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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 19 April 2011

Mardi 19 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 19 April 2011

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

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The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER
REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT
LA LOI CHRISTOPHER
SUR LE REGISTRE
DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Bradley moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the division of time for debate on government order G163.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed?

Mr. Peter Kormos: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don't know whether the clock should be on the 20s or the way it is.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Okay.

Bill 163, Christopher's Law, received first reading on March 10, 2011. I'm pleased to be able to speak to this important bill once again at third reading.

First, I would like to express thanks to my colleague David Zimmer for piloting this bill through the Legislature. He spent a good deal of time, effort and energy on the bill, and I want to commend him for the excellent work that he did.

I'd also like to thank the members on all sides of the House for their thoughtful and helpful contributions to the debate, in particular the critics for the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, who participated in a very positive manner on this debate.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Stephenson family, and with us in the Legislature today is Jim Stephenson. Their courage and dedication in pre-

venting such heinous crimes as the one they experienced was the driving force behind the creation of the Ontario sex offender registry. On behalf of the people of Ontario, I want to thank Anna and Jim Stephenson for your support and for your tireless advocacy.

Finally, I would like to recognize the difficult work and dedication of the police officers across the province who investigate crimes of this nature and work to prevent the victimization of children. Particularly, I would like to thank Deputy Commissioner Scott Tod and the entire dedicated team at the OPP, including Chief Superintendent Ron Gentle and Staff Sergeant Adam Alderson.

Members of this House are aware that it was on April 4, 2000, that the Ontario Legislature passed Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000, to establish and maintain a registry of sex offenders that police can use proactively for investigative purposes and crime prevention. The protection of Ontarians from sex offenders is at the heart of Christopher's Law.

Christopher's Law requires sex offenders convicted of criteria sex offences to register with the police service in their area of residence. Persons who are found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder in relation to a sex offence are also required to register. The OPP and police services across Ontario agree that Christopher's Law is a critical tool in fighting crime, protecting vulnerable children and adults and safeguarding our communities.

Ontario continues to be the only province to maintain its own sex offender registry. We believe that it provides us with direct control over the tools that our police services tell us they need to track and monitor convicted sex offenders quickly and effectively.

The federal government established a national sex offender registry in the year 2004. The national registry was similar to Ontario's, although different in some respects. On December 9, 2010, the federal government and the Parliament of Canada passed legislation, called Bill S-2, that brings the national registry more in line with Ontario's. That legislation came into force only last week. It addresses some of the concerns Ontario has expressed about the federal registry and, in doing so, creates differences between the national and provincial registries that must be resolved. The amendments we are proposing to Christopher's Law would help to align the legislation with the national sex offender registry legislation, as amended by Bill S-2.

I should add that even with federal enhancements to the national sex offender registry, Ontario's registry will maintain advantages, as an investigative tool, over the

national registry. For example, the Ontario registry can display offender residences within a specific proximity of a given location, such as a school. The Ontario registry also provides timely access for all police services in the province, which we all know is imperative in critical incidents where time is of essence.

Police across Ontario rely on the information in the Ontario sex offender registry to help them investigate and solve cases involving sexual offences. That is why they access the registry more than 745 times a day, on average. We need to continue to ensure that essential information that our police and communities rely on is as complete, as accurate and as up to date as possible. That is why, in 2008, this government amended Christopher's Law to enhance the effectiveness of Ontario's sex offender registry.

The logic behind a sex offender registry is quite simple: If police know the whereabouts of sex offenders in the community, they are better able to identify potential threats and can better focus their investigations. That is why Christopher's Law requires offenders convicted of a criteria offence and residing in Ontario to register with their local police service within 15 days after a triggering event such as their release from custody, a name change or an address change. Where there is no custodial sentence, they must register within 15 days after being convicted of a sex offence or within 15 days of receiving an absolute or conditional discharge for a sex offence when found not criminally responsible on account of a mental disorder.

Currently, police services in Ontario are responsible for Ontario and national sex offender registrations, but police services in Ontario only have direct access to the Ontario registry to input and search offender information.

0910

Because information captured by the Ontario and national registries is similar, police services in Ontario are only required to submit offender information into the Ontario registry. Information required by the national registry is automatically transmitted from the Ontario registry. However, the national registry now requires Ontario police services to collect additional information that cannot be entered into the Ontario registry because there's no legislative prerogative or authority to do so. As a result, information that is automatically submitted to the national registry could be incomplete.

Because of the adoption of Bill S-2, there are now differences between the Ontario national registries in the following areas. Bill S-2 requires offenders to register within seven days. The federal registry contains new mechanisms by which offenders convicted outside Canada could be required to register. The national registry will maintain the records of registered offenders who receive a pardon under the Criminal Records Act. The federal legislation also requires the reporting of certain volunteer and employment information.

The legislative amendments we are proposing would ensure consistency between the registries. Consistency is critical to the effectiveness of the registries both national

and provincial. It will help ensure more offenders of interest are identified by an Ontario registry search during time-sensitive investigations.

Having different Ontario and national registry reporting periods could increase the workload for Ontario police services. They would have to manually register offenders in Ontario for the national registry and confirm that offenders are fulfilling their national and Ontario reporting obligations if the registries were indeed inconsistent. The process of manually uploading information from local police to the OPP—and, by the way, the OPP is the only police service with direct access to the national registry—and from the OPP to the national registry could create delays—much too long for time-sensitive investigations. This bill will ensure Ontario continues to provide offender information to the national registry electronically and in real time.

Furthermore, where there are differences in the time allowed for offenders to report to the Ontario registry and the national registry, offenders may fail to differentiate the Ontario and national reporting requirements, resulting in potential criminal charges for offenders who mistakenly believe they have 15 days to report to the national registry.

Including sex offenders in the Ontario registry who have been convicted of a sex crime outside of Canada will help ensure that more offenders of interest are identified by an Ontario registry search.

The amendments we are proposing would address these issues in a number of specific ways. I would like to take this opportunity to remind members of the particular provisions of this bill that would, if passed, align Christopher's law with the amended national sex offender registry.

Section 1 of the bill would add two new clauses to the definition of "sex offence" in section 1 of the act. New clauses (b.2) and (b.3) would result in offences which were committed outside of Canada being included in the definition if the person who committed the offence is required to report to the federal sex offender registry pursuant to an obligation under either section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code or section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

Section 2 of the bill would amend section 3 of the act to remove the 15-day reporting timelines and would provide for the timelines to be prescribed by regulation. The section would be further amended by adding two new clauses, (e.1) and (e.2), which would require offenders who are subject to a federal sex offender registry reporting obligation, pursuant to section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code or section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act, to report to the Ontario registry within the time prescribed by the regulation.

Section 3 of the bill would amend section 7 of the act to remove the 15-day reporting timelines and to have the timelines prescribed by regulation. Section 3 of the bill also contains transition provisions which would stipulate that if the events that trigger a reporting obligation in subsection 7(2) of the act occur before the bill comes into

force, the old reporting obligation provisions would apply, and if such events occur on or after the bill comes into force, the new reporting obligation provisions would apply.

Section 4 of the bill would amend section 8 of the act to state that it applies to persons who become subject to an obligation to report to the national sex offender registry, pursuant to section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code, on or after the day this bill comes into force. It goes on to state that the duration of the reporting obligation under the act is for the duration of that federal reporting obligation.

Section 4 of the bill would further amend section 8 of the act to state that it applies to persons who become subject to an obligation to report to the national sex offender registry, pursuant to section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act, on or after the day this bill comes into force. It goes on to state that the duration of the reporting obligation under the act is for the duration of that federal reporting obligation.

Section 5 of the bill would repeal subsection 9(3) of the act. Under that subsection, the ministry is required to remove all of an offender's information from the registry if the offender receives a pardon for all of the sex offences that triggered a reporting obligation.

Section 6 of the bill would add a new section to the act, section 9.1, which would require the ministry to remove all of an offender's information from the registry if the offender receives a free pardon for all of the sex offences that triggered a reporting obligation.

Section 7 of the bill would add a new regulation-making power to section 14 of the act, allowing for regulations to be made in relation to the various timelines of the reporting set out in obligations 3(1) and 7(2) of the act.

Even with the proclamation of federal Bill S-2, Ontario's registry will maintain the following advantages over the national registry: It is accessible to every police service in Ontario, whereas the national registry is only accessible by the OPP at their general headquarters in Orillia. As a result, the local police services have to contact the OPP to conduct national registry searches. It allows police to perform searches that display the offender residences within a specific proximity to a given location, such as a school. Not all offenders who report to the Ontario registry report to the national registry, and Ontario's registry is routinely checked by police services in the course of their investigations. Ontario's sex offender registry has a compliance rate of more than 97%, one of the highest compliance rates of all sex offender registries in operation, including registries in the United States.

Christopher's Law is an important piece of legislation. It is based on a simple proposition that if police know the whereabouts of all convicted sex offenders in the community, they are better able to identify potential threats and can better focus their investigation. The technical amendments proposed in this bill would, if adopted, maintain smooth and efficient sharing of information between local police services and both registries and more

closely align the Ontario's sex offender registry with the national registry.

In conclusion, the Ontario sex offender registry provides police with the information they need to help provide protection to our communities. A sex offender registry is also an effective tool in preventing such crimes. As Jim Stephenson, who is with us today, has said, "The sex offender registry reminds the sex offender that somebody is watching. If that isn't preventative enough, I don't know what else can be suggested."

I cannot think of a more opportune time to move forward these changes, especially given that this April 23 will mark the 10th anniversary of the proclamation of Christopher's Law.

The amendments proposed in Bill 163 will better align the sex offender registry with the national sex offender registry to maintain the prompt, effective sharing of information. It will also maintain the Ontario system's independence to be a more effective investigative tool and to provide greater protection for Ontario's communities.

I know I don't have to do this: My notes say, "I urge the members of the House to adopt these amendments," and I know that, in fact, the members have been kind enough to do so.

Again, as I conclude my remarks, there are certain pieces of legislation that cause great division within this House. There are philosophical differences between political parties and members who are here. This piece of legislation has the basic consent and agreement of all three parties, and it takes the co-operation of the opposition critics and the opposition House leaders to be able to process a bill of this kind in a timely fashion. I want to once again thank the critic for the Conservative Party, the critic for the New Democratic Party and all who are involved in this particular initiative.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today and say a few words on Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law, in third reading. First of all, I want to say to all the members who sat on the committee and have spoken in this House: Thank you for the swift passage of this bill to align it with Bill S-2, the federal national sex offender registry. I particularly want to thank the member from Welland, who, last week during committee, brought forward a motion to actually go into clause-by-clause in the afternoon last Thursday. It allowed us to get clause-by-clause complete and allowed us to have third reading debate this morning.

We are concerned with how long the House will sit, and one thing we didn't want to have happen was to see this bill lost somehow. Now with the passage of this bill, we will be able to nationally align ourselves with Bill S-2. On top of that, we'll be prepared for the 10th anniversary of the Ontario sex offender registry which, as the minister has said, is next week. I do believe there are a couple of events scheduled at the OPP general headquarters celebrating that great day.

We're quite proud of this bill, and we will always support law and order, of course. Christopher's Law was originally enacted under the PC government in 2000, both with the hard work of now-Senator Runciman and Minister David Tsubouchi at the time.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It sounds really good, yeah.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I bet he wishes he was here today to listen to the debate on this.

We are pleased that Christopher's Law is being strengthened by aligning it with the recent changes made by the federal government on the national registry. We have always felt, as Conservatives and, I think, as members of this House, and the folks up at the Ontario sex offender registry always felt, that we had the state-of-the-art registry to begin with. All these changes only strengthen it and make it not only one of the top registries in North America but throughout the world as well.

I really want to say something this morning about Mr. Stephenson. He's in the audience, and this bill came about as a result of the death of his son Christopher in 1988. You know, it takes somebody very, very special to have that kind of compassion and love for someone that they would move legislation through, talking to different governments at different stages, so that we can have something as good as this bill is today. Mr. Stephenson has been with us through all of the debate. He spoke on the bill at committee. I know he's here today as well. I'm sure he'll be up in Orillia next week at the 10th anniversary. I really just want to say how important it is that we have this true leadership coming from our families in cases like this where they have had the greatest loss.

However, on the other hand, you have to say that if you look at the impact this bill has had on all Canadians or on all Ontarians, I can't imagine how many lives this legislation has saved in the last decade. People who are under constant scrutiny, who might have reoffended, are simply under the kind scrutiny and watch such that they can't move forward with any other terrible crimes.

It brings me to think of a couple of things I watched just recently. I just wanted to talk about some of the fine work of our people in law enforcement. I saw the story the other night, the CBC story on the Fifth Estate on the terrible crimes of Russell Williams. That's a show I just couldn't quit watching. It was so unbelievable that somebody who was that brilliant and such a leader in the armed forces could have a second life and be leading these terrible, terrible tragedies of sex crimes throughout that area—again, the sad story of little Tori Stafford and other cases. I just want to say that because I think in each case it showed the fine police work that solved these crimes. I think it's important to put on record that these types of crimes continue to this day, but with the sex offender registry, we can point out that, in each and every case, these people will never reoffend again.

I'd also like to thank the staff of the Ontario sex offender registry. The minister mentioned Ron Gentle and

Adam Alderson. Jim Mascola is another one. Again, as I mentioned earlier, the anniversary is next week.

In summary, I really want to say that our caucus is very, very proud of this bill. We're happy that the minister has brought in these amendments that will align the bill with the federal legislation. We want to move forward in future years, and when other amendments are necessary, make it even stronger and even better for the people of our province and our country.

With that, I just want to bring it to a conclusion today. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on this. Our caucus will definitely be supporting this legislation, and we look forward to the passage of the bill, the proclamation of the bill and passing it on to the folks at the Ontario sex offender registry to implement in the best possible way.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I see that I'm joined here by the member from Niagara Falls, seated at my left. I suspect he's trying to get a view of the House from this side to prepare himself for after October 6. I'm not sure, but I have no qualms whatsoever with him joining me here. He can't leave now; he'll just draw more attention to himself.

Of course, New Democrats support this legislation. We made that clear from the get-go. These are important amendments, as we all know. We in the NDP have done our best—the others have too—to expedite the passage of this bill. I have no apologies for that. We understand the legislation; we understand its significance and its relevance.

There were very brief committee hearings, the only reason being that there weren't a whole lot of people eager to participate, for reasons that I don't understand. But one of the most important participants, in addition to Mr. Stephenson, was one Dr. Lisa Doupe, who appeared at the committee. She's a medical doctor here in the city of Toronto, a psychotherapist who works with sex offenders. She brought a dimension to this discussion or debate that's too often overlooked, because, of course, in this climate of competing to be more law-and-order than the other guy, it's somehow sacrilege from some quarters to talk about the need to treat offenders so that they don't reoffend.

We know that the sex offender registry contains 97%, give or take, of the names, identities, of people who have been convicted of sexual offences, those that require them to register, and we also know that that means that 2% or 3% aren't on the registry. We also know that those 2% or 3% are the ones most likely to reoffend. That's why they don't register. It's not rocket science. You don't have to be a genius to figure that out. Those people, of course, pose great danger to the community, and the sex offender registry does not protect us from those people. In fact, the sex offender registry, in our view, has a couple of functions: One, first and foremost, is the investigative tool, and police officers talked about that

when they attended the committee hearing last week here at Queen's Park. It's not a perfect investigative tool because, as I say, there's 3% of people who aren't registered, and those are the most dangerous persons most likely to reoffend.

I submit that there's also an element of scarlet-lettering here. This indicates that there's a stigma; yes, there's a stigma attached to being a sex offender—darned right there is. I, quite frankly, am torn about the sex offender registry being private or, as it is in some other jurisdictions—not in Canada, but the United States, most notably—public, because I believe that people have a right to protect their families and protect their children. Having said that, the observation was made at committee hearings that the privacy of the sex offender registry, accessible only by police officers, police forces, helps innocent people to register. If it were public, there would probably be an even higher rate than the 3% who don't register their names. But as I say, that's a debate that I'm sure will be ongoing and it's one that I have mixed feelings about.

0930

Dr. Lisa Doupe raised this whole spectre of treatment. She acknowledged that she deals with low-risk offenders, and the inference I drew from that is that high-risk offenders are all that much more difficult to treat, or are untreatable, perhaps. She was very, very fervent in her advocacy for treatment. She made reference to—she brought the book with her. She brandished it like a preacher brandishes the Bible. She made reference to the book, *The Brain That Changes Itself* by Norman Doidge, and urged all of us to read chapter 4, which I'm doing at her urging, and I find it a very valuable exercise. It's insightful for a whole pile of reasons, not just with respect to why this psychotherapeutic approach that she advocates can be helpful for treating sex offenders and making sure that they don't reoffend.

But she also made note—because I asked her about this. “Dr. Doupe, here you are in the city of Toronto, this large urban centre.” I said, “What about folks down where I come from in Niagara region? What about folks in northern Ontario and in remote communities? Where do they get this kind of treatment?” And she acknowledged that it's hard to access. There's not a whole lot of people doing it. There's not a whole lot of governmental support for this sort of stuff.

I'm a little familiar with what goes on inside our reformatories, our provincial correctional institutions. Many years ago I used to be a criminal lawyer—some folks know that—which is as good a career to lead up to politics as any, I suppose. It probably should have made me eligible for the Senate. But many years ago, I was a criminal lawyer and acted for a whole lot of people convicted of many of these types of offences—or charged with them; not all convicted. One of the things I asked Dr. Doupe about was treatments inside our institutions, because I know that they were hard to come by 30 years ago when I was practising law. Her response was that they're probably even harder to come by now. Isn't that a shame?

We had the cable TV scandal, if you will, last week, and the minister very effectively disarmed the opposition on it. I admired his political skill as he handled that. But the real story last week, during the cable TV scandal, wasn't that there was enhanced cable going into our institutions; the real story was that television has replaced programs in our institutions, that our correctional institutions are using TV to babysit inmates in the same way that very busy parents use TV to babysit their kids. Good grief.

We've got somebody in a provincial institution—maximum two years less a day, and most don't serve anywhere near that. Why aren't we doing something meaningful? A whole lot of sex offenders are getting sentences of less than two years less a day. The more serious ones, obviously, go into penitentiaries. The real story from the cable scandal last week wasn't the enhanced cable; it was the fact that television has replaced programs. I don't fault this minister; that was the hand that he was dealt when he became minister.

When we've got people living in institutions, surely there are better things for them to be doing than watching television, watching stupid American sitcoms. I've been in these places, and they're watching TV not just at night like you and your family might do from time to time, but they're watching it during the day too, because our provincial institutions have become warehouses.

We've got this hare-brained scheme—and I know it doesn't come from the minister; it comes from the Premier's office—to shut down local, regional detention centres, the ones in Owen Sound and Sarnia and yet another one in that same part of the woods, and the government is building these huge American-style mega-prisons, which are understaffed, overpopulated, dangerous for the correctional staff, dangerous for the inmates, and they're centralized. Inmates will be shipped from Owen Sound over two and a half—what is it, Mr. Craitor?—two and a half or three hours to Penetanguishene, to that mega-jail that the Tories built in Penetanguishene, or two to two and a half hours down to the Windsor mega-jail, to be warehoused. They won't have access to community supports. They won't have access to the Salvation Army people in their community. They won't have access even to the lawyers in their own community. That's not corrections.

I know I'm digressing just a little bit, but it's still quite relevant because if we're going to put people in jail for these offences—and we should. Again, you put dangerous offenders in jail for a long, long time because they pose a risk to the community and to potential victims whether they're in jail for two years, five years or 10 years. But if others are going to be released, you had better be doing something with them while they're in jail. Dr. Doupe says we should be working harder in treatment. I agree. I suspect most members of this Legislature would as well. That means we have got to make those kinds of investments.

I want to thank and commend Jim Stephenson for his tenacity, for his courage. I suspect he'll be on this file for

a good chunk of time yet to come, trying to make the process better and better and safer and safer.

I don't share the enthusiasm of my colleague for the 10th anniversary of the registry. I'm not big on anniversaries, but it's also not something that I think we should necessarily be celebrating. We should be trying to build a society, a community, a country, a group of people where people can be safe in their community and, quite frankly, be safe in their own homes. We know that a whole lot of kids who are victims of sexual offenders are victimized in their own homes. There's perhaps nothing more despicable than that. But to those who attend the 10th anniversary, I say good luck to you.

We've worked very hard in the NDP to avoid politicizing this particular issue. As I say, it has moved along at an appropriate pace. It doesn't require more debate.

I want to remind members that there used to be a time here—the minister knows it because he was already a seasoned veteran when I came here 23 years ago—when governments didn't play politics with time allocation motions, closure motions. There was a time here when there wasn't a one-hour limit on lead speeches, when sometimes a lead speech would be two hours or three hours. It was also a time, I tell you, when more legislation got passed than does now. Bills that could be dealt with in a reasonably efficient way, like this one, proceeded reasonably promptly—not without appropriate oversight, not without second and third reading. This bill is getting second and third reading, but this bill is moving along as it should. As I say, there was a time when that happened a heck of a lot more than it does now.

