family Coalition, if they're running, may run ads. If you're running an ad, you have to have a signer at the bottom or a teletype that goes across. Just like here in the Legislature, you have the teletype go across, and oc-

asionally we have signers who tell you in plain, simple American Sign Language what is being said. If you are deaf, you can watch the program and not understand what it's about, but if you have it signed or if you have it electronically read at the bottom, then you would know what it's about. We simply asked that for any major expense the political parties are making around television advertising, that that was included. It has almost no cost to the parties once the ad is prepared, almost no cost. The answer was, "No, can't do that; won't do that."

We asked that the bill be amended to prohibit the holding of all-candidates debates in a forum, in a venue that is inaccessible. Now, we know—I listened to the argument, and I know that this was controversial to some extent—that people, home and school associations, ratepayers, homeowners groups, church groups, civic-minded organizations, when they are holding an all-candidates debate, attempt to do so and understand that it has to be in a place that is accessible so that it will accommodate the greatest number of citizens who want to come out and hear and will also accommodate any of those candidates—because you don't know in advance—who may be in their own right unable to attend unless there is wheelchair access or some signing provision or others when they are running. We asked that this be done. The answer was no.

Last but not least, and one of my great disappointments here, was that this bill does absolutely nothing to empower municipalities in holding fair elections, absolutely nothing. I pointed out to the member from Vaughan, who had the lead, I pointed out to the parliamentary assistant, and I pointed out to all of those Liberals who sat there for four days: What kind of an election is it going to be in the municipal government when you are not including them in this bill, when you are not telling them what has to happen in order to make their elections fairer? Now, I don't think the municipalities need as much pushing as this government might think. The municipalities are discovering wonderful ways to include all of their citizens. They are, in some cases, light years ahead of this province. The city of Toronto is light years ahead of this province, the town of Cobourg is light years ahead of this province and the town of Peterborough is light years ahead of this province because they're already starting to make voting accessible; they're already looking at ways in which people with disabilities can be accommodated. The corporation of the town of Cobourg—and I just received this; there's a memo dated October 21, 2009, concerning the Municipal Elections Act—has passed unanimously in that council authorization for the clerk to do the following: that in 2006 the corporation provided a totally integrated electoral system for the corporation, which enabled an elector to choose from a range of voting options: (1) vote by Touch-Tone telephone, (2) Internet voting or (3) traditional attendance at a polling station.

They asked the staff, in consultation with the former municipal clerk, to investigate other available voting technologies with the objectives of making voting as

convenient as possible for electors, while at the same time ensuring reliability, security and the integrity of the election procedures. As was the experience in 2006, it is anticipated that participation in the electoral process and voter turnout would increase as a result of more convenient, tried and tested methods.

They gave their own experience. This allowed for no voting locations that were inaccessible. It eliminated traditional advance voting. There were no proxies. They gave easier access. They allowed people with disabilities to vote from the comfort of their own homes and to verify how they were voting from their own homes.

The city of Peterborough spent some money, and we had a deputation who came and gave deputation on the city of Peterborough's experience with voting machines. It seemed like a very good experience and worked very well for the people of Peterborough who had disabilities.

We know the city of Toronto is experimenting with voting machines, and we know that they have used in the past and will continue to use other alternative methods of voting. We know in rural Ontario that they have mail-in ballots. We know in places around Ontario they are using technology such as computers and telephones in order to advance the cause of voting. But the province of Ontario seems to me to be totally hidebound when it comes to this very issue. The province of Ontario will not accept anything other than what the members in the committee are told to do by the parliamentary assistant. They voted down every single reasonable, rational way of allowing people who are disabled to vote with independence.

I have to say, it was not a good experience for me to sit there for four days and listen to every single good idea be shot down without explanation. But as bad as it was for me, as the NDP disabilities critic, it was worse for the people who sat there for four days full of hope. Mr. Lepofsky, who is a brilliant man, absolutely brilliant, and an advocate on behalf of the disabled, was there. I think he was there in somewhat disbelief by the fourth day. He referred to some of the attitudes of some of the members as being archaic. I corrected him. I don't think they were archaic; I think they were antediluvian—that which existed before the flood—because there was nothing in there that anybody was changing from the way we have voted in this country since 1867 and before. It's a paper ballot in an inaccessible church hall, not understanding that so many of our citizens no longer can be accommodated in such a place. It was not allowing for new technology, and it was not allowing the opportunity for people to use gifts that they have in order to be fully accessible.