I blame the first Liberal Premier that I served with, Bob Rae, for making some of the most dramatic rule changes in terms of controlling the participation by members in process. Of course, the subsequent Tory regime and now the Liberals again have compressed the role of this chamber and its members. I don't find that particularly attractive or helpful. We as an institution have done ourselves a disservice in that regard.

I'm close to closing. We've worked very hard to avoid politicizing this, but for the life of me, I'm betting dollars to doughnuts that the Liberals won't be able to help themselves. Just watch: This is going to go to a vote in a few minutes. There will be Liberals here who will vote against this bill, who will say no when the question is put, "Shall this bill carry?" Their purpose in doing that will be then to force a recorded vote when it has been made clear by every member of this chamber, by every caucus, by every party in this assembly, that we support the legislation. I find it particularly distasteful that, when so much goodwill has been demonstrated over the course of the passage of this bill, at the end of the day, when it comes down to third reading, the Liberals may well force a recorded vote.

That has become their habit. I don't know who took the stupid pills and decided that this was some kind of clever trick or tactic, but they're clearly overdosing. Somehow, the impression is that if you're not recorded in the recorded vote, if for whatever reason you're not here, somehow you don't support the legislation. I don't know

what the method is to, truly, their madness, but they should be embarrassed if they do that on this one. They should be embarrassed by trivializing what is important legislation that has received the enthusiastic support of the whole assembly, of all three caucuses. They should be embarrassed by playing that cheap stunt here this morning.

Let's see whether or not they serve the memory of Christopher Stephenson well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? Further debate?

Seeing no further debate, Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 163. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I declare that the ayes have it. This will be a deferred vote, until after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We're recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 0941 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am pleased today to introduce to members of this chamber two people with the Ontario Real Estate Association. I'd like colleagues to welcome Barb Sukkau, who is here in the gallery, as well as Matthew Thornton. Barb is the president of the Ontario Real Estate Association and Matthew is the manager of government relations.

I urge all members today to celebrate with OREA and with the three parties. I believe they're either in the legislative dining room or another one of the committee rooms today to host a reception.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm delighted that we have staff from the early learning policy and programs branch at the Ministry of Education here today. The senior managers are Jim Grieve, Jill Vienneau, Rupert Gordon and Michelle Braakman. We're delighted that they've been able to join us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Seated in the Speaker's gallery today are a number of guests of mine that I'd like to welcome. First, I'd like to welcome Kyle Waters and Barrett Nicpon. Welcome to Queen's Park today. I'd also like to welcome two good friends of mine from Winnipeg who are visiting: Steve Moran, and a long-time friend and good travelling buddy over the years, Phil Mandzuk. Welcome to Ontario.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce the parents of page Daniel Mateus: his mother, Liliana Jimenez; sister, Sarah Mateus; friend, Nhora Medina; and friend, Gonzalo Diaz, in the gallery.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I invited everyone to a reception in the dining room when in fact the reception for OREA today is in room 228 and 230. It is co-sponsored by all three political parties. I know that Mr. Caplan as well as Mr. Prue will join me in welcoming them, as well as all members of this House.

Hon. Aileen Carroll, P.C.: I'm not sure if they've yet assembled in the Legislature with us, but we have a civics class visiting today from Central Collegiate in Barrie who have come to watch the practice of democracy in their province. Their teacher, Doug Young, is here with them, and I'm hoping they'll soon file in.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust all members will set a good example for the civics class that will be joining us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Yesterday, the member from Sarnia-Lambton asked you to apologize to the members of a delegation from Sarnia who were given a veiled threat when they met with you. They were told to go away quietly or their courthouse would be on the chopping block next.

You passed on the opportunity to apologize, saying that you didn't really know where it came from. Let me quote Mayor Mike Bradley, who said in a radio interview that "the most shocking thing was, there was a hint that at some point the courthouse could be gone too."

Minister, you used to believe that local leaders and families should be shown respect. When did you start thinking that they deserved bully tactics and veiled threats like the one Mayor Bradley said you made?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I am the last person in the world who would use bullying tactics, as you have described them. I can say to the member that at no time was there ever such a suggestion that the courthouse would be closed or any threat of that nature. Your member for Sarnia was there at the time. I've always known him to be a person of integrity and truth. I think that he was there, and in his heart of hearts, if he were telling us what really happened at the meeting—I can tell the member that there was absolutely no suggestion at any time that any action would be taken against the courthouse in Sarnia—absolutely none. I don't know why—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier McGuinty and his Liberals have changed. The minister has said that in no way, shape or form was any threat ever made at that meeting, but Mayor Bradley isn't the only one who left with the impression that the future of the courthouse is now in question. There were 13 other members of the community there as well.

One of them was Helen Turner, president of the Lambton Law Association. She was also left with the impression that the future of the courthouse was in question. Minister, how out of touch are you that you believe everyone else at the meeting got it wrong and you got it right?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I actually thought that it was—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Oxford is intervening. He should be worrying about the days of day-trading at Agricorp. That's one thing we have to worry about, when to intervene.

I've got to say to the member that I don't know how that impression could ever be created. I don't want to put your fellow member, Bob Bailey—sorry, the member from Sarnia-Lambton—on the spot, but he was at that meeting, and I can tell you that at no time was there any suggestion at all that the courthouse was in jeopardy. I just don't know how that impression was gained. The only reference I can remember—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's pretty clear that after eight years in office the McGuinty Liberals have completely lost touch. This isn't a tough one. The right thing to do is to say "sorry" and to assure all Sarnia families that the courthouse is not on the chopping block next. But you've had every chance to do so, and you keep passing it up. When you said you didn't know who heard the threat, we told you. When you said that the threat was never made, we proved it was.

You've run out of excuses, just like you've run out of gas. Why won't you accept responsibility and apologize for the threats made to Mayor Bradley and to the people of Sarnia?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member obviously did not listen to the answer, because she got up and read her next question, which said what I had said. Clearly, at no time was there ever a suggestion that the courthouse is closing. The courthouse is not closing. The only reference I can recall being made to it in the meeting was that there's some work being done to the courthouse at the present time. That's the only reference I can remember being made to the courthouse itself.

I say for the third time to the member that there was never any threat in that regard. The courthouse is not closing in the city of Sarnia, and I honestly don't know how people would gain that particular impression from the conversation of a very good meeting between those from Sarnia and representatives—

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

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Minister of Correctional Services: You say that the reason for closing the Sarnia jail is to save money. I say that the decision to

close the Sarnia jail and move those operations to Windsor is another step in the McGuinty Liberal seat-saver program.

Let's look at your side of the argument. According to documents obtained by the Ontario PC caucus, the Sarnia jail is in fact one of the most efficient and well-run jails in Ontario. On my side of the argument, the super-jail that will swallow up the Sarnia jail and take all those jobs from Sarnia is in the finance minister's riding.

Why should Sarnia families have to pay the price for the McGuinty Liberals' seat-saver plan once again stealing jobs?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Perhaps in one of the supplementary questions the member would reveal to the House the fact that there was never any threat to the closing of the courthouse in his riding. I know he was at that meeting.

1040

To get back to the issue at hand, if you think this is the case, two of the decommissionings that took place in the province of Ontario are in ridings held by government members, and two in ridings held by opposition members. So there's no political consideration in this at all.

I get the information made available to me by the officials of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. They provide all of the information to me in terms of the fact that they believe they will save about \$2 million in decommissioning that particular jail—

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the minister: The Sarnia jail employs 76 hard-working, dedicated staff. The jail in the finance minister's riding is over two and a half hours away. So when the Sarnia jail closes its doors, that's 76 jobs lost to the Sarnia-Lambton community. That's 76 Sarnia families who will be out of work or have to move away from home and live their lives again so that the finance minister can once again feather his nest.

Why should Sarnia-Lambton families have to pay such a high price just so the finance minister can do another feel-good, seat-saver announcement in his riding?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I suspect that the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills would understand exactly what we're talking about, being a member who's been here for a period of time, and recognizing that some of these same arguments were put forward—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe-Grey, you're sitting directly to my left; the minister is sitting directly to my right and I can't hear him, courtesy of you.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I am certain that the same challenges were faced when your government closed the jails in the following places: Cobourg, Ontario; Haileybury; L'Orignal; Waterloo-Wellington; Parry Sound; Barrie; Peterborough; Guelph; Cornwall; Burtch; Lindsay; Whitby; Brampton; Millbrook; and Sault Ste. Marie. I'm sure the minister of the day, Mr. Runciman,

got all the information available to him from the ministry and made the decisions based on the information provided by ministry officials.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the minister: Taking the jobs of 76 Sarnia families is a high price to pay just so the finance minister can once again feather his nest. It's particularly hard to swallow when you think of all the times he has taken advantage of this seat-saver program across this whole province. Who can forget the Windsor Energy Centre, which cost Ontario families \$100 million—even though it has yet to produce a single watt of power? Or the casino, which has become known as the Dwight elephant?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker likes elephants, particularly one named Jumbo, but I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I withdraw.

Now, it's a job-stealing super-jail. What's next—turning the casino hotel rooms into the headquarters for your online gaming experiment?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to say to the member, there's a member whom I have a good deal of respect for on the Conservative caucus over there. When you were going through the exercise, previously, of closing several jails—you heard me list all the jails that the Conservative Party, when in power, had closed—first of all, a very good friend of mine, Senator Bob Runciman, said that we have some of the oldest infrastructure in Canada. He said that closing the older jails was simply common sense. My friend from Wellington-Halton Hills, whom I respect greatly, said the following: "I think the people of Ontario would expect us to look at how we're operating the system of provincial jails and find ways to do it better and cheaper." I happen to agree with my very good friend—

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

NORTHERN ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Northern Ontario has abundant natural wealth, yet the region has suffered economically under this government's watch. More than 30 mills have closed and 40,000 forestry jobs have been lost over the past eight years.

What will it take for the McGuinty Liberals to stop paying lip service to northern Ontario and instead properly consult and implement policies that actually grow northern Ontario's economy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: As the leader of the third party knows well, on March 4, 2011, we released the northern Ontario growth plan, a plan that's an economic vision for northern Ontario for the next 25 years. Part of that, as well, were a number of marquee initiatives, including putting together a northern policy institute and

looking at our multi-modal transportation strategy, which is so important. And that does not even speak to the measures that we've put in place to assist the forestry sector through these very, very challenging times, let alone the other aspects of northern Ontario economic development opportunity, such as the Ring of Fire, which is part of our Open Ontario plan.

There are many measures we've put in place, recognizing the challenges that have been faced by northern Ontario. In particular, that's why we were so pleased that the northern Ontario growth plan, the second one in the province, was given to northern Ontario so we could develop our own economic vision.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government won't admit it but, routinely, northerners haven't been properly consulted on issues that affect their daily lives: not when the Far North Act was adopted, not when the northern growth plan was drafted, not when the process of timber reallocation was changed. More recently, the McGuinty Liberals refused to travel across northern Ontario for Bill 151 hearings, despite that bill's consequences for forestry-dependent towns.

Why does this government continue to show such contempt for northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That is truly an absurd thing to say related to the consultation efforts of our government. May I say, to reference the northern Ontario growth plan, we went through a period of two and a half years of extensive consultations. In fact, to some degree, people said, "Why don't you bring it out more quickly?" Because we wanted to be sure that we consulted thoroughly.

In terms of Bill 151, modernizing the forest tenure legislation, we had extensive consultations for over two years. Indeed, we had extensive presentations by northerners at our public hearings last week. We take second place to no one in terms of consultation with northerners because we recognize, myself as a member and all my northern caucus members, how important it is for us to consult. That's why we have a vision for northern Ontario through the northern Ontario growth plan. That's why we're planning a regional economic summit to follow up on the implementation of that plan in June, and we are very excited about the opportunities that are there.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Northerners are sick and tired of the empty promises. Forest-dependent communities like Wawa, Dubreuilville and Sioux Lookout are losing their wood allocation without being given a reason. The livelihood of entire communities is at risk, yet this government seems oblivious to it all. Enough is enough.

When will this government stop thumbing its nose at northern Ontario and start giving a damn about the good people, the proud people who live there?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Speaking specifically related to the wood supply competition, we have made about 20 announcements, which are helping many communities, creating or retaining over 1,000 jobs. We recognize that

not everybody has been successful, but we're working with those communities to try and find solutions to some of their challenges.

In terms of the forest tenure legislation, we are acting to make sure that the forestry sector is revitalized as a result of us making sure that our crown forest is no longer hoarded, that our Ontario wood is put back to work. There is example upon example of the support that we've shown for the forestry sector by offering up to a billion dollars in incentives, including uploading road maintenance that that previous government downloaded to the forestry sector back in the early 1990s.

There are examples of consultation, examples of assistance, and nobody is more strongly supporting northern Ontario than our northern Ontario Liberal caucus members.

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Rural and northern Ontario drivers are especially angry about gas price gouging. In Timmins this morning, frustrated motorists were filling up at \$1.37 a litre. In Sudbury, it's \$1.34 a litre. In Kapuskasing, it's \$1.40.

In every eastern province but Ontario, governments have moved to stop these kinds of rip-offs by regulating the price of gasoline. Why does this government continue to take the side of big oil companies and refuse to protect the interests of Ontario drivers?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The situation in world energy markets and oil markets is affecting the price of gasoline right across the world. In fact, in a number of major Canadian centres outside of Ontario, prices are actually higher than they are here in some Ontario centres, and it does vary. It's interesting: I paid \$1.24 in Windsor on Sunday; on the same day in Toronto, it was \$1.35. The member opposite knows that in those jurisdictions that have chosen what are really not regulatory regimes, the prices are higher.

This kind of mindless grandstanding on the price of gasoline is designed not to solve a problem but to get cheap votes. Do you know what? We have a lot going for us in this province. The price of oil and gas—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A CIBC study says that the increase in gas prices could cost the average Ontario household as much as \$950 more this year alone. That's causing real pain to Ontario families already struggling with sky-high hydro bills and punishing home heating costs.

New Democrats know that Ontario can't insulate itself from increases in world oil prices, but we also know that there is much that the government can do to ease the pain, particularly in rural and northern communities. Why does this government continue to be the only eastern Canadian province that sides with oil companies over its motorists?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Because their regulatory regimes don't work. They in fact hold the prices up. You're talking about jurisdictions with a fraction of the population of Ontario and markets that are much more solid.

Hon. James J. Bradley: This is a federal issue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague reminds me that in fact it is a federal issue.

Regulatory regimes in the provinces don't work. They keep the price of gasoline up. So I reject her suggestion. Liberals reject that suggestion. What we're going to continue to do is make investments in our economy that create jobs, improve wealth and build a better future for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's a possible reason: Maybe it's because the finance minister himself has a real soft spot for the oil companies.

On April 12, he responded to my question by saying, "The leader of the third party earlier this morning tweeted that we're giving oil companies tax cuts. What she doesn't realize is, they don't headquarter here or pay their corporate taxes here."

Here's a memo to the minister: "All oil companies operating in Ontario pay Ontario corporate tax on their refineries, storage tanks and gas stations located in Ontario."

When is the minister going to quit spinning and admit that Ontarians are getting fleeced and that his government is only more than willing to help the oil companies in getting away with it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Imperial Oil, for instance, moved its headquarters to Alberta several years ago. The leader of the third party knows about that.

What is important to Ontarians is the fact that our economy has turned the corner. Here's what the Financial Times FDI Intelligence unit today named "the top two destination states for foreign direct investment ... in North America.... California saw new projects rise 7% to 172, while Ontario" had "a 21% jump in new projects, for a total of 127." We also ranked second behind California in new capital investment, but we led in resulting job creation. They further describe Toronto as one of the "most attractive business cities in North America."

That's what our plan is about; not about mind-numbing—

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

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. After four years of letting families believe that daycare inspection and serious-incident reports would be posted online, Ontario families were very shocked and troubled to learn that their government had taken no action. Even more troubling was the minister's reaction when she was confronted by her government's failure to keep this promise. It was as though she was

commenting on someone else's poor conduct. She said she found it "unacceptable."

Were you referring to your colleagues the Minister of Children and Youth Services and her predecessors, who failed to keep this promise to families, or were you meaning to say it was unacceptable for the Premier to make the promise he never intended to keep?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Yesterday, I was very clear that this ministry will be posting online the results of inspection reports within a month. That was the commitment that was made to families.

I think that it's also important for the honourable member to remember that parents have access to this information in every child care facility in the province of Ontario. I would say to the honourable member: That was not the case when you were in government. Parents do have access to this information. We want to make it available for everyone on the Web; that will happen within the month.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: There were 5,500 incidents reported at child care centres last year. This government promised four years ago to post these findings. You can imagine how troubled and shocked Ontario families were yesterday to hear that the minister who has been part of the government looked to blame—as today—others. Just as troubling is the excuse that was given that the promise which was made will not be kept because of privacy concerns with posting reports online, since we know the city of Toronto has been posting its findings from incident reports.

This government made the promise four years ago. I ask you: Why did your government not keep its promise to families and children?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would say to the honourable member she would do well to actually go to the city of Toronto website, and she will find that, in fact, incident reports are not there. Rather than just read the paper, you might want to actually go to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will please come to order. You're constantly interjecting to the minister, and your colleague wants to hear the answer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I do.

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's very important that we clarify what is available to families. We do want to be sure that when we make information available in a public way, we are sensitive to all of the laws that we have, including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

We continue to work on ways that information can be made available around incidences, around convictions, if you will, in facilities. We have not been able to land on that yet, but—

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question for the Minister of Energy: Under the long-term energy plan, how much new renewable energy will the government bring online in Ontario between 2020 and 2030?

Hon. Brad Duguid: In the long-term energy plan, we're looking at 10,700 megawatts of new, clean renewable power coming online, we expect, by 2018 indeed.

It would be nice, though, to have the NDP supporting the important investments that we're making to be able to accomplish this as we move off of dirty coal. Just last week, my colleague joined me at the Lung Association, where we announced that we're making great progress. We've reduced coal in the first quarter of this year compared to the first quarter of 2003 by a full 90%—tremendous progress—but we won't be satisfied until coal is gone 100%.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Either the minister doesn't know the facts, or he didn't want to answer the question; I don't know. But luckily, a new Ministry of Energy document quietly submitted last week to the Darlington nuclear joint review panel does answer that question. The document shows that only one kind of power will be brought online in Ontario between 2020 and 2030: nuclear power, which will almost double in output. There will be no new renewable energy and barely any energy conservation.

Why is this government abandoning clean renewable energy in 2020 and focusing only on expensive and risky nuclear power?

1100

Hon. Brad Duguid: I suggest the member take a look at our long-term energy plan which we released last November, turn to pages 28 and 29, and he'll find that the answers are there and that, indeed, we'll be creating 10,700 megawatts of renewable energy by 2018.

But I ask the member, for my personal reference, and maybe Ontario families would like to know, on what page the NDP energy plan talks about renewable energy. Wait a minute; that's going to be a little hard to find because they haven't brought forward any plan on energy. In fact, they've opposed every effort that we've made to conserve power. They've opposed every effort we've made to move off the dirty coal, to build cleaner sources of power in this province. They talk a good game, but when it comes to making the investments, they run and—

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, the Canada health transfer agreement expires in 2014. This agreement between the federal government and the provinces provides funding towards our publicly funded health care system. I know that to maintain our health care system,

we will need a renewed agreement after 2014. This federal election is a great opportunity to remind the parties in Ottawa about the need for this agreement to be negotiated. Minister, what is this government doing to ensure that a renewed Canada health transfer agreement in 2014 will protect the interests of Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for the question. This government knows that it is vitally important in this federal election for all of the parties to support an extension of the Canada health transfer to ensure a strong future for our cherished public health care system. That's why just last week the Premier called on all federal parties to commit to a 10-year agreement by 2012 so we can continue with a long-term plan for health care.

I know our government's commitment to health care does not end in 2014, and I think that Ontarians want to know that the federal government's commitment doesn't end there either. It's very important that we have the co-operation on the other side of the negotiating table to ensure the future of Ontario's precious health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: We all know that there is more to dealing with this agreement than simply getting it signed. We need to ensure that the federal government lives up to their end to ensure a fair agreement that provides the needed funding that Ontarians deserve. We also know that the federal government's contribution to health care is much lower than it historically has been. Minister, what is this government doing to ensure that the federal government pays Ontario's fair share of health care funding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I agree with the member: We need to ensure in these negotiations that Ontario receives its fair share of funding from the federal government.

Make no mistake about it: Provinces need sustained federal funding to ensure a strong future for our health care system. Specifically, we have asked that the federal government maintain the 6% increase in spending on health care. Currently the federal government contributes about 23% of every dollar spent on health care in Ontario. It is very important that that funding continue.

We're calling on the federal government to call together the provincial governments to negotiate by the end of 2012 so we can continue to plan for health care so it's there for Ontario families.

COURT DOCUMENTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today, as we speak, there is a court hearing downtown. At that hearing, your lawyers are fighting to stop a judge from reviewing thousands of documents when deciding whether your party broke election laws or not. We would like to know what is in those documents that has caused you to dispatch a battery of lawyers to block a judge from seeing this evidence.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite knows this is a matter before the courts. It would be completely

inappropriate for me to comment on it. I'm certainly not familiar with what's in those documents, in any event, but what I can say is this: People do want to know about health care and the future of health care in this province. They want to know why that member and her party want to cut \$3 billion from health—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Another outburst from the member from Renfrew and I will have to warn him.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That member and her party have fully disclosed that they'll have to close hospitals; they'll have to let nurses go. They've fully disclosed that they'll shut down full-day learning. That's what's important to Ontarians: to stop that kind of mentality and build better public services for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Not one iota of his rhetoric is true. He knows it. In fact, that party has become—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment she just made.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

Publicly, you and your officials have kept insisting that there are no formal connections between you and the Working Families Coalition and that you have nothing to hide. Judging by the answer I just heard, there clearly is something to hide, because if you truly had nothing to hide, then why are you trying to stop a judge from looking at all the evidence when he rules on whether or not you broke election laws?

What is in those documents that you don't want the public to see?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will remind the member opposite of what Elections Ontario said in response to their complaint on this issue. They said, "In our view, the evidence does not support the allegations that the WFC was the agent of or was acting on behalf of the Ontario Liberal Party."

The member had to withdraw a comment, Mr. Speaker; you made her withdraw it, quite appropriately, because it was inappropriate. She's asking, in my view, a question that was responded to by Elections Ontario in an appropriate fashion. The only thing being kept hidden from Ontarians is how many hospitals you will close, how many nurses you will lay off, how many kids will lose their teacher and how you are going to pay for your \$3-billion-to-\$6-billion tax cuts.

We're going to stand up for strong, better public services, and we welcome the support of all Ontarians—

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

CANCER SCREENING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. In the last provincial election campaign, this party made a promise. It promised to fund prostate-specific antigen tests, better known as PSA tests, for Ontario men. I quote

a Toronto Star article from 2007: "Most people would not have the resource of an OHIP-funded PSA test.... So, this is a very dramatic expansion of the OHIP coverage for the PSA test."

Yesterday, men were still asked to pay from \$30 to \$70 for a PSA test ordered by their primary care practitioner. Why is the McGuinty government still asking men to pay out of pocket for a lab test that they may not be able to afford?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The answer is very clear: The evidence does not support universal screening for PSA. We rely on evidence; increasingly we rely on evidence. As we get the best value for our taxpayer dollars, we are prepared to fund those things that actually improve outcomes for people, but as we move forward, we're going to have to rely increasingly on evidence.

We do fund PSA for men who fall into a high-risk category. It's the right thing to do, just as we're expanding breast cancer screening for high-risk women between the ages of 30 and 49.

The party opposite may want just a carte blanche to fund anything anybody wants; on this side, we take our responsibility as stewards very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The McGuinty government's promise to cover the cost of PSA tests was crystal clear. Let me quote from the government announcement: "Starting in January, 2009, the cost of a prostate-specific antigen test performed at a community laboratory will be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan when it's ordered by a primary care provider." To make matters worse, depending on where you live, the cost of the test varies widely. This situation is not fair.

Why did the government allow men to believe this test would be covered when, really, according to the minister's words, they had no intention of covering it under OHIP?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat: The government does now fund PSA tests for men who fall into a certain prescribed, evidence-based category.

I can imagine the member opposite would like to fund lots of things that we simply can't fund. We are determined to rely on evidence because we value our health care system. We need to put our resources where they make a difference for patients.

As we move forward, we will continue to make changes to what is covered and what is not, based on evidence—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will withdraw the comment that he made.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. Stand and give an unequivocal withdrawal.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw.

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

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Infrastructure. Reining in urban sprawl is a key priority in and around my community of Oakville. In fact, just last month, a group of Burlington residents attending a workshop organized by a local group called BurlingtonGreen called urban sprawl their top environmental concern. I share these concerns, as I know a great many members do. Transitioning toward smarter communities, complete communities, where people can work closer to where they live, is one of the best ways we can minimize the environmental footprint of our communities. Not only that, but complete communities are much better places to live.

Minister, what is our government doing when it comes to urban sprawl in Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you for the question. The Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative caucus believe that a greenbelt is something you earn at karate or tae kwan do. They have absolutely no plan for uncontrolled growth in our communities.

With our growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, we're saying no to unplanned growth and uncontrolled urban sprawl. We're promoting complete communities with jobs and homes, healthy communities that will cut down on smog and traffic gridlock. Yet the PCs are against the growth plan, just like they're against the greenbelt, the world's largest greenbelt, protecting an area the size of PEI. And the Leader of the Opposition wants to build a superhighway through it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That's an encouraging answer, because the evidence continues to mount that urban sprawl is a serious threat to our environment. For example, late last year an organization called QUEST released a report on the connection between climate change and urban sprawl. According to QUEST, our country could reduce yearly greenhouse gas emissions by 12% by 2050 by simply fighting urban sprawl, by building more close-knit communities, by involving public transportation and by helping people live closer to their workplaces.

Minister, given this mounting evidence and that the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe was released four years ago, what is the status of the implementation?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First, I'd like to thank the member for his question. He won't ever stop fighting to keep communities across the Halton region safe, clean and sustainable.

We are already seeing the benefits of our growth plan. Municipalities across the greater Golden Horseshoe are implementing our award-winning growth plan. They are designating employment areas where we can create the jobs of tomorrow. They are planning for the complete communities that will be better for Ontario's environment and quality of life. They are designating appropriate rural, agricultural and green areas because, unlike the opposition, municipalities understand how

important it is to plan and grow responsibly. That's good news for our economy, our environment and our communities.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, last year I raised the issue of access to medical laboratory services throughout my riding. Lab closures in Stayner and Elmvale were having negative impacts on seniors, who endured long lineups, extra costs for parking and up to \$80 to travel to get their blood taken because their local lab was closed. At that time you said you were working to resolve the issue of access to lab services.

Minister, the lab in Elmvale is still closed and it's not clear that the Stayner lab will stay open in perpetuity. I'm not sure what you've been working on, so I'm going to ask you: What have you done to ensure that seniors in my riding have access to lab services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member opposite for this question. It is one that is of concern to me, and I'm very happy that the Stayner lab is open.

We're talking about improving access to care. These community labs are part of that care that people need to rely on. We're asking people with diabetes, for example, to have the testing they need done at the appropriate intervals, so community labs are part of our health care system. That's why we're continuing to work to improve access or maintain access to those community labs.

In the supplementary I will happily speak more about some issues that are important to people.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's not just residents in my community who are facing reduced access to laboratory services. Since your government came to office, close to 60 labs have closed across the province and a further 15 have reduced the services that they offer. Half of these reductions and closures are in rural and northern Ontario.

I'm hearing from physicians whose patients don't have access to lab services anymore. These same doctors can't diagnose and treat their patients appropriately as a result. The province-wide contract with lab service providers expired on March 31, as you know, and you seem to have been doing nothing on the issue since.

Minister, will you commit to review the system and bring in real competition to ensure that Ontario's patients and taxpayers are getting the services that they need and the value that they deserve?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the initial question, this is an issue that we are currently very much engaged in. I think the people of Ontario have another, much bigger concern, and that is the future of health care in this province.

You know that we've had concerns about the plan of the people opposite. One of your newly nominated candidates, Kevin Gaudet in Pickering-Scarborough East, is quoted in an op-ed in the National Post: "Mr. McGuinty should instead look to alternative delivery models—which include greater private sector involvement—be-

cause no amount of new cash ever seems to be enough under our current health care monopoly.” Another quote: “There is no good reason that hip replacements and cancer care can’t be equally insured.” That’s private insurance. This is Kevin Gaudet, your candidate.

My question is: Do you agree with your candidate in Pickering–Scarborough East—

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Mount Brydges Sonshine Daycare near London opened its doors in May 2009. The centre is licensed for 10 toddlers and 16 preschool children, ages two and a half to five. It opened with the government’s promise that smaller centres like Sonshine Daycare wouldn’t be destabilized by a flight of four- and five-year-olds. After giving its word to community-based centres, why did this government decide to turn its back on them?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, our government is very supportive of child care facilities across this province. We are also very excited about our commitment to have full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds by 2014.

We appreciate that that commitment will have an impact on child care facilities across Ontario, and that is why we have set aside dollars for capital to enable those facilities to refit their operations for younger children, and we will continue to work with them to ensure that they have the supports and the resources they need, particularly in communities where there may be, for example, only one child care provider. This is an essential service, and we are doing all that we can to ensure that they are able to continue to provide these excellent services in our communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government’s own expert, Charles Pascal, recommended protecting and assisting licensed community-based child care programs. Instead, this government is driving affordable community-based child care centres into deficit, causing fees to rise significantly and forcing some centres to close. Centres like Sonshine Daycare, much to the shock of its board members, some of whom are here today, are left scrambling as the government abandons them. They were told that stabilization funds had been set aside to mitigate any harm to their operations.

Will the minister assure the visiting delegation that there will be the fiscal support promised for this rural child care centre to keep parent fees down and to keep their doors open?

1120

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I did indicate in my first response that our government has committed support for child care facilities right across Ontario. We will be investing, first of all, \$200 million for the full-day kindergarten program. We are also providing capital invest-

ments of \$245 million. Upon full implementation, it will be a \$1.5-billion investment. We have also provided capital funds for child care facilities to enable them to retool their operation and invest in capital investments for their new and younger clients. We will continue to work with child care providers across Ontario. Because of the relationship that we have developed, we have provided additional resources. We know that families value—

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Just a few months ago, this government introduced its much-anticipated long-term affordable housing strategy. In my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, this bill was greeted with much support. It provides the flexibility that municipalities have requested and the commitment to housing that Ontarians expect. That said, there have been comments made by both opposition parties that this bill doesn’t go far enough. Could the minister please outline for this House examples of how this just isn’t accurate?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for his great advocacy with regard to affordable housing within his own riding. Our legislation, if passed, sets a very—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East, please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Unlike the member from Hamilton East, our legislation has good order attached to it. It sets a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system. It’s the first of its kind for the province of Ontario. No other government before has gone out and put this type of legislation in place. It puts people first. Isn’t that remarkable? The two opposition parties would criticize putting people first. It ensures that we use the resources in a far more efficient way.

I look forward to giving more details about this in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: This long-term affordable housing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Excuse me.

Please continue.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: This long-term affordable housing bill is the first of its kind in Ontario and was greatly anticipated in my riding. My supplementary is again to the Minister of Housing. Since this bill was introduced, both opposition parties have been professing their—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

The member from Hamilton East is warned. The member from Hamilton East, I would just encourage you that you need to ensure that you have respect for this Chair and respect for this House. A little comment like that isn't respectful to anyone in this place.

Please continue.

Mr. Rick Johnson: During just about every one of the debates, they said that there's no money included and therefore it will not fulfill its purpose. The minister said that we have made unprecedented investments. Could he please touch on those investments and tell this House how those investments will benefit low-income families in my riding?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to ensure that the member from Hamilton East understands that \$2.5 billion have been invested in affordable housing in the province of Ontario. It's the largest investment—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sergeant-at-Arms, I name Paul Miller, the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We have built or repaired 260,000 units. We have helped more than 680,000 Ontarians. We continue to provide \$430 million annually in affordable housing.

This legislation will ensure that we maximize the potential of our investments. That's why I encourage the two opposition parties, very shortly from now, to support this legislation. Show that you care about—

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

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Minister, the sunshine list is supposed to make the public sector more open and accountable to taxpayers, but a recent Martin Regg Cohn article reveals that at the Ontario Financing Authority, the board decided that traders shouldn't pay the price for a tough financial situation, which meant that when the performance targets weren't met, they decided to sweeten the pot.

Minister, can you tell us what other agencies take part in this practice?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I wouldn't characterize the situation that the member described the way he has, first of all.

I will say this: Across the public and broader public sectors, professionals are routinely engaged that fall outside of the normal limits. The ones that come to mind are highly specialized skill sets: chartered accountants, lawyers and so on. Those get all of the appropriate approvals.

At the Ontario Financing Authority, for instance, we have to employ bond traders. We pay about half of the going rate that these same people could get in the private sector. So the board of the Ontario Financing Authority, working with outside advice, routinely sets pay packages

that are well below the private sector for the same jobs but also allow us to maintain the people in those positions who are very dedicated—

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, Minister, there does seem to be a disconnect between the public and the private sector. In the real world, when times are tough and an employee doesn't make a performance target, guess what? They don't get the bonus. But at the Ontario Financing Authority, the top civil servant—who makes more than half a million dollars a year—together with other board members, decided that 14 senior employees who didn't qualify for bonuses because they didn't meet their performance targets should get a better deal.

Minister, why bother having performance targets at all? Don't you think that the public sector should expect to meet the same standard that the private sector does?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, those employees are paid about one half of what their counterparts in the private sector are paid. I would remind the member opposite that, in fact, the packages that are paid today were established by the previous government.

It is a difficult issue. We have to wrestle with these very highly skilled people, who, by the way, are dedicated public servants. They make less than they could by simply walking two miles down the street to go to work on Bay Street—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, many of them do, eventually, because of what I would call the cheap antics that are thrown their way by people not being particularly thoughtful about these challenges.

We maintain the policy that was established by the Harris-Eves government. It is the appropriate policy for compensation for these highly—

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

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, the Ontario Legislature has been a symbol of our province's democracy for 118 years. Last year, the OMB allowed the construction of a building at 21 Avenue Road that would permanently destroy the skyline of the Ontario Legislature. The valiant efforts of the Speaker of this Legislature were not enough to protect this historic view.

Acting Premier, do you agree that the historic vista of the Ontario Legislature should be protected?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member opposite that, in 2005, our government strengthened the Ontario Heritage Act. We were the first government in 30 years to do so. The act gives municipalities the power to protect heritage properties in their community. Since we strengthened the act, municipalities have protected over 4,600 properties.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Toronto city council passed it. The NDP had the majority.

1130

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the case of 21 Avenue Road, the Divisional Court has turned down a request to appeal a decision by the Ontario Municipal Board. I have to respect the court's decision in this matter. The city has made its decision—as my colleague indicates, at the time, it was an NDP council that dominated—the OMB has made its decision and the court has made its decision. These are all important institutions that serve the public. We have to respect the decision of these boards.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to salute you on your valiant efforts on this particular issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There was a lot of blah, blah, blah in that answer. The Acting Premier would know that, in the Ontario Heritage Act, the minister could declare a provincial interest. Clearly, you're not taking advantage of that act.

The Ontario Municipal Board—the provincial body under your jurisdiction—allowed the construction of 21 Avenue because there is no legal framework to protect the Legislature's historic view. It's up to the provincial government to step in and protect the Ontario Legislature.

The OMB already stated that if you had an interest, if you had stated an interest, they would have been able to do something. But in the absence of any legal framework from you, the Premier or any other minister, they could do absolutely nothing.

When are you, the Premier or any other minister going to step in and protect this important historic view and this historic site?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that the city of Toronto council dealt with this, the Ontario Municipal Board dealt with this and the Divisional Court dealt with this. The member is simply wrong. There has been a full process, due process established by law. The government has acted appropriately in all steps, has used appropriate authorities to act in the interest of all Ontarians, and we have to respect the very processes that were set up by this Legislature.

Unfortunately, these disputes come about from time to time. Sometimes remedies are available; other times they are not. The government is satisfied that the process has been appropriately followed and that the appropriate authorities have rendered their decisions. That still means, though, that this is one magnificent building, one that I think we can all continue to be proud of.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, I've been hearing from many students and young people concerned about the effects of climate change and its impact on the air that we breathe.

Last Friday, I attended the York Region Environmental Film Festival with some 200 Catholic secondary school students. It focused on important issues to those of

us working and living on and around the Oak Ridges moraine.

The participants wanted to know about our government's commitment to plant 50 million trees by 2020. Minister, what progress has the government made towards this goal, ensuring clean air for our children and grandchildren?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for her question and assure her that tremendous progress has been made towards meeting the goal.

In the member's riding, there are three conservation authorities—the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority—who, in partnership with Trees Ontario, have planted 176,000 trees in this area alone.

The member might also be interested to know that the 50 million tree program is the most ambitious project of its kind in North America and the single-largest commitment to the United Nations Billion Tree Campaign.

Working with some 65 tree-planting organizations across this province, including conservation authorities and the MNR's stewardship groups, the 50 million tree program is restoring southern Ontario's landscape one tree at a time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier in question period, there was a question to me. The member from Nickel Belt quoted from a news release. Unfortunately, she left off what was—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, you cannot correct someone else's record. That's not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. The member from Renfrew. Order. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Member from Barrie. Minister of Consumer Services. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me—seated in the members' gallery is Mr. Jim Stephenson, father of Christopher Stephenson. Jim, welcome to Queen's Park today.

DEFERRED VOTES

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment by Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, to the motion by Ms. Broten to locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved that the motion be amended by deleting the words “endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling” and substituting therefor the word “calls.”

All those in favour of Mr. Miller’s amendment will rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	O’Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Steve	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gélinas, France	Martiniuk, Gerry	Yakabuski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Craitor, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 27; the nays are 52.

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

Amendment negated.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is the House ready to vote on the main motion? I’ve heard a no.

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2011, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur les services de logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d’autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On April 13, 2011, Mr. Bartolucci moved third reading of Bill 140. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John
Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Mitchell, Carol
Bailey, Robert	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	O’Toole, John
Best, Margaret	Hoy, Pat	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Cansfield, Donna H.	Johnson, Rick	Prue, Michael
Carroll, Aileen	Jones, Sylvia	Pupatello, Sandra
Chiarelli, Bob	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Clark, Steve	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Craitor, Kim	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	MacLeod, Lisa	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Dombrowsky, Leona	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Duguid, Brad	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Mauro, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	McMeekin, Ted	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 78; the nays are 0.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

CHRISTOPHER’S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher’s Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000.

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

Interjections: Same vote.

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 78; the nays are 0.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

I'd just like to remind the members of a reception taking place this evening with the Ontario Craft Brewers and the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. Please join us from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in room 228/230.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2012, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Dated April 18, 2011.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: Earlier today, we had the pleasure of a tour by a class from Light of Christ School in Aurora. Unfortunately, I was committed to a caucus meeting and so wasn't able to meet with the students, but I wanted to take this opportunity to express our welcome to them. We will be sending the class a copy of the Hansard record of their MPP recognizing the fact that they were here in the assembly with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker provided some assistance to the honourable member. I had the opportunity to welcome your students as well.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RIVERSIDE BUICK GMC

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to recognize Riverside Buick GMC: not only one of the great employers in the town of Prescott in my riding of Leeds–Grenville, but truly one of the finest corporate citizens you'll find anywhere in Ontario.

Last week, the dealership's owners, Stuart and Stephen Birmie and Ted MacMillan, were the proud recipients of the 2011 Employer Champion Award for their outstanding contribution to co-operative education. Riverside is one of just four employers in the province recognized with this award. It's a fitting tribute to the dealership, which has been opening its doors and hearts to co-op students for more than 20 years. Throughout that time, Riverside staff have made sure those students got a real sense of what a career in the automotive world involves.

Many of the Riverside graduates have gone on to fulfilling careers in the industry, some even working in the dealership itself.

As South Grenville District High School grade 12 co-op student Michael Tracey said at last week's awards ceremony in Kemptville, "I've done everything from rebuilding an engine to changing oil."

For students like Michael, the meaningful co-op experience provided by businesses like Riverside can be nothing short of life-changing.

It's really no surprise that Riverside has been recognized for its contribution to co-op education. Giving back to the Prescott and area community is a philosophy that the business has exemplified since it was purchased by Gus Birmie in 1978. You'll find them quietly sponsoring events large and small in Prescott, from local sports teams to the annual Leo Boivin Midget Showcase to the town's annual Loyalist Days weekend.

In those 33 years, the dealership has grown to become the largest GM dealer in Leeds–Grenville and now employs 30 people.

Today, I hope all MPPs join me in congratulating Riverside Buick GMC, which has truly earned its reputation, "The little dealer with the big heart."

ELMIRA SUGAR KINGS

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Today, it's my pleasure to announce another exceptional triumph in Woolwich township.

The Elmira Sugar Kings of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League are the pride of Kitchener–Conestoga as they represent our community at the Sutherland Cup.

First awarded in 1934, the Sutherland Cup is the next major goal of the Sugar Kings. They've recently been crowned the Cherrey Cup champions of the league's midwestern division under the outstanding leadership of: the club president, Jeff Seddon; the general manager, Keith Stewart; the coach, Geoff Haddaway; and his three assistant coaches, Kyle Campbell, Kyle Rank and Brad Nickel.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the team captains: Josh Woolley, Jarred Parent, Shane Smith and Lukas Beleshta.