I was somewhat ashamed by the end of those four days. I know that the disappointment in the room was palpable. There were statements made by every single one of the deputants that they hoped this next election would be the first one that was truly barrier-free, and if it couldn't be the first one that was truly barrier-free, that at least it should be the last one where artificial barriers were set up to those with disabilities.

In the end, nothing was done. There will be no reports. There will be no evidence gathered, save and except that

which the Chief Electoral Officer wants to gather. There will be no reports by independent people. There will be no commissions. There will be nothing to ensure that access is barrier-free or that there will not be stairways that block those in wheelchairs. There will be no TTY phones in the offices. There will be nothing.

I'm looking forward to the questions and comments, if my honourable friends have been listening to all this. You've got two minutes each. You'll get two opportunities. That's four minutes to explain to me, to the disabled community and to this House why you think that this bill is accommodating the needs of 20% of our population.

1740

I want to hear it from your own lips. I haven't heard it in committee. I haven't heard it in debate here, except to pat oneself on the back and say, "We listened to the disabled community." I want to hear why these 25 or 30 recommendations that were made were wrong and why these 25 or 30 recommendations would not have revolutionized for the disabled an opportunity to vote in this province. Liberals have to be on the record on this, and I'm asking you to do so.

I would say in my last minute or two, I thank my Conservative colleagues on the committee. They voted and spoke eloquently on the majority of these motions in favour of extending that opportunity to the disabled community, which they had not heretofore. They voted for them and you can see the recorded votes there, recorded with me.

They were enlightened on this; the government members were not. It is not too late. You can send this back. You can do the right thing, or you can all put up your hands and vote for such a seriously flawed bill, understanding that you have done irreparable harm to those who have sought your help in trying to do something in the 21st century to alleviate the problems of our disabled. If you don't do that and you accept what this is, then pat yourself on the back some more.

It is, as I said before, nothing but a weak and ineffective bill, save and except for those provisions involving students and those who get jobs on election day. Those are the only two good things that can be said about it because what you needed to do foremost and what had to be done for the benefit of all was what you needed to do for the disabled and, in that, you failed miserably.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I just wanted to compliment the member from Beaches–East York on the way he went through his litany of amendments that were quite reasonable and respectable for the issue of persons with disabilities in Ontario being accommodated in an election.

What's surprising is how the government members were whipped into negative behaviour and that they bought that holus-bolus. I think it was a very good article by Jim Coyle on April 7 saying it was toothless in that section of the bill. More importantly—I'm not going to have time today because we're running out of time

here—I want to talk about the third party advertising which was not in the bill.

Initially I thought the Working Families Coalition was supporting the NDP, and probably should have been. They were stealing NDP money actually. But they were clearly supporting Premier McGuinty and I think that Working Families Coalition—I've got the disclosure here and the names and the millions of dollars, almost always union money. I was surprised at how they had somehow acquiesced to this program we see that's kind of devastated Ontario; now we have 10% unemployment. I'm not sure they got what they paid for. Some of the public sector did. We saw that in the sunshine list. But I think this was a serious omission in not dealing with this third party advertising part.

The member from Beaches–East York, I think, eloquently and effectively pointed out the shortcomings in this bill that have been addressed in the media. The amendments were moved in committee, which he sat on, and I think were reasonable amendments to accommodate persons. There's no politics in that. I can't believe that the Liberal members all unanimously defeated those reasonable amendments. So, for that reason, I can't see any reason that this bill does what it's supposed to do.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Prue, the member from Beaches–East York, knows what he's talking about. He worked on that committee when they were reviewing the rather lacklustre—thoroughly lacklustre piece of legislation that the government produced.

I was substituting for Howard Hampton on the Sorbara committee that had the opportunity to consider a wide range of things, but was denied the opportunity to do so by the government, which made it very clear that any reforms around elections here in the province of Ontario were going to be the most modest of reforms.

Surely one of the key areas of interest during that Sorbara committee period—Mr. Zimmer was on there for the government—was concerns around persons with disabilities and their right to vote. You see, not accommodating persons with disabilities denies them their right to vote, and what kind of democratic society would deny a member their right to vote?

Cathy Crowe, who was the NDP candidate in Toronto Centre in this province's most recent by-election, appeared in front of the committee with the old proverbial—the Arlo Guthrie 8 by 10 glossies, circles and arrows on each one, pointing out, in the instance of three polling stations, their inaccessibility. We're not talking about 100 years ago; we're talking about 2010. We're talking about a period in time after everybody has committed themselves to ensuring access, we're talking about a period in time after the government has passed legislation that they say demonstrates their commitment to access, yet what has the government come up with in this bill? What Mr. Lepofsky described as a baby step. Mr. Lepofsky has to maintain a rapport with the government, because he's going to be advocating for the dis-

abled, I suspect, for a good chunk of time, regrettably—not regrettable that Lepofsky is doing it, but it's going to take that long.