The Sugar Kings are facing the Niagara Falls Canucks and the St. Thomas Stars in the Sutherland Cup round robin final.

Behind any good team, of course, are the unsung heroes who work hard and who continue to make the team a success. For the Sugar Kings, this is the booster club—the volunteers and the parents who support the team. That includes Tracey Bartlett, Debbie Bowman, Marilyn Craig, Karen Good, Sandy Mann, Marylou Murray, Alva Cummings, Deb Farr, Lois Fisher, Anne Hanley, Donna Martin and Cathy Nearingburg.

The Sugar Kings are celebrating their 40th year in operation. They're a true example of the character of our community: hard-working, resilient and committed to fair play. The puck drops for the next game tomorrow in the Woolwich Memorial Centre at 7:30. All the best to the Elmira Sugar Kings.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Go, St. Thomas Stars, go!

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: As people across the province join with those the world over to celebrate and champion efforts to protect our third planet from the sun on Earth Day, we in Ontario are left wondering if the government is even paying attention.

In Ontario, while the McGuinty headlines may be green, once the photo op is over, the failing results are plain as black and white. This is a government that blows hard about its favourite dirty coal scapegoat while, behind the scenes, increasing the output of that same coal electrical generation by 29% last year over 2009. We've seen waste diversion rates falling to less than half the government goal two years past the mandated deadline, electronics recycling programs reaching only 2% of their diversion targets and eco taxes throwing support for environmental stewardship into reverse—all of this while we await a promised new Waste Diversion Act that's gone MIA.

The promise of new legislation was former Environment Minister Gerretsen's Earth Day present to us last year. It turns out that when we got past the green ribbons and the green bows, the gift box was empty. Will the new minister have more empty promises for us this year? Where is the new Waste Diversion Act, and how many tonnes of landfill have gone undiverted while the minister dithers?

On Earth Day, I encourage people to pitch in and work towards the clean earth goals the government seems unable or unwilling to achieve.

SUMMIT PLACE TAVERN

Mr. Peter Kormos: Like most members, when I'm back home on the weekend, I'm out there with my federal candidate, campaigning. I'm luckier than most because I've got Malcolm Allen, who of course is an elected member of the federal Parliament and has done a great job over the course of the last two, almost three, years, and is working hard to earn re-election—and is doing a fine job at that, too.

Where did we end up on Sunday but in Thorold, at the Summit Place Tavern in downtown Thorold, the heart of Thorold. It's the third Sunday of the month, usually, that they have their Koliba night. That's their Slovak pub night. Of course, Joe Vargovič and his wonderful family—his wife, Hana, who's one of the best cooks I've ever met, and his sons, two great guys, Joe Jr. and Peter—have been operating this little place in its historic location for a good number of years.

The place was packed. The food was great. I had the halushky. Halushky, for those of you who don't know, is the crack cocaine of ethnic food: When you've eaten it once, you're compelled to eat it over and over and over again.

I just want to thank Joe Vargovič and Hana for the cooking, and Peter for his hospitality. Stephen Reistetter, my old friend, was there with some of the members of

the vesely hrvati, playing music—and Stephen's so multi-talented: vocals, violin, as well as mandolin.

Thank you, Joe Vargovič. Thank you to the Summit Place Tavern. I'll be out there again with Malcolm Allen this weekend.

NATIONAL SOIL
CONSERVATION WEEK

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge National Soil Conservation Week. This week highlights accomplishments in the field of sustainable soil protection across the country and recognizes the important work being done by our farmers, farm organizations and producers.

We know that Ontario's farmers are excellent stewards of the land and that scientists at the University of Guelph have been working on soil conservation for many decades. Since 2003, government and farmers have worked together to implement over 20,000 best-management practices to help protect and improve Ontario's soil and water resources.

Our government is also contributing to scientific innovation. Through the OMAFRA-University of Guelph partnership, the ministry has invested in over 20 soil conservation projects, ranging from the development of best practices to the impact of fertilization on soils.

1510

I urge all members of this House to join me in celebrating National Soil Conservation Week and give credit to the producers and their organizations, such as the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association and Innovative Farmers of Ontario, which are dedicated advocates in the province for soil conservation. Why? Because we all understand that the future of agriculture depends on keeping our soil resources viable for future generations.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: This morning, I spoke to the Minister of Natural Resources, and I was assured that she was very familiar with the issue that's occurring in my riding of Durham.

The Toronto Star's article is the best recap of that. It says, "Stray Bullets Terrify Durham Residents." My residents Ted and Kipp Wilson and their family are very concerned about this issue, and I am aware today that ministry representatives, as well as local mayor Chuck Mercier, have convened a meeting with Durham Regional Police and other police enforcement agencies to deal with this issue on some crown land in my riding of Durham, in the township of Scugog.

This is very important. It's a public safety issue, and I'm confident that the Minister of Natural Resources is aware of it and is responding appropriately. But when it comes to the endangerment of families and property—this is a case where, in this instance, the home was damaged with what is reported in the media as .44 magnum

shells being found around the site, as well as other evidence of damage to public property in an area where there should not be discharging firearms.

I'm anxious to report to the House, on behalf of my constituents Ted and Kipp Wilson, that the minister is aware of the issue. I'm confident that there will be a solution found, and public safety will be restored.

THUNDER BAY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last Thursday, April 14, 2011, one of Thunder Bay's best-kept secrets celebrated its 40th anniversary. The Thunder Bay Community Foundation has been distributing grants, scholarships and bursaries since it was founded in 1971 by an act of the Ontario Legislature.

First established by an anonymous donation of \$100,000, it was only very recently that the foundation was able to publicly acknowledge this act of generosity upon the death of Mrs. Prue Morton, who had insisted that her donation remain silent until she had passed. This initial contribution of Mrs. Prue Morton has now grown to over \$6 million in assets, and it has allowed the foundation to distribute over \$3 million in grants, scholarships and bursaries to 347 students and 228 charitable organizations.

I want to thank the sponsors of this year's 40th anniversary and offer a special thank you to the board of trustees, including President Deborah de Bakker, Art Warwick, Rosy Brizi, Shannon Gothard Ramirez, Mark Wright, Maria Hudolin, Bonnie Moore, Tere McDonald and Rob Mozzon, as well as Executive Director Paul Wolfe and Dina Marsico. Their contribution and effort, along with past trustees and donors, has honoured the legacy of Mrs. Prue Morton and allowed this foundation to thrive and flourish.

I am sure that this homemade Thunder Bay success story will continue to serve the interests of our community for years to come.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jim Brownell: Today I wish to recognize the tremendous work done by our government and by my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Carol Mitchell. The announcement in this year's budget of a permanent risk management program, RMP as we know it, is good news for Ontario's farmers and farm families. However, the real credit for this program goes to the farm groups who put the proposal together. This was farm-driven.

I had the great pleasure to welcome and host Minister Mitchell in my riding in 2010 to meet with local farmers and leaders of the local Federation of Agriculture to discuss risk management programs. My brother, a beef producer and member of the OFA and the Stormont Cattlemen's Association, and other farmers like him know that risk management is a good incentive for the next generation of young farmers, who will continue

agricultural practices in our province. RMP gives them some of the stability required as they look into the future.

Now we have a commitment from the farmers, and we have a commitment from the province of Ontario, but there is one partner that is not at the table. We need the federal government to come to the table. Agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility. Farmers are in. The province is in. Now it's the federal government's turn to act and to get in this too.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm very pleased to give the House an update on some of the very exciting development that's going on in the very north end of my riding, right on the 49th parallel at Cochrane. Because of a gold mine development further up, Cochrane is benefiting from the Detour Lake gold mine, which is really exciting for the whole region, including the neighbouring riding.

Cochrane has applied for and received some money from the Ontario government to build a new road so that they can properly offload supplies and equipment off the Ontario Northland Railway yard to Detour Lake Road so that they don't have to go through all the subdivisions in town and also disrupt Commando Lake, which is where the water supply for the town is housed. The town is very pleased to hear that news, and of course Detour mine itself is going to contribute to that project.

Also, the town wants to expand the airport facilities because some of this equipment will be flown in and flown back out further north. So the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has granted money to the tune of \$716,000 for the town for expansions. Also, a local business at the airport site is going to build its own heated hangar. It received \$125,000.

So it's very exciting up there. It's nice to see some positive development—41 jobs created and many more up the road as the mine develops over the next few months.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I beg leave to present the first report 2011, from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Leal presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have no brief statement, Mr. Speaker.

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

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OMBUDSMAN STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (DESIGNATED PUBLIC BODIES), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À L'OMBUDSMAN (ORGANISMES PUBLICS DÉSIGNÉS)

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act and the Police Services Act with respect to investigating designated public bodies / Projet de loi 183, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman et la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui a trait aux enquêtes au sujet des organismes publics désignés.

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 member for a short statement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The bill amends the Ombudsman Act and the Police Services Act to give power to the Ombudsman to do anything it may do with respect to a governmental organization under the Ombudsman Act to a university, hospital, long-term-care home, school board, children's aid society, retirement home and the Office of the Independent Police Review Director.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS ACT, 2011 LOI DE 2011 SUR LES ASSOCIATIONS ÉTUDIANTES DES COLLÈGES ET DES UNIVERSITÉS

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 184, An Act respecting student associations at post-secondary educational institutions in Ontario / Projet de loi 184, Loi sur les associations étudiantes constituées au sein des établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire 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 member for a short statement.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The College and University Student Associations Act, 2011, or CUSA Act, is co-sponsored with me by the member from Trinity-Spadina. It's enacted to recognize the autonomy of student associations

at post-secondary educational institutions, to provide for the good governance of student associations, to require accountability of student associations to their members, to promote collaboration and agreement between student associations and post-secondary educational institutions, and to ensure the collection and remittance by post-secondary educational institutions of fees levied by student associations.

1520

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values;

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

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

"That the Minister of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines" in Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and support it on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and present it to Jimmy in his last week here as a page.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong prosperous Ontario;

"Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario's non-supply-managed commodities;

"Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

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

"We applaud the Ontario government's support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario's agricultural sector."

I agree with this and I will affix my signature.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

“Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

“Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

“Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

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

“That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones’s Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings.”

I obviously support this petition, am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Kiruthika.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

“Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

“Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

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

“That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Jimmy.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a number of petitions that came from the township of Matachewan in the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane, and they read:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

“Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

“Whereas the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka’s private member’s Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

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

“That the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka’s private member’s Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

Of course, I support this petition.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I’m pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex:

“Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

“Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

“Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

“Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

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

“Enact Bill 115, a private member’s bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery.”

I support this petition and affix my signature, and I send it to the table with page Sydney.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Petition to Save Duntroon Central Public School and All Other Rural Schools in Clearview Township:

“Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

“Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

“Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe–Grey;

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

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Rick Johnson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

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

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and I pass it off to Kiruthika.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

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

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

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

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with page Jimmy.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

1530

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

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

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale. I want to thank Focus Elmvale for sending it to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

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

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians, including the people of Elmvale."

I will sign this petition, and I certainly agree with it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas pursuant to the Champlain Community Care Access Centre, there are currently 825 patients on the waiting list for the 11 long-term-care homes in the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry counties, including Akwesasne; and

“Whereas from those 825 patients on the waiting list, 685 are for Cornwall homes; and

“Whereas 54 beds at the Cornwall Community Hospital are dedicated to acute care patients; and

“Whereas because of these 54 beds being dedicated to acute care patients, there are 54 fewer beds committed to Cornwall residents requiring surgeries and regular procedures, thereby creating a longer wait time; and

“Whereas as our population ages and the baby boomers grow older the number of patients requiring long-term-care beds will only increase; and

“Whereas in response to these concerns, AMO’s board of directors recently commissioned a long-term-care discussion paper;

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

“To increase long-term-care homes in the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry counties, including Akwesasne.”

I shall sign this and send it to the clerks’ table.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to get one more petition in today. It reads as follows:

“Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

“Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine” and the greenbelt.

I’m pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Kiruthika.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I’m pleased I’ve got a petition today from farm families from Marysville, Napanee, Bancroft and Toronto.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario’s economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong, prosperous Ontario; and

“Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario’s non-supply-managed commodities; and

“Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

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

“We applaud the Ontario government’s support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario’s agricultural sector.”

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Ciaran.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario’s economy and deserves investment;

“Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

“Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario’s fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey’s private member’s bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay.”

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Grace.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING FAMILIES AND SUPPORTING YOUTH TO BE SUCCESSFUL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT LA FONDATION DE FAMILLES ET LA RÉUSSITE CHEZ LES JEUNES

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Ms. Broten, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care

and maintenance / *Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne l'adoption et les soins et l'entretien.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. But before I cede the floor to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, I have a few things I'd like to say about this legislation. It is a great privilege for me to stand in the House today to support the Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011.

This legislation is the next step in our government's commitment to improve Ontario's adoption system. If passed, it will help people build their families and help children in the province's care find loving, permanent homes, because there's nothing more critical, Mr. Speaker—as I'm sure you're aware and members of the House are aware—and more fundamental to a child's well-being than knowing that he or she will always have a place to call home.

In 2006, our government introduced changes to increase the number of children growing up in permanent homes, including through adoption. These changes included establishing a standardized home study and important changes to how our CASs are funded. Since then, fewer kids are coming into children's aid society care and more kids are getting the chance to succeed in permanent homes. We continue to work with adoption organizations and community partners to strengthen Ontario's child protection system and help all Ontario children reach their full potential.

If passed, the Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011, along with these other changes, will make it easier for a child to get adopted in Ontario and for would-be parents to adopt a child. It's a win-win situation for adoptive parents who wait to open their hearts and homes to a child and for the children who need a loving, stable and permanent home.

As I'm sure you are aware, there are currently about 9,000 crown wards in the care of children's aid societies across the province. These are children and youth who have moved from place to place, from school to school, and over 80% of those have special needs.

We all know that the best chance of success for a child is a safe, stable and permanent family. Research indicates that kids who are adopted or provided with the permanency of a long-term home have significantly better outcomes compared to those who remain in care. Adopted children are almost 25% more likely to complete high school and 50% more likely to continue school at the post-secondary level.

Unfortunately, three out of four kids in care have access orders that legally prevent them from being placed for adoption. An access order is a legal order that prescribes how much and what type of contact the child has with significant people in their lives, including their birth family. Access orders have prevented young people from being adopted in Ontario for more than 30 years. If our legislation passes, this will be fixed. Our government must make it easier to bring these children and the

parents who are waiting to adopt together. These young people deserve a place to call home. They deserve to be cared for by loving parents.

This new legislation, if passed, will mean an access order would terminate automatically when a child is placed for adoption. In cases where it would be in the best interest to maintain some contact with their birth family or another person after adoption, and the child consents, the court may make an openness order. In the case of a number of private adoptions, there is usually an openness order, and I'm very familiar with that system, as two of the most important people in my life have come to our family through adoption, and that's why it's so important for me today to speak to this and to speak to the importance of moving forward with these changes to the adoption rules.

The changes do not stop with openness orders. We have heard from adoptive and prospective adoptive parents about what they need to make it easier to adopt a child in Ontario.

1540

As a result, we're doubling the number of Adoption Resource Exchange conferences that are held annually across the province from two to four. This is an opportunity where we bring families together with prospective children, and they are allowed to find out information about what children are being cared for by the crown and what children are available for adoption. They've been very successful in matching prospective adoptive families with children. It's one of those innovative ways that we're bringing families together. We want to expand that because we've seen the success from that.

We've also heard from adoptive and prospective adoptive families that they'd like reliable information, no matter what adoption stream they are interested in: public, private or international. They want the information, and so we are proposing that we will develop an easy-to-navigate online information system so that adoptive parents can determine which adoption option is right for them.

Our government has also heard from children's aid societies. I work very closely with my local CAS. Hats off to Gisèle Hébert, who's my executive director at home, and all of the hard workers at the North Bay-Parry Sound children's aid society, who are doing a tremendous amount of great work in sometimes cramped quarters and are providing great care to our children across what is a very large region in our area.

We have 1,500 families across the province who are waiting for home studies to be completed. A home study, as many of you who are familiar with the adoption process know, is an assessment process between the prospective adoptive parents and a qualified adoption practitioner, usually a social worker. It determines whether parents are prepared and suitable to adopt, and it provides the basis on which the adoption moves forward. Right now, there's presently a backlog of 1,500 of these assessments, and that's unacceptable. We want to work closely with our CASs to get this number down to ensure

that home studies are done without delay and that we set up standard timelines for home studies in the public system so that we know that these studies are being done in a timely way and parents are not being held up by this part of the system.

With respect to our aboriginal children—and we have a number of aboriginal children in care, particularly in my region and further north of my region—we recognize that customary care is a way for children to find permanent homes. Customary care is the care and supervision of an aboriginal child by a person who is not the child's parent according to the custom of the child's band or native community. Each community defines its own traditions. We will work with the CASs and the First Nations to increase the use of these arrangements so that more aboriginal children and youth are able to stay connected to their communities, their culture and their traditions. We know how important that is for a successful placement for them to stay connected to their communities, their culture and their traditions.

We're also planning to build on the innovative steps being taken by CASs that are providing subsidies to make it possible for some families to adopt. There are a number of CASs that are working on innovative projects and ideas on how to better place children, how to get them through the system more quickly and how to get them out of crown care and into permanent homes.

One such example is a proposal that my CAS—that I referred to just a moment ago, the North Bay-Parry Sound children's aid society—is working on and has proposed to our government. It's a system where they want to look at how we can get children placed as quickly as possible. It has been adopted in a couple of jurisdictions in North America—one in the States and one, I think, in British Columbia—where they've put together a team that looks after one particular child. They engage former police officers and private investigators. They determine all of the potential family links that that child has—second cousins, great-aunts. They identify all of those potential relatives that they have; then they stream that down to potential families that could take this child. Many of these families were not even aware that the child existed in certain circumstances. They allow for the bringing together of these relatives with the prospective adoptive child. It's a really great system. It has worked very well in certain jurisdictions. There are some limitations around it that need to be worked out, but it's one that my CAS at home is looking at perhaps adopting in a pilot way, to determine what the limitations are in the Ontario context and what the success rates are of bringing these children into care with a relative, which, we all know, has a high rate of stick-to-it-iveness where the families are very successfully matched together.

We want to make sure that all of these various innovative options are being looked at through this legislation and our co-operation with our CASs. We're looking at a number of options and a number of ways of bringing these families together.

I'm not going to take too much time today, but it was important for me to speak to this legislation because it is

an important part of my life. My niece and nephew are both adopted. They're a fantastic part of our lives. I get choked up when I talk about it. People say to us that the kids are so lucky to have us; I say we're so lucky to have them. I know that there are many other families out there who are interested in forming a family this way. I think it's very important that we make it as easy as possible to let these families come together and form a permanent basis of home for these kids.

I hope that the members opposite will consider this good legislation. I think it's an excellent move forward for our CASs and for our adoption system in the province, and I am sure that we will have lots of time to discuss it over the coming weeks.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this discussion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member from Nipissing, the government House leader, for her opening comments. As you can see in her comments about her own family, where there have been a couple of adoptions, it's something that makes us all reflect on people who we know who are adopted or who have adopted children, and how much it really moves us all to think of the importance of these families that have the courage and have the generosity of heart to adopt children, and what a critical role they play in building this province and building these homes for these children who don't have access to their natural birth parents.

I'm here today speaking at this point in time because the minister is at a conference in Fort William First Nation in Thunder Bay; it's the very first aboriginal child welfare summit. This summit, hosted by the minister and her aboriginal adviser, John Beaucage, is an important milestone towards improving the lives of First Nations and aboriginal children and youth. I know that Ms. Broten is very, very passionate about this issue and she's very passionate about the work she's doing today in Fort William. I'm just going to try to pinch-hit in her place here today to bring this new legislation into perspective for the members of the House and the public.

Bill 179 is the Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011. As the member from Nipissing said, if passed, this bill will help build better lives for children in the province's care and will help them find loving and permanent homes. The thousands of families who want nothing more than to build their families through adoption will be helped by this bill, and the thousands of kids who want nothing more than to know that they will always have a place to call home are also the keystone of this legislation.

We know that if we are going to improve the welfare of all children, especially the welfare of aboriginal children, we need to take a holistic approach. We have to recognize that the community plays a central role in the life of a child and the child is the circle of the community, the centre of the community. We all want a better future for all of our children, especially our aboriginal children. The legislation I'm speaking to today

is an important step towards that better future for children—this is about children.

There are currently about 9,000 crown wards, and these children in the care of a children's aid society—9,000 of them—come into the care of a children's aid society for a variety of reasons, but they all have one thing in common: We know that their best chance of success is with a safe, stable and permanent family to call their own. All the experts indicate, and so does the research, that children who are adopted or provided with the permanency of a long-term home have significantly better outcomes compared to those who remain in the care of a children's aid society. Adopted children are almost 25% more likely to complete high school and 50% more likely to continue school at the post-secondary level. Unfortunately, 75% of crown wards—these children that are under the care of the children's aid societies all across this province—have something called an access order, which legally prevents them from being eligible for adoption. It's a roadblock to their adoption, so that the adoption cannot proceed because of this order. In fact, access orders have prevented young people from being adopted in Ontario for more than 30 years. You can imagine all the children who could have been adopted and were unable to be because of this block that existed for all this time. At the same time, there are many prospective adoptive parents in our great province who long to bring a child into their lives to love and support. They cannot adopt these children because of these access orders.

1550

In 1984, the Child and Family Services Act was enacted in Ontario. This legislation forms the basis of our current adoption system. It seems that it is about time, according to all the stakeholders who have been consulted over the last year and a half, to fix the adoption system in Ontario. As a government, we must remove this roadblock and make it easier to bring these children and their prospective adoptive parents together.

These young people deserve and need a place they can call home. They deserve to be cared for and loved by parents and families who want to open their homes and hearts to them. These children deserve the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential.

Under the current legislation in this province, a children's aid society cannot place a crown ward—a child who is under the care of the children's aid society—for adoption where he or she has an outstanding access order that was made under the Child and Family Services Act. This section of the Child and Family Services Act would be repealed by this new legislation we have before us today. Under the new legislation, an access order will terminate automatically when a child is placed for adoption—so that barrier would be eliminated and the child would then be eligible for adoption, if this legislation passes.

The current legislation also states that access orders terminate at adoption placement, except those made under part III in respect of a crown ward. We propose to remove this exception so that all access orders, no matter

what type, are terminated when a child is placed for adoption.

The new legislation will also include a provision that the children's aid societies are not prevented from planning for the adoption of a crown ward, even where an access order is in effect. It seems that the children's aid society couldn't contemplate planning for adoption because there are these existing access orders.

These changes will make a big difference for thousands of children who want to be part of families and who want to come home from school to a hug or a high-five from Mom and Dad and their new adopted family.

In addition to our proposed legislative changes, we are implementing a number of suggestions from adoptive and prospective adoptive parents that will make it easier to adopt a child in Ontario. To match prospective adoptive parents with children who need a permanent home, we will double the number of Adoption Resource Exchange conferences held annually across the province, from two to four. These forums help match prospective adoptive families with children waiting to be adopted.

Adoptive and prospective adoptive parents have also told us that finding reliable information, no matter what adoption stream they're interested in—public, private or international—is a most difficult challenge. With that in mind, we will be providing easy-to-navigate Web-based information so that prospective adoptive parents can determine which adoption option is suitable and right for them.

We will also tackle the waiting lists for home studies and establish standard timelines for home studies in the public system.

We know from children's aid societies across this province that about 1,500 families are waiting for a home study to be completed. I guess this is a procedure that the children's aid societies conduct before a family is acceptable, but this long waiting list right now is certainly unacceptable. We will work with the children's aid societies to get this number down so that home studies are done without delay.

As I mentioned earlier, we also understand that there are better ways to care for aboriginal children and youth that keep them connected to their communities, culture and traditions. In fact, the Child and Family Services Act recognizes the distinct social and cultural needs of aboriginal and native people, and notes that, wherever possible, services under the act should be provided in a manner that recognizes their culture, heritage, traditions and the concept of the extended family. That is why, as part of the changes we propose, we will work with the children's aid societies and First Nations so aboriginal children and youth in care remain connected to their communities, cultures and traditions through more frequent use of customary care arrangements.

In customary care, an aboriginal child is cared for and supervised by a person who is not the child's parent, according to the customs and traditions of the child's band or native community.

While we aspire to secure permanent homes for every child in our care, the unfortunate reality is that some will

not be adopted or permanently placed. Some of these children will grow up in the care of children's aid societies. We will not give up on these kids, nor should we give up on them. They need our help to make their transition to adulthood easier.

We know that almost half of Canadians in their twenties live at home and enjoy all the support that comes with living at home. Yet right now, a youth who lives in the care of a children's aid society at the age of 16 or 17 is not allowed to come back for the support he or she needs and wants. When youth leave the care of a children's aid society before the age of 18, they face an abrupt end to the emotional and social supports they received in the care of children's aid societies. These youth are often not yet prepared to assume responsibility for their own needs and well-being. This makes them at risk of falling through the cracks and being unable to cope. This is not how good parents take care for their children.

As you know, children at a certain age sometimes want to leave and feel that they are mature adults. Then they realize once they leave home and they have to pay bills and find a place to rent, and nobody's cooking for them, taking care of them or giving them the love they deserve—these children will come back home. In the children's aid societies, if they leave they cannot come back.

New policy and our changes to the legislation, if passed, would allow youth whose court-ordered care for a customary care arrangement ended at the age of 16 or 17 to voluntarily return to their children's aid societies to receive financial and non-financial supports until the age of 21. This is another major part of this legislation. If that 16- or 17-year-old leaves and then realizes that they cannot cope by themselves in society and need help and nurturing, this legislation, if passed, will allow for these children who've changed their mind to come back under the umbrella and the support of the children's aid society until they are 21 years of age. I think this is a very important change, because we know that some of the decisions that 16- and 17-year-olds make may not be the right ones.

This continued support will help these young people achieve better educational outcomes and help them become successful adults. As these children are supported, obviously, all of society benefits from them making the proper adjustments in education and career choices.

1600

We will also make it easier for a youth receiving financial support from a CAS to go to college or university. We will do this by exempting the extended care and maintenance funding that these young people may receive from their children's aid societies from being considered as income if they apply for financial assistance from the Ontario student assistance program. This is another encumbrance that was there and that is being removed. Therefore, if they receive this financial assistance, it will not be considered as income that will be punitive for them when they're trying to get OSAP.

That's another very important thing, because we all know that a young person's ability to get proper training and education will ensure greater chances of success. This encumbrance is also removed in this legislation.

These are critically important steps for young people. We have seen many innovative approaches in this legislation. We know that the children's aid societies are doing great work, and these are some of the changes that they've asked for. We know that the expert panel has recommended these changes take place. The expert panel was headed by the now-Governor General David Johnston. All in all, this piece of legislation has something that many organizations and stakeholders want. They've been consulted for the last couple of years, including the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, the Adoption Council of Ontario, the Dave Thomas Foundation, the Laidlaw Foundation, and the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare. All these experts say that it's time for these changes to be undertaken as soon as possible.

These children deserve a warm, loving, caring home. We need to get rid of these obstacles that make this very difficult with the present legislation. I hope all members of the House will engage in an examination of this legislation. I look forward to your input and comments, and hopefully we can make life better for these children, right now, who need a break. I hope that we can agree to do that for these young people in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, Minister?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent for the House to revert to reports by committees for the purpose of receiving a report of the Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there consent? Agreed.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
PROPOSED TRANSACTION OF THE
TMX GROUP AND THE LONDON STOCK
EXCHANGE GROUP

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I beg leave to present the final report from the Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Does the Chair wish to make a brief statement?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Yes, I do. On behalf of the Ontario Legislature's Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group, I'm pleased to table its report today. The report includes a dissenting opinion from the New Democratic Party member of the committee, Mr. Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins—James Bay.

The committee's report is a result of consultations held in March 2011 with members of the public and

interested organizations. During the public hearings, the committee heard a series of presentations by witnesses, including experts such as the TMX Group, the London Stock Exchange Group and the Ontario Securities Commission. The report makes nine recommendations that reflect the committee's views after considering the testimony heard from all the witnesses and the written submissions.

As noted in the report, the committee wishes to emphasize that it has no power to impose its view on the matter. It is the committee's hope that the recommendations will be taken into consideration by the proponents of this transaction before seeking the necessary approvals, and by regulatory bodies and governments as they proceed with their review and approval processes. The committee also wishes to emphasize that it took no position on whether or not the transaction should be approved by the regulatory bodies and Industry Canada. Rather, the committee sees its recommendations as an important step in obtaining a better understanding of the issues associated with a transaction that could have significant and long-term effects on the economy of the province.

The committee is of the opinion that any transaction between the TMX Group and a foreign stock exchange group must take into account specified principles. These include the impact on and net benefit to Canada, including Ontario, its economy and people; Toronto's financial services sector; and northern Ontario's mining industries.

The committee's recommendations cover five main issues that were raised during the hearings:

- the structure of the board of directors of the merged entity;
- the role of regulatory bodies;
- strategic decision-making;
- the impact on jobs in Ontario and Canada; and
- the impact on the mining sector.

The consultation process revealed an underlying concern that, under the terms of the proposed merger, the centre of gravity in regard to the decision-making ability of Ontario and Canada would move to London. This shift could result in decisions made that do not reflect the interests of Ontarians and Canadians as a whole.

To possibly address this concern, the committee is putting forth recommendations. Three such recommendations are:

- that the board of directors of the merged entity have an equal number of directors from Canada and from the United Kingdom/Italy;
- that safeguards be built into the proposal that ensure the development and introduction of new technologies, products and services be carried out in Canada and the United Kingdom, and benefit both countries; and
- that an irrevocable commitment be made that the operations, assets and key staff of the TMX Group and its businesses will continue to reside in Canada.

The committee is proud of the way the members from all three political parties worked together and were committed to ensuring the interests of all Ontarians and

Canadians were at the forefront of deliberations and are reflected in this report.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

BUILDING FAMILIES AND SUPPORTING YOUTH TO BE SUCCESSFUL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT LA FONDATION DE FAMILLES ET LA RÉUSSITE CHEZ LES JEUNES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We will now revert back to Bill 179. Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to provide a couple of comments on Bill 179. I can't wait for our critic the member for Dufferin–Caledon to have her time to speak on behalf of our caucus.

In reviewing the bill, I realized that there are two issues that the government is dealing with with this particular piece of legislation: access orders, and also crown wards—that would be relinquishing that and allowing them to come back before they were age 18. I think the member for Eglinton–Lawrence said it's 21, but the way I understand the legislation, it's 18.

From what I can see, however, the legislation is not going to stop grandparents, for example, from contacting us about some of the private members' bills that members have put forward on that side of the House. I think the member for Niagara Falls has had a private member's bill that I've received correspondence on from grandparents across Ontario.

As well, I don't know that this bill addresses some of the events that I attended last year. Last June, I attended a fundraiser, and I think they were selling hot dogs and baked goods, because there was some mention that the minister had implied that they wanted children's aid societies to have bake sales and sell hot dogs if they wanted to raise money for programs. I'm not particularly sure, from what I heard from that side of the House, that this bill is going to address that issue, but it is a question that I'll put on the floor, and perhaps I'll get an answer from one of the government speakers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the government House leader and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence as they tried to explain what was contained within the body of the bill, and I must state that I'm disappointed. This is a very complex bill, and between the two of them, they only had a few brief comments to be made in that period of time.

Of course, there are two main functions of the bill, as has been outlined. One is to facilitate adoptions of crown wards, and the second is to allow crown wards to get back into the system between the ages of 16 and 18 so that they might be able to better receive support from children's aid societies and the government of Ontario.

What the government has not explained, and what I'm hoping that they will explain, and what I want to further discuss when it is my opportunity to speak is why all of those key recommendations from the expert panel that the government set up following the last election have not been followed. These are but two of many recommendations, and it takes me back to the position of the Pascal report on education. It's all well and good for the government to cherry-pick and take two out of 20 recommendations and then wonder why there is some angst in the community—just as they cherry-picked one out of 10 recommendations made by Charles Pascal when it came to education.

1610

It is probably not sufficient for the government to just stand up there and state the obvious; that is, that we want crown wards, where possible—the 9,000 of them or so who exist in Ontario today—to be adopted. Of course everybody agrees with that. But nowhere has the government so far explained how the legislation is going to be put in and what kind of funding arrangements are going to be made to facilitate this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen carefully to the government House leader and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I know that in the period of time that I have been in public life, I've had the opportunity to work with a number of executive directors of the Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society. I shared with my good friend the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock the individuals that I've had to work with—first Bob Penny and then Paul Hudson and currently Hugh Nicholson.

Hugh Nicholson just recently said that he will be retiring as executive director of Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society. He had a very long and distinguished career previously, being the executive director of the children's aid society that covered the North Bay area before he took the job in Peterborough. One of the great strengths that he brought with him when he arrived in Peterborough was the whole issue of adoptions within First Nations communities. He had extensive exposure in working with First Nations communities in and around the North Bay area, and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence did touch upon that in his remarks this afternoon.

One of the important aspects of this legislation, as it gets debated and ultimately goes to committee for review, is the whole issue of crown wards in the province of Ontario. Right now I'm told that there are about 9,000 crown wards in the province of Ontario, and shockingly, only about 10% are adopted each and every year. Currently, this substantial barrier is in place for these crown wards to find a family in which to be nurtured and grow and seek their future. So this piece of legislation is a wonderful start in this process.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: Bill 179 is the bill we're debating right now, and I'm just sort of trying to fill in for—the response from our critic was very clear on this.

The adoption issue is quite controversial. It involves families, families often in trouble and families that need the aid of children's aid, so I wouldn't ever be critical of that organization and the tough issues they're trying to deal with.

The most vulnerable people in society, you might say, are our youth. In my view, the bill, as described to us by our critic Ms. Jones—the first section there makes quite good sense. The section is the adoption issues around access, under access orders. I have orders here to stay on message. But the most important thing is to not lose focus on the child at the end of all of the discussion.

Next, the most important unit of society is the family itself, strengthening the family in this attempt here. Under that section of the previous bill, Bill 210, if there's an access order in place, and that includes, I think—outside today there are grandparents who are lobbying or at least wishing their voices to be heard. They should be recognized, in my view. As long as they are custodians with a responsible history of care and things like that, I think that should be certainly looked at. But I want to make sure that the repatriation within the family is given the most obvious opportunity if someone wants to adopt within the family. I think that should be supported, and I'm not sure—our position is quite clear, as our critic has said; it's to put the family first and make sure that the child's safety is paramount in all decisions.

This bill, I'm sure, will get our support. Our critic is leading that charge in that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Mike Colle: I thank the members for Leeds–Grenville, Beaches–East York, Peterborough and Durham for their comments.

Just a correction there: The legislation does say that a ward who is 16 or 17 can come back into the system, and then financial services will be given to them till they're 21. I hope the member from Leeds–Grenville made note of that correction. You can get support till you're 21.

In terms of the other issues, I think the co-chair of the working group said it best: “The minister's action today shows an impressive grasp of the issues facing prospective parents and kids in care. This package of legislative changes and other supports for prospective parents will result in better outcomes.”

There's a whole series of actions that this government has taken along with legislation. Some of the actions are not in the legislation because they don't need legislative change, but certainly they're reducing the waiting list. There's an 8% increase in what we gave children's aid societies last year. We're doubling the number of Adoption Resource Exchanges, making it easier for prospective parents to get information online and working with CASs and First Nations—so, aboriginal children. There's a real emphasis in this legislation on ensuring that there are supports given to First Nations children.

It is a piece of legislation that's roundly supported by all the major stakeholders on the expert panel, and many of their recommendations are in the legislation. Others are part of the ongoing efforts of our government in helping children. So it is a timely piece of legislation that the stakeholders want to get enacted as soon as possible because the delays are not to the benefit of the children.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I welcome the opportunity to join in the debate today on Bill 179, Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful. Like the member for Nipissing, I am also the proud aunt of a young lady who joined our family through adoption, so I have more than a passing interest in legislation when it talks about home studies and the adoption process. There are lots of opportunities for improvement. I think the Towards Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario report that came out almost two years ago was an excellent report that we should be basing our debate and discussion on today.

At the onset, I will say I think there are quite a few positives in this bill, but I also believe we need to hold public hearings. We need to listen to what the families and the organizations are currently dealing with in the existing system and things that they believe could be changed and ways that we can make this bill better, because there are improvements and amendments that could be included and incorporated in Bill 179.

I also have some questions about this bill. I'm a little disappointed that the minister, during our leadoff debate, has opted not to participate. But having said—

Mr. Mike Colle: That's out of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): If you could just withdraw that, please.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I withdraw.

The legislation was brought in—

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. The record was already straightened out.

Mr. Mike Colle: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Go ahead.

Mr. Mike Colle: The minister is at a First Nations aboriginal child summit on this very subject, and it's de-meaning for the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. She withdrew. It's not a point of order, and it had already been recognized.

Continue.

1620

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I also have some questions about this bill.

Interjection.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Are we done? Only one of us has the floor, and I'm fairly clear that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member for Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I still have the floor, Speaker. Thank you.

As I said, I have some questions about this bill, and I'm hoping that we can get them answered today. I'm starting to wonder, with the level of debate and decorum, whether that's going to happen.

Having said that, I would like to take a minute to thank Cathy Paul from the child welfare division of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. She gave an excellent briefing to me on Thursday, the day after the bill was introduced. She answered all my questions with no hesitation, and I do appreciate the time that she took to share that information with me.

One of the first things I want to talk about is the home study process for potential adoptive parents. As I said, I am an aunt of a family member who was adopted, and so I have some knowledge of how the current home study process works. It is my understanding that there is currently a wait-list of approximately 1,500 families to get a home study completed by the children's aid society. In fact, I believe that number is considerably higher, because there are many children's aid societies across Ontario who have chosen to tell potential adoptive parents, "Don't bother waiting for a home study from us. We have limited resources. We do not have the ability to complete your home study in a short amount of time, and therefore I would recommend to you that you go privately to get your home study completed." So that 1,500 number that has been bandied about: I believe that, in fact, it would be higher.

What I would like to know from the ministry is specifics on how they plan on dealing with these backlogs. Will more social workers be hired? As I understand it, temporary funding will be allocated to deal with the backlog but, again, in what format? If you have families who have simply chosen not to wait on a children's aid society wait-list, then your number is going to go up, so the 1,500 is going to be skewed. How long does the ministry estimate that it will take to clear the backlog? Will the backlog include both private and public home studies? It's my understanding that some children's aid societies have not even begun wait-lists for that very reason. There are a number of examples that I could give you of children's aid societies that are quite small, and for the very few children who do become available for adoption, they transfer them to another CAS because there aren't sufficient resources within their small agencies to do that.

It seems to me that this bill adds more and more responsibilities on to the backs of the children's aid societies, with no obligation or understanding of the funding that it takes to implement them. I am in no way questioning that we need to deal with the backlog; I am concerned that this is another level of responsibility legislatively being given to the children's aid societies across Ontario, with no equivalency in terms of funding or understanding of how they can implement.

I mentioned the Towards Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario report. It's almost two years that we've been waiting for action on this report. We've already had a

number of members in the chamber talk about the valuable work that the sustainability commission raised; many, many recommendations—I believe there were upwards of 20, and this bill will cover just two. Since those two years have gone by and we've had the sustainability report tabled, we've had a number of children's aid societies that have actually had to file section 14 reviews of their funding model. For people who are unfamiliar with a section 14, it is essentially having the children's aid society ask the ministry to open up their books and saying, "Show me where we are able to financially provide the legislative mandates that you've asked us to do." They are not able to do it, and they are willing to go through a section 14 to prove that it's an unsustainable model of how much they've asked children's aid societies to do and yet no funding to tie it in.

We continue to download more responsibilities on to the children's aid societies, but we've been hearing very little on changes to their actual funding model. The closest that we've come to any kind of discussion on a funding model is actually recommendations for children's aid societies to amalgamate. I believe that the latest number is that 13 separate children's aid societies across Ontario have been asked to combine their services with another agency or combine with a second children's aid society. Kenora–Rainy River comes to mind immediately. They are in discussions right now, and a lot of that discussion is because they are simply unable to sustain the funding model that the current government has given them.

In the midst of all this, children's aid societies have been faced with laying off employees in order to meet their budget constraints. York region had their budget cut by \$7.3 million in 2009 and handed out layoff notices to 16 employees. In my own riding of Dufferin–Caledon, Dufferin Child and Family Services saw their budget cut by 17.1% halfway through the 2009 fiscal year. Peel estimated that they would need to cut 24 front-line workers to work within the new budget constraints. Halton would need to cut 34 workers, and Durham 63. They are all to work with their existing budgets but still provide essential child protection services and answer every call that comes in. London has seen the closure of six area group homes—these were group homes that were serving children with special needs, mental illness and addiction—all because the mandate and the funding did not match.

While I agree that we need to get moving and get more home studies completed, we need to find that balance between properly funding the children's aid societies and their legislated mandate. I know that the sustainability commission has been out travelling the province and meeting with children's aid societies to discuss funding and their mandate, and has recommended that some of the smaller children's aid societies consolidate either with each other or other agencies within the area. As I mentioned, 13 are in that process right now.