It's time for the members of this assembly to stand up and say no to legislation that continues to deny access to the disabled.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured to stand up and comment on the speech of the member from Beaches–East York. I listened to him a little bit, off and on, speaking about this important issue.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Off and on? Every once in a while when you came to?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Actually, I was outside listening to it on the TV because it's more clear. Honestly, when you sit outside there, we have a big TV and you can see well and you can focus on his speech.

I listened to him, and I know he brought up a lot of different important initiatives. I agree with some of it, but I think he'll agree with us—as elected officials, you know, we have an election strategy, a method that has been used for many years. I think that, over time, technology has progressed, and we have to change our way of elections. I think it's very important to create an accessibility method to allow the people of Ontario to participate in elections, whether electronically, whether we create a method so that people can go in wheelchairs to vote, and also to modify and create a new mechanism to allow more people in the province of Ontario to participate in elections, especially the youth, people with disabilities, racial minorities and many different aspects and elements of our society.

So I know he brought up many different points, but I still believe that if this bill passes, it will be an important step toward a reformed Election Act in the province of Ontario, which has not been touched for many years. I think Mr. Sorbara, as the Chair of this committee, listened to many caucus members from both sides. He listened to a lot of people, people who have been involved in elections for many, many years. They took their input, put it together and created this bill. Well, you know what? Whatever we do in life, we're not going to see the acceptance from all people. At least it's a good step forward toward reforming our elections in Ontario.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I too want to commend the member from Beaches–East York for the fine—

Interjection: Rendition.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —rendition, shall we say, of the elections bill.

I too was somewhat taken aback by the fact that so many amendments which would seem so simple to implement or to mandate so it would happen, particularly an issue as simple as to say that when you set up a polling station somewhere, it should have a place for the handicapped to park so they can go in and vote—it's rather interesting. I remember going to a place to vote

and, in fact, when I drove up, because of what was on the side of the vehicle, I wasn't allowed to go into the schoolyard. If the vehicles aren't allowed into the schoolyard, how is someone who can't walk supposed to get in to vote? It seems almost incomprehensible that they wouldn't have included things like that to make it accessible for people to vote.

Again, on the issue of people who can't read the ballot, not everyone wants to make the mark not knowing where it's going, because in fact they may have a spoiled ballot. If they've gone to all the trouble of going to vote, I'm sure that they expect that vote to be counted. As the member suggested, if they didn't bring their glasses, they wouldn't know whether that was in fact true. Again, it seems fairly simple to change the format to make the printing just a little bit larger on all ballots so everyone could see it and it would be equal for everyone who voted.

I want to commend him for the job well done and I guess somewhat chide the government for saying no to so many good amendments that would have made this bill a better piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Prue has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from Durham, Welland, London-Fanshawe and Oxford, and I thank them especially for listening to what I had to say, because they did talk about those selfsame issues that I tried to bring forward.

To the member from London-Fanshawe, he was the only Liberal who stood up to speak, although there were opportunities for two. At least he stood up. He set out what the government's position is. Quite frankly, the government's position is a little tiny step forward. It's going to make some very slight, small improvement to the elections laws. We've been dealing with this for a century, and if this little change takes place, it will be just that little bit better than it has been in the past.

I acknowledge what he is saying. I accept—no, I don't accept what he's saying; I should be honest. I don't accept what he's saying because this is an opportunity for a law that only comes every 10, 12 or 15 years, when improvements are being made. This was an opportunity to embrace technology. This was an opportunity for the government to stand squarely behind the disabled community.

I stood up in my place as an opposition member and voted for the Ontarians with disabilities law that this

government brought forward in its first mandate. I stood up and voted for it because I thought that in the long term, the government was heading in the right direction, requiring full access to all government services, all private services, all schools, all hospitals and all public institutions and that they would become barrier-free. I lamented that it was going to take 25 years, and I still do, but I did vote for that bill, full in the knowledge that this government—or hoping this government—was committed to, as rapidly as possible, changing the lives of the disabled.

This would have been a very easy task. This bill could have embraced the Ontarians with disabilities legislation and could have moved the yardstick, but the government has determined in its wisdom not to do so, and it is a lost opportunity.

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

Seeing none, Mr. Bentley has moved third reading of Bill 231, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I have received a deferral slip from the chief government whip. This vote will be deferred until next Monday during deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): "On division" will be recorded.

This House stands adjourned till next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
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Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
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Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
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Maria Van Bommel
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