I want to move on now to the 30-day waiting period. There was a reference made that children who are currently in care could not be considered for adoption if they had an access order in place, and so the new legislation would actually allow children, even if they had an access order, to move forward through an adoption process. The children's aid society would have 30 days to contact the individual or individuals—because it's not always birth parents; it could be siblings, grandparents, neighbours. There's a whole range of people who could have access orders in place. So the 30-day waiting period would oblige children's aid societies to contact the individual who holds a current access order, notify them that the child is potentially up for adoption and give them 30 days to apply to the court to say, "I would like an open access order," which would allow the relationship to continue in a different model, and yet still allow the adoption to take place. So there's that 30-day waiting period to notify the holder of an access order that the order will be terminated and the child is going to be placed for adoption. Again, it's now up to the children's aid society to use all methods available to contact the holder of the access order, and it is up to the judge to determine that all reasonable effort has been made to contact the holder of the access order for it to be officially terminated.

So we have a situation where there is 30 days for it to happen, and then the judge decides whether what the children's aid society did—whether it was in the form of notification by letter, by face-to-face contact, phone—was sufficient to allow the access order to be officially terminated. Again, this places more burden on the shoulders of the children's aid societies, because the reality is, if the access order is not being utilized, it makes it very challenging for a children's aid society to potentially find the individual named in the access order and then get some action on the other side. It's an important part, but it is an added responsibility that we are putting on the CASs across Ontario.

1630

I want to now talk for a few minutes about Bill 210, which was the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act passed by the Liberal government in 2006. I'd like to read to you from a press release that went out regarding Bill 210 because it directly relates to what we're now discussing with this new legislation. I believe there's a little bit of catch-up and correction happening with the new legislation before us.

From the press release:

"Openness in adoption arrangements is the key to finding more permanent families for Ontario's crown wards....

"If passed, the legislation would make thousands of Ontario children eligible for adoption, taking them out of foster care and into permanent families." Again, this is from five years ago.

"There are about 9,000 crown wards in the care of Ontario's 52 children's aid societies"—that number is actually up from early in 2003, when there was approximately 7,900. "A crown ward whose birth parents

have a court-ordered right to visit or contact cannot be adopted unless they give up that right.” That, again, is the access order I was referencing.

“Currently three-quarters of crown wards are ineligible for adoption because their parents still have access to them. Yet almost 60% of parents never take advantage of their rights, and don’t contact their children.” Consequently, the kids are moved from foster home to foster home with no option or availability for a potential adoptive situation. “As a result, only 10% of crown wards are adopted each year—about 900. (This compares with about 700 international adoptions each year to Ontario, according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.)” So, in fact, there are almost an equal number of international adoptions as domestic adoptions.

“Under Bill 210, which”—did—“amend the Child and Family Services Act, crown wards could retain contact with their birth parents after being adopted.” That’s the open access. “They would no longer have to cut off all contact to be eligible for adoption.

“The Ontario legislation’s stress on openness reflects the strong trend ... toward open relationships in adoption: birth and adoptive families know each other’s names and addresses, and have ongoing contact through letters, phone calls or visits.” What that option is, whether it is contact by visits, letters or phone calls, is actually all set out in the access order. “Open adoptions have been the norm in private domestic adoptions for many years.” It was one of the barriers, quite frankly; parents who were potentially willing to give up their children for adoption would consider that a barrier. So by allowing the open access, it made more children open to having a family situation. “A similar rule in the public sphere should boost the number of public domestic adoptions.” Again, these are the goals that were set out five years ago with Bill 210.

“Ontario’s Bill 210, officially called the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, would allow a children’s aid society to go to court to get an openness order for crown wards who are to be adopted.

“Bill 210 provides that:

“—If a child who is a crown ward has been or may be placed for adoption, the court may grant an openness order before the adoption is finalized.

“—To make an openness order, the court must be satisfied it is in the best interests of the child, and will allow a continued relationship with a person that is beneficial and meaningful to the child, such as”—but not limited to—“a birth mother, foster parent or member of the child’s extended family.

“—The adoptive parent and other parties can make their own openness agreement, before or after adoption. This would allow an ongoing relationship with significant people in the adopted child’s life, such as birth or foster parents, or the adoptive parent of the child’s sister or brother.”

It ended with, “If the changes go through, a child could keep important ties to her birth family, siblings or grandparents, and still be adopted.”

Another change that was implemented with Bill 210 was additional improvements to help remove barriers preventing thousands of Ontario children from being adopted. “Standardized application and screening process: The government is changing the application process to make it consistent for both public and private adoptions across Ontario, and to avoid repeated assessments of prospective parents.” You can also actually include the home studies necessary for fostering.

“Guardianship: In a legal option beyond traditional adoption, children could gain a permanent home by being placed under the guardianship of an adult, if they don’t want to be adopted or placed with a relative.

“The new funding formula will allow children’s aid societies to pay for post-adoption support services such as physiotherapy and counselling.”

Then we talk about some of the stakeholders who commented on Bill 210. “The Adoption Council of Ontario ... said it is pleased with the changes proposed to the adoption system. ‘This is a very good day for adoption,’ said Pat Fenton, ACO executive director, ‘but it is essential that the government move quickly to implement these changes. Every child deserves a forever family, and every day that we wait to make these changes, thousands of children in Ontario have to wait longer for their family.

“‘The removal of access orders as a barrier to adoption placement is a key intent of the proposals,’ she added, ‘and it is a great step, as it gives the opportunity for openness arrangements to be considered where appropriate. For me, a key element is flexibility and different options for permanence, with adoption being one of several options (others being guardianship, kinship care, customary care, etc.). It also makes the system friendlier to applicants, more responsive and effective.’

“The Ontario adoption community, led by ACO, has long called for a legal change so that crown wards with access” orders “can nonetheless be adopted.

“ACO’s position is that ‘it makes no sense emotionally and economically to keep children as crown wards who could be adopted by loving families.’ Keeping a child in foster care for one year costs about \$40,000; children suffer from having to move from one foster home to another about once every two years. Providing a permanent family through adoption would be a cost-saving measure in both fiscal and”—more importantly—“human terms.”

All of those comments were from Bill 210. Sounds very, very similar to the bill we are debating today. I would like to know how Bill 179 is going to be different from Bill 210. Five years later, there is still the same number of crown wards waiting for adoption in Ontario. I’d like to know what this government is going to do to ensure that this bill works this time, because it obviously didn’t work very well the first time it was passed, five years ago.

Bill 210, in 2006, was supposed to increase adoptions in Ontario, but as we see, the numbers have stood still. Why, if access orders were to be removed in 2006, are they still not being removed today?

There is something else I have to question in the timing of this bill. For the past 23 months, the government has been applauding the work of the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption, who tabled their report in June 2009, yet the report was sitting on a shelf until last week.

One quote I'll pull from the report: "There are kids in Ontario who have no permanent home, and that is 100% the result of how difficult the" current "system is." This was written after the 2006 legislation that was supposed to make adoptions across Ontario easier to manoeuvre through.

Another quote from the report: "Children's aid society adoption service providers told us they don't have the resources they need to do the job they would like to do.... The central systemic problem is that adoption is not the primary focus of children's aid societies, nor should it be. Child protection is, understandably, their main focus. Only about 2% of children's aid society funding is devoted to adoption, and children's aid society workers themselves told us that the resources dedicated to adoption vary greatly from one children's aid society to the next."

I'm going to reinforce: That's not me speaking as a critic. That is from the sustainability report. These are the experts that the Liberal government asked to go out into the field and talk to the experts. I would like to know if this issue is going to be dealt with through this legislation, or how they're going to fix the flawed model so that more children can be adopted into waiting families.

1640

I'd now like to move on and talk to you a bit about the expert panel on adoption and fertility. I have met with a member of this expert panel, who spoke to me about the tracking of access orders within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I know it's a major component of the report. This was a report commissioned by the Liberal government. It was handed to the then Minister of Children and Youth Services in June 2009. Twenty-three months have gone by since that report was tabled in this Legislature and we are just seeing the first movement on it now, so I have to question the timing.

If you want a comparison, in December, the Dean report, the workplace safety report, was tabled, and in March, just three months later, Bill 160 was tabled. So we go from tabling a report to preparing legislation and debating it in less than three months. Yet, in comparison, the sustainability report on fertility and adoption took 23 months. I was hoping that you tabled this bill last week because you believe in the work the expert panel has done, and not just because the plight of crown wards was highlighted in the media last fall.

I have also heard that one of the reasons these access orders are still not being removed is because there is a backlog in the court system. If it is the courts that are slowing down the process, I would hope that the minister spoke with her colleague the Attorney General about ways to streamline this process to ensure that these access orders are administered and terminated in Ontario. Because of this backlog, many crown wards in Ontario

are actually turning 18 and aging out of the system without an opportunity ever for a permanent family.

Again, if we go back to the legislation that was passed in 2006, access orders should be terminated when children become available for an adoption placement. I look forward to seeing how this legislation will be different from Bill 210 and provide better results for children and families as they try to move forward with adoption.

Moving forward to the issue of adoption subsidies—which was not at all raised in Bill 179, but was clearly referenced in a number of adoption recommendations from the sustainability report: It is not mentioned in the legislation. It is my understanding that, currently, individual children's aid societies have the ability to provide adoption subsidies to parents who are adopting a crown ward and that these subsidies are, in fact, at the discretion of the individual CAS. In other words, it is a case-by-case basis. Quite frankly, it most likely depends on what, if any, amount of funding is available at the children's aid societies, and as I referenced earlier in my remarks, many of them are facing funding crunches. So there isn't going to be a lot of opportunity for adoption subsidies, and there is no reference made to them in Bill 179. I heard the minister say in her press conference last Wednesday that she would like there to be some consistencies in these subsidies, but she did not mention how this would work and she made no reference to how they were going to resolve it.

She said that she also wants to consult with experts in the field. I am hoping that throughout the debate she will provide some clarification on how this will happen and when this will happen. This leads to more delay, and I'm hoping the minister can shed some light on her government's plan for adoption subsidies across Ontario. Are they looking at one dollar amount across the province? Will it vary based on the cost of living of different cities or communities or the individual child's needs? There was no reference made to it in either the press conference or the minister's response, and unfortunately, those are the only two opportunities we've had to hear her speak on it.

I know that the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies noted in their pre-budget consultation that resources for adoption subsidies will increase adoptions of children, which will remove them from the long-term care of children's aid. There are still a lot of unanswered questions and a cloud over how this will work.

These subsidies will be especially important for the families who are willing to adopt a special needs child. The cost of keeping a child in care is approximately \$32,000. Special needs children were not mentioned at all in this bill, and the minister has mentioned very little about this issue. Of children in care, 68% are diagnosed as special needs. It may include attention deficit disorder or hyperactivity disorder, or psychiatric, development or learning disabilities.

Of children in care, 93% have behavioural difficulties. This can include aggressive, assaultive or inappropriate sexual behaviour, substance abuse, or being frequently

AWOL—or “runners,” as the children’s aid workers would say. Twenty per cent are suspended from school; 17% are identified as high risk, meaning they are risks to themselves or others. We all understand that children who are crown wards face significant challenges. Only 42% graduate from high school by the age of 20.

We need to improve the system. We need to encourage families to come forward, and we need to ensure that a system is in place that won’t put up unnecessary barriers for families who want to grow their family through adoption. Because of the challenges that we’re facing, these children with special needs are the least likely to be adopted because of their social and medical needs. As you know, if a child with special needs is a crown ward, they have access to all of the programs and medical supports that they need. Once a child with special needs is adopted, the family assumes responsibility for providing these needs.

I’m going to read briefly from a letter I got—actually, it was very timely: about a week before this legislation came forward. It’s from a mother who has adopted three special needs children:

“Approximately 12 years ago, a worker from assistance for children with severe disabilities came to my home to teach me how to fill out their paperwork. I showed her my son’s adoption subsidy”—or permanency funding, as most people would know in the industry—“and she said that the PF didn’t matter, that the assistance for children with severe disabilities was for his special needs. I was left with a duplicate copy of the paperwork to use as a guide for the following years.

“I’ve been doing it this way for 12 years and three adoptions. There has never been a problem. This year, on the request of their annual review, someone handwrote on the form letter asking for copies of each of the children’s adoption subsidies. The form was not signed. I did as I was asked. I was later told by the children’s aid society that that was confidential and that it did not need to be shared, as permanent funding was not part of ACSO. I received a letter back from ACSO saying the children would be denied benefits starting April 1 of this year because they received adoption subsidies.

“I requested a review. Their next letter said that they had completed the review and the children would be denied benefits because they completed their review and the children would receive medical and dental coverage with a minimum \$25 total benefit.

“I have no work benefits. The children’s aid society asked me to write to a member within the CAS. Two different CASs have provided letters stating that the permanency funding does not cover the children’s special needs. They gave me the booklet about permanent funding printed by the same ministry, children and youth services, that governs the assistance for children with severe disabilities.” And she goes on and on.

Basically the gist of it is that one ministry is trying to help this family, because they know she has three children with special needs—not adopted children, but three children with special needs. And the other ministry is saying, “We’re going to cut your funding off because

those adopted children get 25 bucks, so you’re on your own.”

It is ridiculous to me that we have two provincial ministries fighting and making this family go through these kinds of hoops when—let’s not forget—she did the honourable thing by adopting and wanted to have children join in her family, and now we’re having two ministries fight over whether they should fund them or not.

So I would like to know if the minister and her ministry have a plan for these special needs children, to encourage the adoption of children with special needs, who are obviously at the highest need, based on the stats I referenced earlier, yet seem to have the lowest likelihood of being adopted.

1650

In regard to another component of the bill, allowing children between the ages of 16 and 18 less a day to return to care voluntarily is an excellent idea. I think we can all understand that children will sometimes leave the care of the children’s aid society on their own. Of course, most of us being parents or knowing young people—you think that once you turn 14, 15, you know everything and you can do it all yourself, so I understand that crown wards at that age would potentially leave children’s aid. With this new proposal made in Bill 179, if necessary and if the child voluntarily agrees, the child would be allowed to return under the care of the children’s aid society until they’re 18, and in special circumstances until they’re 21. So I’m pleased to see that. As I said, sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn’t, and this simple change will allow that relationship with the children’s aid society to continue.

I think it’s a good idea that we’re giving these same children between 16 and 18 the opportunity to apply for and more easily receive assistance under the Ontario student assistance program, or OSAP. As I mentioned earlier, the graduation rate for children in care is 42%. Hopefully, now that children know that they will have the option to apply for OSAP without having their financial assistance from the children’s aid society counted as income, it will better their chances at getting a post-secondary education. Anything to support youth in care getting access to an education I know we can all support.

I was pleased to see that Irwin Elman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, had the opportunity to present to the Standing Committee on Social Policy concerning Bill 140, the affordable housing bill. We, of course, voted on third reading of that today. The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth noted in his deputation that children in care are overrepresented in the homeless population and overrepresented in the youth and adult justice system, so we need to make sure we have policies in place to ensure that children in care have the tools to succeed.

To quote Mr. Elman from his committee deputation: “The other thing that is not really debatable is that study after study says—as one youth told me, it’s not rocket science—that this is what can help: housing; education;

mental health support, if they need that; counselling; employment. They need the practical things. They need connection to that one person who will make a difference in their lives; connection to a family of their choice, of their own making; connection to a community.”

Mr. Elman’s amendments to this bill were put forward and voted in favour of by both the Progressive Conservative caucus and the NDP. However, in that committee, the Liberals voted them down, so I now somewhat question their commitment to providing access to services for children in care. After all, Irwin Elman is advising as an officer of the Legislative Assembly.

I look forward to hearing what my colleagues in all parties have to say about Bill 179. I look forward to it moving towards committee so that we can hear what the stakeholders have to say. I’m sure that they have some excellent suggestions. I’ve already heard some in the very brief time that we’ve had to review the bill since its introduction Wednesday afternoon. I’ve had some excellent discussions, both electronically and in person, with stakeholders, who are pleased to see some movement.

A number, I must say, talk about the many recommendations that were brought forward in *Towards Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario*. The very first recommendation was that the government of Ontario should create a provincial adoption agency with a local service presence. We don’t see that in Bill 179.

There is, as I go through it:

“Develop a focused program to find families for older crown wards and crown wards with special needs.” Again, no mention of that in Bill 179.

“Provide adoptive families and birth families with support to negotiate openness and ongoing support to maintain openness.” Well done; that is in Bill 179—pleased to see it. It’s an important part, but it is one part.

There’s a couple more that I’d like to highlight:

“The government should develop clear policy that demonstrates support for relative adoption, including relatives adopting intercountry”—again, no reference made in Bill 179.

“Include conflict of laws provisions in the Child and Family and Services Act which recognize adoption consents and orders terminating parental rights made outside of Ontario.

“Address legislative gaps, including those related to guardianship and expenses, and develop policy to assist Ontarians temporarily living outside the province who wish to adopt.” Again, no reference made to it.

I could go on. There are four pages of very clear, very concise recommendations made by this committee led by now-Governor General David Johnston. I think they did excellent work and Bill 179 is a good first step, but I would hate to think that two of over 20 recommendations are all we’re going to do to improve adoptions in Ontario. We have a long way to go.

There was a line from another debate where a member said that none of us are going to go to heaven with the changes that we’ve made to improve adoption. It was actually in reference to mental health. I think we could

say the same for adoptions in Ontario. I think we can all take some responsibility and hopefully all be included in how we can improve Bill 179 going forward.

I don’t want to belabour the point, but I do hope that we get the opportunity for true input and that we start to open up our doors beyond this chamber and ensure that we do get the public consultation that is so important.

I know, from talking to family members and individuals who have had the joy of welcoming a child to their family through adoption, that there is no more special opportunity. I’d like to see that we actually make sure that that opportunity is available to more Ontario residents, because there are lots of people who would like to have the benefit of expanding their family through adoption.

With that, I will leave my debate for another time. Thank you for your interest.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I know this is not a point of order, but I just thought I’d take the opportunity. My son is here from downtown Torrance in beautiful Muskoka. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He’s a great guy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Since we have interrupted the flow, I will just make an announcement that we should wish happy birthday to Wayne Butt.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much on this auspicious day, the birthday of Wayne Butt.

I’d like to comment on the member from Dufferin–Caledon and what she had to say today. I listened intently because she spoke with some degree of knowledge and some considerable degree of compassion for those children who find themselves under the care of the children’s aid society. She also made some very good points that I think the government ought to hear.

First was the plight of children’s aid societies across this entire province, how so many of them are facing financial constraints or seeking orders in which to combine, are having a problem making ends meet or are having up to April 1, the beginning of a new fiscal year, to lay off staff, or have the fear of laying off staff in order for them to carry out the mandate which this Legislature and this government has put upon them. We need to always bear in mind the difficult job that they have to do, and the member from Dufferin–Caledon spoke very well about that point.

She talked about the concept of guardianship. Although adoption is the focus here today, we need to start looking at the concept of guardianship because in some cultures it is not possible or permissible to adopt children. I’m speaking mostly about the Islamic culture, the concept of sharia law, where it was strictly forbidden to adopt the child of another human being, whether that person was alive or not alive. There’s some good reason for that, and we need to take that into account here in Ontario, as increasingly people are coming from other countries.

1700

She also talked about Bill 210, which I'll leave for later because my time has run out.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just in terms of what the member from Dufferin–Caledon said, I'm quite perplexed, because she talked about the 23 months of waiting and delays. Then I find that her House leader moved a motion yesterday to delay the debating of this bill. It says, "substituting therefor the words 'This bill be not now read a second time but be referred back to the government with instructions to conduct further consultations with client groups.'" She's saying, "Why is this taking so much time?" Then yesterday they asked for it to be basically blocked. I find it very difficult to understand.

I just want to say that last year this government increased the subsidies for adoption services for children's aid societies by 8%—an 8% increase, which is quite substantial. The number of adoptions increased 21% last year alone.

There are many things that are being done along with this legislation, which is going to basically try to remove barriers for these children, especially our crown wards, to be adopted. All the members of various groups have been consulted. They've gone across the province. Experts from all walks of life who are helping children have done their consultation. Almost all of them agree that these changes in this legislation are long overdue. They're from the adoption working group; Mary Ballantyne, the executive director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, applauds "Minister Broten and the McGuinty government for this comprehensive and thoughtful announcement." The Adoption Council of Ontario said they're encouraged by this bill. Adam Diamond, a YouthCAN coordinator, says it's great that youth can come back home and get the support to finish their education.

So there are a lot of good things. I think she was fair—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly rely on the member for Dufferin–Caledon for advice. We moved a motion yesterday to give us one more day to work on this. We talked about it in caucus today—I chair caucus. I hope the government members had a chance to look at this as well and I hope they stand up today and make some comments on these amendments to the Child and Family Services Act with respect to adoption. This is actually a very long and strange title—I won't get into that. It's actually about adoption.

It makes it easier for children to be adopted if they're crown wards by addressing this issue of access orders. Under the new legislation, when a child is placed for adoption, all access orders are terminated. I feel that's a good thing. Like I say, we've just had a chance to discuss this today. It was introduced fairly recently.

Secondly, the legislation allows any child aged 16 to 18 less a day who had previously been in care and if they

had left—it makes it easier for them to return to care and makes them eligible for the extended maintenance program up until age 21.

As the member for Dufferin–Caledon mentioned, it's similar to the child and family services amendment act of 2006, but unfortunately that legislation, even though it allowed the termination of access orders—five years has gone by and really nothing has happened. The number of crown wards in care remains the same today as it did in—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I was present in the chamber and listened very carefully to the comments made by the member for Dufferin–Caledon. She made a very competent contribution to this debate. She raised points that are legitimate ones, that are valid ones. The government members, rather than getting all heated and bothered about it, should be listening and understanding that that's why we have these debates: because it helps us get a handle on what the legislation can or, more importantly, what it sometimes can't do.

The issue here is large numbers of crown wards who aren't being adopted. The impediment, we're told, is the access order; we understand that. But I suggest to you that there's more here than just the impediment of an access order. I suggest to you that the trend is to want to adopt younger children rather than older children.

I'm suggesting as well that by the time a kid is a crown ward and is 13, 14, 15, that kid may have had a whole lot of damage done to him or her over the course of the years by virtue of being flipped back and forth from a parental home back into a children's aid society as a ward of children's aid, of being in a foster home, what have you. That creates special burdens for adoptive families.

As well, there's the whole issue of kids with special needs who need special families, I tell you, to adopt them. One of the remarkable things that is omitted here is any consideration or contemplation of the additional costs that an adoptive family takes on when, for instance, with love and great compassion, they take on the challenge, emotionally, physically and financially, of a child with special needs. Why isn't this government considering the huge cost of caring for a crown ward? Yet the failure of this government to support those families who, with extra love and extra attention, want that child.

The crux here is that we've only got 16, 17 days. I don't know what the heck the government had in their minds by introducing this at this point in the legislative year. Sixteen, 17 days—this bill needs committee work. For the life of me, I'm not sure that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Dufferin–Caledon has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the members from Beaches–East York, Eglinton–Lawrence, Haldimand–Norfolk and Welland.

To compare asking for one further day to allow us to review the legislation, when we've waited for 23

months—it is incomprehensible to me that you can make a comparison and an argument that one day to allow us to talk to stakeholders, to allow us to reach out to families who have gone through an existing adoption process and get their feedback, is undue delay. Twenty-three months is the undue delay; that is the frustration.

I'll read from one email that I got this morning, that said: "We also believe that there are components missing from Minister Broten's bill and that this all should have been addressed when Raising Expectations came out nearly two years ago. We find this appalling." That is from an agency that looks after families, that advocates for families who want to adopt children. So please don't tell me that a one-day delay is unreasonable.

The Toronto Star article that talked about this bill when it came forward said that Bill 179 is simply tweaking the existing legislation and fails to address two major barriers to adoption. We've talked about them both: the challenges that the existing children's aid societies have already in dealing with the pressures that they have, and the challenges that families have who want to adopt a child with special needs, and the fact that there are no ongoing subsidies available to them, or consistent subsidies.

I will leave it at that and thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to preface my remarks by just talking about a little bit of my own experience in dealing with children's aid.

It was my privilege and my honour, when I was the mayor of East York and later, as a member of the megacity council of the new city of Toronto, to be council's representative on the Children's Aid Society of Toronto. First of all, as the mayor, I was representing Metropolitan Toronto, the council of Metropolitan Toronto, as it then was, and after amalgamation, the city of Toronto, as it then was, to go to the children's aid society each and every month to a round-table meeting of ordinary citizens, of some experts, of two politicians, of which I was one, to sit down and talk to those people who tried to put together the children's aid program for an entire large city like Toronto. It was a difficult job, not so much for me, because my job entailed one evening a month, but for the people who worked there. I am, to this day, eternally grateful for what they were able to accomplish in the most trying of circumstances.

There never seemed to be enough government money. There never seemed to be enough resources for the thousands upon thousands of children who needed them. The only thing that there was always plenty of was criticism—criticism from the press, criticism from families who were upset at what the children's aid society was trying to do, criticism from other levels of government; there seemed to always be a lot of that. The people who work for children's aid were amongst the finest individuals I ever had the opportunity to meet. I remember with great esteem Mr. Bruce Rivers, who was at that time the CEO of children's aid in Toronto and

who has since gone on to work for—I'm trying to think of the name, the group that deals with adults with intellectual disabilities here in Toronto.

1710

Mr. Mike Colle: Community Living.

Mr. Michael Prue: Community Living. Thank you very much. It wasn't coming to me.

He has since gone on to work with them. He instilled in me the complexity of all of this.

We had children, so many children, who were taken from their families. They were taken from their families for horrible reasons: some because the families were into drugs or alcohol; some because there was abuse and sexual abuse; some because the children were deprived and were not being given the necessities of life, often because the parents were incapable, sometimes unwilling, but mostly incapable of providing for them; and sometimes because the children were abandoned. In every case, there were people who were there to help: trained professional people who tried to find them homes, lawyers who sometimes had to make them into wards of the state, and foster parents who came to the ready to provide temporary homes while we tried to do some long-term planning.

The children who were placed as crown wards sometimes succeeded but all too often, unfortunately, did not. I do remember all of those success stories that we heard around the table, and I do remember that once or twice a year there would be a meeting where some of those successful crown wards would come forward, sometimes to tell us of their success in school, how they had been granted admission to a university; sometimes they would put on talent shows and show how they were able to learn how to play musical instruments or to do some acting or other things. You had to marvel at the tenacity of those young people and how they were able to overcome the deprivation of their families, how they were able to overcome being placed as crown wards.

But I want to tell you that just as often, and sadly, far more often, people who were crown wards were problem children. They were problem children because they never quite were able to accept in their lives that they had been taken from their families or that their families had rejected them and that they were placed into foster homes or sometimes into group homes, and they simply never made it. It was very sad. I stand here saying that adoption is just one of the many things that need to be done for those young children to make them into really responsible, caring and productive adults. Unless we give every single tool that is available, we are going to find out exactly what was said by the expert panel. The expert panel said it far better than I think I ever could, and I want to quote from them. The expert panel reported:

"Former crown wards who age out of the system are less likely to finish high school, more likely to become parents themselves at a young age, more likely to be users of the mental health system, more likely to require social assistance, more likely to rely on homeless shelters, to experience poverty as adults and more likely to be in conflict with the law. The long-term costs to society

when children do not have permanent homes are staggering. The human costs, in terms of personal suffering and unfulfilled potential, are heartbreaking.”

We have here today a government bill that takes a very small step. The expert panel made 20 major recommendations, all of which deserve to be implemented. We have two of those recommendations coming forward here in the body of this bill, two major ones. They're coming forward in the body of the bill, and one has to ask: Is this a good thing?

Well, of course, it's a good thing. It is a good thing if you will take some of those children who languish on waiting lists to be adopted, who can be adopted and who should be adopted, and it's another good thing to take those children who are 16 or 17 years of age, who have broken away from the system, who want to come back in order to be helped.

No one is going to deny that this is a good thing, but I think it behooves all of us to look at this bill and to see what it accomplishes and what more it could accomplish if the bill is made better.

The number one thing that the panel recommended that I do not see here in the bill is that we must increase the level of people who are willing to adopt children who are crown wards of the province. At present, it's my understanding—and I've seen two sets of statistics, but it doesn't matter which one is correct: one that there are 7,000 children who are crown wards, and another that there are 9,000 children who are crown wards. It doesn't matter which one of those is true. I hope it's 7,000 and not 9,000 for the sake of the children. But there is nothing in the bill to increase the number of prospective adoptive parents. That has remained stagnant since 2006 and is currently, to my understanding, somewhere around 1,500. So there are approximately five or six times as many crown wards who potentially might be adopted as there are families out there willing to adopt them.

This bill does not relate to how to get more people interested in taking crown wards as potential adoptees, and I think that is a major failure of the bill to this point and something that might be addressed in committee work. We need to do everything within our power to convince people to do the best they can by way of these children.

My colleague Mr. Kormos said there is an increasing tendency for people to want to adopt younger and younger children and a reluctance to take on those who, as he termed it, may be damaged by the system, by being passed back and forth between families and foster situations, perhaps being crown wards, legal difficulties, courts and everything else.

But we have an obligation, if we are going to do this bill right, to look at each and every one of those children and how we can do right by them. Adoption will not work in every single case. I am stating this quite categorically from my own experience. I have met and do know of children who did not want to be adopted. They were 12 years old, 13 years old or 15 years old and simply did not want to be adopted. Some of them could hardly wait until their 16th birthday, when they could

escape from the entire system, even though the escape would be to the streets and homelessness, because that is how despairing they were.

One has to know that not all of these children will ever be adopted, but surely we can do better than having 1,500 prospective parents for a group of 7,000 to 9,000 children. Certainly the overwhelming majority, certainly those under the age of 10 or 12, should be candidates for adoption, and this bill should be making much more effort to find families to do so.

Another question which I think surely we would be better equipped to answer following the committee hearings: Are we balancing the rights of all the parties involved correctly? Are the rights of children, birth parents and adoptive parents all being looked at and looked at very carefully? I think this is something that's difficult to say at the outset.

1720

In my consultations with people who came from the minister's office, who came from the bureaucracy, and met in my office for half an hour, some very pointed questions were being asked, and I'm not sure that all of the responses were appropriate.

I understand that people have worked long and hard on this bill—at least, I assume they've worked long and hard. They've had nearly two years since the filing of the report and have come up with only two recommendations. I know that what has been said is difficult in terms of openness concepts and other things that have been put into the four walls of the bill, but I am not convinced that everything is being done to facilitate the children, who are my primary concern, and also the birth parents and the adoptive parents as well.

This is a very, very complex bill, although it's a small bill in terms of what's written down and the number of paragraphs and the number of pages. A very careful balancing act of competing rights and concerns must be struck. That is why I know, and all of us know, that this is going to have to go to committee.

I am somewhat puzzled too as to why this is coming before this House with only a few weeks left. We are going to be meeting for the balance of this week, and then we're going to be off for a little while, and then we're going to be back for a couple of weeks. Then we're going to be off for another week, and maybe—but maybe—we might come back for that last week of May/beginning of June. There are but four or five weeks left in this parliamentary session, unless, of course, the government wants to extend it. If you do, please let us know. If the purpose of coming back is to pass this bill, I, for one, would hugely welcome it. But if this is an exercise in us debating this bill for the purpose of the government being able to say that they introduced it and the opposition shut it down and we ran out of time and everything else, then I think the government needs to be very candid. It is highly doubtful, if there are to be structured hearings, that those hearings can be accomplished within the next four parliamentary weeks, because there are so many people who need to be heard.

We need to hear from First Nations groups. I heard the parliamentary assistant today state that the minister is meeting with First Nations groups on this bill and on adoption procedure. I am thankful that she is, in fact, doing that. It is absolutely essential that this take place, because many of the difficulties and the crown wards and the children at risk belong to our First Nations communities, way out of all proportion to their numbers in the general population.

We need to know that we are being culturally sensitive to First Nations groups, that we are not taking their children away from them. We have had experience in Canada—horrible experience—of taking away the children of First Nations people and putting them into residential schools. We've had a horrible experience trying to take them away, to demean their culture, to have them forget their language, to forget their parents and their surroundings and all of the people with whom they have lived. We do not need to compound that by failing to consult with them in terms of what is happening in this bill, and so I am thankful that the minister is consulting with them.

I do not know how much consultation has taken place to date because I have been unable to find out in the day or two since this bill has been tabled, but that needs to happen, and there needs to be extensive consultation. Again, I need to find out, and I need to hear from them and I need to have some committee hearings—and perhaps the government House leader can inform us what the government's plan is on all of this—to make sure that we have hit this right, because in this Legislature I want to do absolutely nothing that is going to harm the cause, the culture and the vitality of First Nations communities in the bringing up of their children, and to make sure that every single child who is a crown ward is looked after in a culturally sensitive way.

I also want to say that we need committee hearings to find out why the rate of adoption of crown wards has hovered consistently around 10%. It does not seem to me that the system is working overly well. It does not appear to me that a system where only 10% of the crown wards are being considered is one that we should be proud of. We should be finding out why this is happening and we should be making amendments to the bill that will increase that amount exponentially.

The NDP is also very concerned that the excellent, comprehensive and forward-thinking work of the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption entitled *Raising Expectations* is largely excluded from the bill. We want to find out and hear from the experts, perhaps even people who served on that expert panel, what they had intended, and perhaps from government members and others why these very real provisions have been excluded from the bill. There were many, many good things that were said that are not here. I don't know why they're not here. They could easily have been here. The government had two years to prepare. The government had a battery of lawyers and others to draft a bill that could have included these very provisions, but it has chosen not to.

There is also the very significant problem, or potential problem, when it comes to the ability of CASs or others, to contact birth families and, if the contact is not made within 30 days, to have that relationship severed.

As well as serving on the CAS for many years, I also worked, as many of you will know, in the immigration department. We used to have appeal rights that flowed: People would be sent a notice and they had 30 days in which to appeal the refusal of a family member in a family-class application. It would be sent to the last known address. But sometimes, every once in a while, there was a reason that people were not contacted, and I would think the reason could be very simple here too. You contact a parent who is estranged from the primary caregiver and you ask them if there is anything that they want to do, but sometimes that parent may be working in a foreign jurisdiction. Sometimes they may have gone to the United States or Qatar or some other place in order to find employment, and they are not within the jurisdiction of Ontario and may not have any idea what is happening. They may not find out until the 30 days have long elapsed.

There is no provision in the bill that I can see that will allow for an appeal of this. So you might get an otherwise good parent who does not have the authority over their son or daughter that has been granted to another parent and who would suddenly find that their relationship has been severed, that there is no provision for openness, that the adoption has taken place in their absence and they have lost their son or daughter.

I want to know what provision, if any, this government is going to make to allow for problems like this that happen. It is one thing to say that you can't find somebody if they don't want to be found, if they have absquatulated off the face of the earth—

Mr. Ted McMeekin: What?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a good word. It is. It means to make off like a thief in the night—"absquatulated"—and no one can find them. It's quite another thing for a person to be away or unknown to a CAS worker—away on vacation, away on business, away attending a family funeral or something in another country that has taken them out of the jurisdiction for more than 30 days—and to lose their rights. I think we need to have something in the legislation that allows for that provision. To simply state that at the end of 30 days somebody throws up their hands and says, "I can't find the natural father. I can't find the natural mother. I can't find these people. I don't know where they are. Therefore, the adoption will proceed," only to have them come back, is tantamount to creating a lot of disturbance.

We have—and I've already talked about that—the whole problem of aboriginal communities.

We have to look at the impact this is going to have on children. As I've stated already, there are people who are not going to want to be adopted, who are 12 or 13 or 15 years of age and who will be listened to. But you will also have some very strong-willed children who will be younger, who will know their parents, who will cry, who will be disappointed and who will not want to be

adopted. We have to look at the impact on them. We have to look at what is in their best interests.

1730

I know it's often difficult to determine whether a child should have that right, but if anyone should have rights in these circumstances, I would leave it to the children. It is the children who will suffer. It is the children who, in and of themselves, have this great emotional turmoil and this great emotional bond with their birth parents and/or the people who bring them up. Sometimes it could even be a foster parent. To take them out of that parental situation and to give them up to someone else can be very traumatic.

I do know this: My sister-in-law for many years was a foster parent. She adopted one of those foster children to become her son, but she looked after so many of them. I know when those children, who were sometimes in her care for years, were given up for adoption or went somewhere else, the emotional pulling away was very, very traumatic for all of them.

We need to look after those children. We need to make sure that their interests go first.

We need to have, as I said, extensive community hearings. I haven't heard yet from the government whether these are planned, and if they are planned, how this bill is going to proceed within the time frame of this legislative session when it's due to be finished and elections take place in October.

In the last provincial election, the McGuinty government promised to strike an expert panel on adoption and fertility. Two years later, that panel gave an extensive, well-researched report with dozens and dozens of recommendations. Now, 20 months later, the government finally brought forward the issue to legislation, and as I've said, much of what the expert panel seems to have said did not make its way into Bill 179. The issue of fertility treatments is nowhere to be found. There's not a single mention in the bill. And the complex, multi-layered recommendations for adoptions in Ontario are nowhere to be found.

Bill 179 is being moved through this Legislature at a very fast progression. Notwithstanding the very capable and learned actions of my friends in the official opposition to delay the bill by one day so that they could consult with people, everything else has been done here with some very considerable speed. I don't know why the government is trying to move so quickly on this bill, other than to say that they attempted to fulfill the recommendations that were made by the expert panel. However, we are dealing with legislation that governs the lives of children and the lives of adoptive parents and the lives of birth parents, and I think we need to do it right.

The expert panel said the following: "The central problem is the current 'patchwork quilt' nature of adoption services in Ontario. Services are not structured in a way that makes sense for children or families—or even service providers. In fact, there is really no 'system' at all. Service providers tend to operate in relative isolation, often with few connections between them. Adoption policies, legislation, guidelines and standards are not

based on current research or best practices, are inconsistent across services and, in many cases, do not reflect the current realities of adoption—or the diversity of this province. Furthermore, insufficient information is collected about services and outcomes for children and families. Without evidence-based research, it is difficult to plan a comprehensive range of adoption services that anticipate and fully respond to children's, families' and service providers' needs." The members will find that on page 36 of the report.

The expert panel thus went on to recommend the creation of a provincial adoption agency. This is central and key to what they wrote, but is not found in this bill. They wrote that the creation of a provincial adoption agency was mandatory, and they urged the government to create a new, centralized provincial adoption agency with a local service presence in order to accomplish most of what needs to be accomplished—six major things.

The first is to "provide all interested families with the information they need to explore their potential to adopt." I do not see this within the body of the bill, and I do not even see it in terms of the adoption of crown wards. Perhaps the government members will tell me how this is contained within this bill, because unless you can provide the interested families with the information that they need, you will never be able to expand that list from its current 1,500 to meet the needs of all of those children who might potentially be adopted.

The second thing they said is that we have to "work with CASs to make appropriate and timely adoption plans for children in care." Again, I have not seen that within the body of the bill. If it's there, someone please advise us, because it is not readily apparent to me, either in my reading of the bill or in my discussions with officials who came to my office yesterday.

The next thing they said had to be done was that we have to "focus on finding families for older crown wards and crown wards with special needs." Again, there is nothing contained within the body of the bill that will facilitate this. We know, and I'm going to talk about this a little more in a few minutes, that one of the ways you facilitate the adoption of older crown wards and crown wards with special needs is that you make certain funds available to those very brave families who want to adopt them. It is one thing to take a child who is a crown ward, who has services provided for them by the government at no cost to the foster family, and another thing, if that foster family decides to adopt the child, to say, "Okay, we paid for all these things in the past. Now it's up to you," because so many people, even though they have love in their hearts and care for the child and want to do the best, do not have the resources to make that a reality.

I think about people who have taken children who have finally settled down in a foster situation after years of neglect or abuse, who have finally gone to a hockey team or have started to learn some things in school or who belong to music practice, or have special needs that are being met as a crown ward, and then, say, all these things that they've suddenly become used to and that have brought stability to their life are no longer available

unless the family has the wherewithal to pay for them. Surely it would make more sense, surely it would be a better thing, that the government put something in this legislation that would allow the funding, at least on a temporary basis or for several years, to allow people who were adopting older children or those with special needs to have the money and the wherewithal to accomplish it, to ease the transition from one to another, rather than yanking the children out of situations that they were finally growing comfortable with and which were meeting their needs to go to a family that could no longer do so. That's what we're hoping will be talked about when this goes to committee.

The committee recommended that we "match and place crown wards with families." Again, there's nothing in this bill that will do that. It is important to find the right match. It is important to find a crown ward who feels comfortable with the family, and a family that feels comfortable with the crown ward, because if you don't do that, then this whole thing will be doomed to failure.

They recommended that we "provide birth families and adoptive families with the support to negotiate and maintain openness when in the best interests of the child." This is not in the legislation either. In fact, the legislation goes so far as to say that if you don't file within 30 days, or if you can't find the birth parents, then the time is closed. I don't think that's in the best interests of the child, who forever will wonder why their parents have given up on them or will forever wonder why their parents cannot come around anymore. That would be a traumatic and horrible experience which would, in some cases, start the downward spiral.

1740

The committee also recommended that we "support families throughout the public adoption process and help families after the adoption is finalized." This is on page 44. This would involve a commitment of this and future governments to give some money to ease that transition. It would be far cheaper, I would put to all of you, to give the money or a portion of the money that is being spent through the CAS, through the crown ward, through the foster system, to the new family to make the transition possible and to make the child secure and happy than to continue the situation the way it is.

If the money is going to be spent anyway, I think it's far better to spend it within the confines of the family so that the child can truly be helped in a loving and nurturing way than to give it to a government agency, as well-meaning and as competent as the CAS is. In my view, the family would be the appropriate institution to receive the money, but there is nothing within the body of the bill or any commitment made by this government to spend the money in a way other than you're spending it now.

There are, and there will continue to be, serious problems in terms of finding enough families to be adoptive parents. As I've already said, there's 7,000 people and only 1,500 families. The report went on to state, and I quote again from it—and this is a long quote, Madam Speaker:

"And we repeatedly heard from families pursuing public adoption that, instead of being treated as a valued resource for waiting children, agencies worked to screen them out of—rather than into—the adoption process. Many families told us that they were not welcomed nor provided with the opportunity to explore whether or not public adoption was the right choice for them. This approach could be due to a lack of resources within CASs to embrace all prospective adoptive families and it could also be because many families initially inquire about adopting healthy infants. Some CASs told us that, at first contact with prospective adoptive families, they try to describe the realities of the needs of many of the children in their care.

"This may well have the unintended result of 'scaring off' families calling about healthy infants but who, with more complete information, might be more than willing to adopt a toddler, an older child or a child with special needs. The 'screening out' approach might be a natural outcome of a child protection orientation: approaching adoption using a child protection lens is completely understandable given how much child protection work CASs are engaged in on a daily basis."

That's found on page 46 of the expert panel report. But again, none of this found its way into this bill—none of it.

The expert panel went on to state again: "Despite this trend" of openness in adoption "we learned that openness and how it may be implemented is not yet widely understood by some adoption workers and many adoptive families. We have heard that many CASs find the current tools, including openness orders and agreements, to be very complex—so complex, in fact, that some have established a policy not to use them." This is my aside: Perhaps that's why nothing has really changed since 2006.

They go on: "The complicated tools, coupled with concern about safety for children and fears about how openness may infringe on the 'right to parent,' make some CASs and adoptive families reluctant to consider openness in public adoptions."

Children's aid societies are already struggling to stay afloat. My colleague from Dufferin—Caledon spoke about many of those societies, spoke about the financial insecurity that many of them have had in the past year as their funds dwindled at the time of the end-of-year allocation, so that they had to seriously look at laying people off. They are expected to do an enormous job in increasing complexity. They are given additional responsibilities by the government without the funds to go along with them.

Children's aid societies are struggling today to stay afloat, and only 2% of their resources are being spent on adoptions. If this bill goes through and they are going to have to start looking into more and more adoptions, if they are going to have to start increasing the number of adoptions or potential adopters from 1,500 to 3,000 or 4,000 or 5,000, then where are they going to get the funds? How are they going to accomplish this goal?

If it is the intent of the government—and it would be a laudable attempt—and if they were successful in getting children adopted, maybe they wouldn't need as much money. Maybe the money could be given to the families. Maybe that's what needs to happen here, but I didn't hear it from either the parliamentary assistant or the government House leader when they spoke. That's why we need this to go to committee; this is why we need to have this discussion.

Is this bill going to help or is it going to hinder? Is it going to make it more difficult for CASs to find adoptive places for people? Are they going to have the resources? And then, if it happens, where are those resources going to end up? If the CAS doesn't need them, I think it would be very laudable that the family get them. If the CAS continues to need them, are there additional funds for what can only be said to be one of the most worthwhile goals that we could undertake? That's a legitimate question to be asked.

With the new provisions in Bill 179 that will require a new process for terminating access orders and creating openness orders, what does this mean for CAS resources? I do know that a good deal of the money that was spent by the Children's Aid Society of Toronto when I was a member of it for some eight years back in the 1990s, up until I came to this place in 2003, much—far too much—of the money that they had was spent on legal advice. I understand that this is a complex process, that lawyers were constantly involved, that the courts were a remedy that had to be resourced all of the time; that people were running back and forth, the families who were potential adoptees sometimes, the birth families for sure, the official guardian for the children and the children's aid society itself. This was a hugely complex and expensive proposition.

We need to know, if this bill is going to require new processes for terminating access and creating openness orders, what, if anything, is going to be resourced to children's aid societies to do it. It could be that they need less money. I don't know, but I do need to hear about this, and we have not yet heard about this from anyone.

A very real issue that I want to spend some time on here is the whole issue of subsidy. I've touched on it a couple of times, but this is what the expert panel had to say about this, and it's important to read it all. It's from page 55 of the report:

“A second issue related to placement success in many public adoptions concerns adoption subsidies. As the child welfare system is currently structured, most children with special needs receive substantial additional financial support to address those needs while they are in care. This support may be cut off, however, if the child is adopted. We heard from some very dedicated foster parents who said they would like to adopt children currently living in their homes, but primarily due to the significant needs of the children, simply could not afford to do so. Others worried that adoption was not in the best interests of a child if it resulted in a loss of critical services and supports. Perversely, as the system is currently structured, a child with special needs has a

better chance of having those needs met by remaining in care—a ‘solution’ that overlooks their basic human need for permanency and emotional attachment, and the province's own need for fiscal responsibility. Simply put, it costs more to keep children with special needs in care than it does to provide adoption subsidies for these children.”

That's what we want to hear. That's what we want this government to say.

1750

The budget was passed a couple of weeks ago but there was nothing in the budget—I guess because the bill is not yet law—that would state how the government intends to move in this very vital sector. But within a billion-dollar budget I'm sure that there's monies that are not accounted for, or at least for which I cannot account, that the government could draw on if that is their intent. I hope it's their intent, and if it is, I'd like to hear that when it comes to committee.

The issue of subsidies was one of the very primary concerns raised by adoption advocates, nearly all of them who came before the special committee. We have a perverse incentive in the system, as they said, that if you are a foster parent, you have access to funding that will ensure the child in care has access to the services they need. But once you decide to do a wonderful thing, to bring that child into your family, to forever say that they are yours, that you love them and they are part of your family, then you lose that access. Does this make sense? It is an impossible situation for most people. We want to know what's happening with this before we give our seal of approval. It could that be the government has got this all planned out. I hope they do.

There is no moral justification though, I would say, for it and it makes terrible financial sense. The minister has hinted at a discussion with children's aid societies that this issue of subsidies will be discussed, but we don't know. We want to know and I think the children's aid societies need to know, and the people of Ontario will demand that right. They are the wards, they are our children; they are not anyone else's children. When they are wards of the state, they are our children and we have a responsibility to do what is best for them.

We know what this government has done in other similar circumstances, which does not bode well. My colleague the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who's occasionally quite loud in this chamber, was never more diligent when he worked tirelessly to protect the temporary care assistance that grandparents were supposed to receive when they looked after their children so that the children did not become wards of the state. I remember all of those grandparents coming here. I remember the demonstrations in front of this building. I remember them coming into the Legislature and sitting in the public galleries. I remember the dismay that they had because the few tiny dollars that they were being given to look after their own grandchildren were being taken away by the system, and the system was indeed perverse.

For three years, my colleague Mr. Miller has been working with the grandparents to fix the definition of

“temporary.” “Temporary,” the government has determined in its wisdom, means for a very small period of time. The courts and the tribunals have determined it to mean something else. In fact, the two cases that have made it through all of the courts and tribunal system have found against the government. The two cases have said that “temporary” is not just for a short period of time, but “temporary” can be defined as until such time as the children might be normally expected to return to their own parents or perhaps to become wards of the state.

These grandparents are subsisting on very little and they were getting, I think, in one case, \$241 a month in order to look after all of the needs of a child whom they had assumed; for all intents and purposes, they were the guardian and looking after them. The government fought them every single step of the way. Rather than say this is a good thing so that they didn’t become wards of the state, rather than say it’s a good thing so they didn’t go into the care of the children’s aid society or end up in a group home, they denied the grandparents who were willing to look after them, grandparents of very modest and meagre means, the \$241 that allowed them to do so. That caused me then and causes me today considerable angst and I wonder, if the government is willing to do that to grandparents, what plans do you have for the system in terms of financing, what kinds of regulations will be made, and will the word “temporary” be bandied about some more?

The government denied there was even a problem. I remember the Minister of Community and Social Services being thankful that there was an appeal process. Big deal. That means the appeal process that took the families a year or two years, finding lawyers to do it pro bono because they had no money at all, and then in the end losing the case. Simply stating that everybody has to go through this elongated legal process to get some funds to look after their grandchildren causes me nothing but pain.

I want to also deal, in the time remaining, with Mr. Elman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. Again, my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon spoke about his representations. He was the one who first alerted me to the use of “our” children. I think it’s an important concept, because the children who are wards of the state are, in fact, our children. We have taken them, and it is our responsibility to do that which is right. He made a presentation that called for the government to apply a lens to all decisions impacting crown wards of how our children are to be treated. Elman recommended making the financial support these youth receive through extended care maintenance not count towards income when it comes to subsidized housing.

There was a meeting just last week, I believe, in which a motion was put forward. After Mr. Elman spoke, after he made that recommendation, my colleague Ms. DiNovo from Parkdale–High Park put forward the motion in committee that would do precisely that: that the financial support these youth receive through extended care maintenance not count towards income when it comes to subsidized housing, so that they could

receive subsidized housing and look after themselves once they were no longer wards of the state, once they had maxed out at 18 years of age, to give them a chance. These are children who have been through destitution, who have been through poverty, who have been through neglect, who have been through, sometimes, abuse and sexual abuse. Some of them have lived on the street. Mr. Elman made a very simple request. The motion was put forward, and every single government member voted it down—every single one. I don’t know why, but it causes me nothing but grief in terms of this bill.

What is the plan of this government? What are they doing? They say they want to help those who are 16 or 17 get back into the system, and I believe they probably do. It’s only normal and natural that a child who has gone through some of these troubles in their life will find that they rebel, they run away, they don’t want to be part of it. It’s only normal or natural that, after a few weeks or days or months on the streets, a few times living in shelters, living in some friend’s basement on a couch, they find out that they’re not going to make it, and they come back and want to work with the system.

I agree wholeheartedly with this provision of the bill that allows children’s aid to say, “Yes, come back and we’ll help you. You’re not yet 18 years of age. If you come back and do our bidding, then we will, in fact, support you up until the time you’re 21.” I want these children to have an opportunity. I want them to get an education. I want them to have a job. I want them to have all of that. But it is also, at the same time, very, very difficult with the conditions that in are the body of this bill, because if children’s aid puts conditions that the child may not or cannot live up to, they will find themselves on the outside looking in.

I am mindful of the time. I have a few more minutes, but if it is time, I can finish on another day, Madam Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

I wish to inform the House that the late show standing in the name of the member for Durham has been withdrawn.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Wellington–Halton Hills has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have five minutes in which to give your question.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Here we go again, discussing the Minister of the Environment's contradictory statements on wind farm approvals. The last time I felt it was necessary to trigger a late show on this subject, which we had on October 5, the minister sent his parliamentary assistant, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham, to defend his own remarks. While her comments were intended to explain the approvals process, they did not in any way explain the minister's contradictory public statements—but that's hardly surprising. He gave her a near-impossible task: to defend the confusing and rapidly shifting words of her minister.

It's highly unfortunate that this debate is even necessary. Little has changed since last October, when I called the minister to account for his own contradictory statements regarding the municipal consultation process on industrial wind farms. At that time, I asked only that he repeat what he'd told his constituents at a meeting in Mapleton township. He failed to do so, necessitating a late show debate. And here we are yet again, at another late show debate on the same issue, because the same minister continues to duck responsibility for his own remarks.

I want to remind the House of our last late show debate, in a brief summary. Two community newspapers reported the remarks of the Minister of the Environment before he became the minister, when he was still the Minister of Revenue. In both the *Wellington Advertiser* and the *Drayton Community News*, in their May 21, 2010, editions, the minister appeared to promise his constituents that if municipalities refused to sign off on the wind farm applications, the Ministry of the Environment would not approve those applications. I'll read from the article verbatim:

“One resident in the gallery asked point-blank if there is anything the township could do to stop wind farms if the proponents have otherwise met all the government's criteria.

“Wilkinson replied companies must obtain the signature of the township for the application to be complete.

“If the application is not complete, the” application “will not proceed,” he said.”

Again, let's imagine the minister taking questions at that meeting, at which the atmosphere was no doubt very heated. It was, of course, his Liberal government that imposed the Green Energy Act, and no doubt he supported it.

One of the minister's own constituents recently wrote the following to the minister, copying me: “Since I was present at that particular council meeting, I can say that you indeed said that an REA must be signed by the municipality in order to be deemed complete. You gave us the impression that the municipality had the right not to sign if they felt the company had failed to address concerns by the municipality.”

And so we have the minister, under fire, attempting to shift the blame for the wind farms to the local municipal government, implying that they could somehow veto the project application by denying a signature. Of course, we now know that's utter nonsense. The McGuinty gov-

ernment stripped municipalities of their power to stop wind farms, and it's time the minister finally admitted it.

In October, the minister failed to categorically repeat his earlier assurances. Instead, he told this House that a wind farm proponent “must submit a complete application, and that includes a review and a consultation with the municipality....”

I go back to the minister's constituent who wrote to him recently: “Stating in the paper that a municipality merely has to be consulted is not what you said. Please explain why you felt the need to alter your statement.” He still hasn't provided that explanation.

Now, incredibly, he's changed his story once again. First, the minister suggested municipalities have an effective veto over new wind farm proposals. Then he suggested that the wind farm proponent need only submit proof of their consultations, in the form of a complete application. Now, incredibly, he suggests that the application need not be complete after all.

Here's a fact: The *Wellington Advertiser* reported on March 25 that the county of Wellington and the township of Mapleton have refused to submit the municipal consultation form on a wind farm proposal in Mapleton township.

The minister used to say that a complete application requires the municipal consultation form. But now we know he accepted the NextEra wind farm application, even without the required form, nine days before the county of Wellington took its stand.

This clarifies something important. For months, municipal officials have been trying to understand the minister's contradictory remarks, trying to understand exactly what he meant by “consultation,” but this latest development makes one thing clear: The minister's consultation isn't even worth the paper it's written on. That paper, in this case, doesn't even exist.

We now know, notwithstanding the minister's empty promises of consultation and complete applications, that this government is determined to foist industrial wind farms on places where the elected municipal governments don't want them. On numerous occasions, this minister has failed to clarify his own remarks to his own constituents. For failing to correct his own record, for failing to uphold even the most basic standards of truth, he owes his constituents an apology.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has up to five minutes in which to respond.

Hon. John Wilkinson: It's a pleasure to rise today and expand on the values behind the Green Energy Act. Mainly, these are the right to clean air, respect for our municipal partners, and transforming our economy with good-paying green jobs.

But first I want to touch on what I would call the evolution of the MPP for Wellington–Halton Hills. There was a time when you were on this side of the House and you supported protecting the environment.

In 1997, you said in this House, “Protecting the integrity of our natural environment so that future generations have clean water, clean air and a safe environment requires commitment, political will and action.”

Obviously, you knew that green energy was the right thing to do, because in 2002 you said in this House, “We are aiming for green energy.... It will benefit all Ontarians.”

But my friend’s commitment to the environment and green energy has subsided. When recently debating green energy policy, he said in this House, “Who in their right mind would promise to shut down a fifth of Ontario’s generating capacity?”

I’ll tell you who: The McGuinty government made the promise of cleaner air to all kids and families who are suffering from dirty air, and we are fulfilling the promise we made despite your objections.

Is the \$3 billion in annual health care costs or the great number of people in this province who suffer or die due to poor air quality affordable?

I’ll tell you where I stand. I’m with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the chief medical officer of health, the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario, the Ontario Medical Association, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, the Asthma Society and the Lung Association.

On this side of House, we value our municipal partners. When you were in government, I say to the member, you wiped 50% of them, including my hometown, right off the map of Ontario through forced amalgamations, completely getting rid of them with the stroke of a pen. In contrast, we have uploaded literally billions of dollars in costs that your party forced on them and that never should have been placed on the property taxpayer in the first place.

Municipal consultation is an essential part of the renewable energy approval process. We want to hear from municipalities. Our act actually says that, by law, companies must provide municipalities an opportunity to have their say. I encourage all municipalities to fill out a municipal consultation form because we will make the company address any reasonable comments or the project will not go forward. But they are not limited to that form. We will take their comments in any form they choose to provide them. That’s why I want to put on the record that I am so very pleased that Warden White in the county of Wellington wrote to me. Their feedback is now included in the submission that will be thoroughly reviewed and decided upon. I want to be clear: Not signing the form is not a veto, but we will say no unless the municipalities have had an opportunity to have their say.

I want to say in these last few minutes that it’s best to touch on the third value: creating new jobs and supporting our farmers. The Green Energy Act is good for our environment and our economy. Just ask the more than 20,000 Ontarians who support green energy and signed up for the microFIT program. Many of those people are local farmers, small businesses and families in my riding and in the riding of the member opposite.

That’s who I’m standing up for today. They work hard every day to underpin our rural economy. That’s why I’m proud to be part of a government that is supporting them.

We already know that your leader wants to rip up those contracts. Kris Barnier, a staffer in his office, said,

“We need to be perfectly clear ... a PC government will shut down all of the planned expansion of the ... microFIT plan. There will be no new contracts.”

I say that I believe that your plan will hurt farmers, it will hurt local business owners and it will hurt parents wanting cleaner air for their kids.

You have repeatedly accused me of being contradictory, so let me be clear. I believe that your position has evolved over the last few years. I remember when you were with Mr. Harris and you thought the environment was worth protecting. No wonder he didn’t put you in the cabinet. I remember when you were with Mr. Eves: Then you said that you thought that we should have green energy. What happened there? The lights went out. So obviously Mr. Eves wasn’t listening to you. He would have valued, as would have Mr. Harris, your wise counsel.

1810

But now we have Mr. Hudak in the House, and what does he do? He supports the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, who’s all for dirty coal.

On this side of the House, clean air trumps all. That’s why we’re moving ahead with green energy. We’ll do that in consultation with our municipal partners, as we always have.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nepean–Carleton has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity for this adjournment proceeding to address a question I posed on March 29, 2011, to the Minister of Education regarding a new public high school in Riverside South and a new public elementary school in Barrhaven. After providing the minister with advance notice of my question, I was disappointed the minister refused to provide a reasonable, rational and non-partisan response.

Nepean–Carleton is home to two of the fastest-growing communities in Ontario, if not all of Canada. That means that we have to ensure infrastructure like the Strandherd–Armstrong bridge is completed and that health centres like those aligned with the Pinecrest–Queensway and Kemptville hospitals are built, open and accessible.

It also means that we need to keep up to the growing demands of our new and exceedingly growing populations in Barrhaven and Riverside South, namely, by building new public schools—an elementary school in Barrhaven and Riverside South’s first public high school.

Recently I spoke with a former colleague of mine from the city of Ottawa municipality, Ian Cross. Mr. Cross is responsible for research and growth projections at the city of Ottawa, and he is often called upon by city councillors and planners who rely on his analysis. Here is what Mr. Cross told me: In Barrhaven alone, our population is 70,000 people. In five years, it will be 81,000.

By 2021, Mr. Cross suggests Barrhaven will reach 90,000 people.

Across the Rideau River, and soon to be connected to Barrhaven through the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge, is the community of Riverside South, where 11,000 residents reside. In the next 10 years, that population is set to double to 20,000 people, according to Mr. Cross.

How does this high growth stack up to school capacity in the English public education system in Nepean-Carleton? It doesn't.

In Barrhaven, where I've had the pleasure of working to secure funding for the new Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School, we see its feeder schools are near, at or well over capacity. A few examples: Barrhaven's oldest school, Barrhaven Public School, is 207 students over capacity; so is Farley Mowat, by 312 students; Adrienne Clarkson Elementary School, by 65 students; and Berrigan Elementary School is 86 students over capacity. Each of these schools have portables infringing on the kids' playgrounds. Other public elementary schools, like Cedarview Middle School, Jockvale Elementary School and Mary Honeywell Elementary School, are just under or at capacity. Clearly, there is a need for another public elementary school in our community.

Kennedy MacLeod, no relation, said, "We need funding. We have asked to build a new school in Barrhaven to relieve the schools we currently have that are over capacity."

Jenna Swinwood said, "There is no doubt an additional public school in Barrhaven is more than necessary to accommodate the population growth we are currently seeing. As Barrhaven grows even further south, we are already seeing children being sent a long way from their communities. Having something closer to home would be easier on everyone and help the communities stay strong."

And Jennie Maynard added, "Barrhaven and Riverside South are both desperately in need of public schools to take the pressure off the overcrowded schools that are currently housing our children. We owe it to our children to offer them appropriate and local schooling."

And then there is the matter of the high-growth community of Riverside South, which is currently without a public high school. I first raised the need for this school in 2008 with the previous Minister of Education. I've met with community leaders and parents, like Scott Hodge, who would like to have their children have the opportunity of a public education in their own community without being transferred to another board or being bused out of the community entirely.

Presently, Steve MacLean Public School has an enrolment of 805 elementary students. It is over capacity by 256 kids; it has seven portables. Not only does that elementary school require upgrades and an expansion, but those children also deserve a high school education in their own community. Again, I was disappointed when the minister chose not to give me a reasonable answer.

John Bruce, the community president of Riverside South, told me, "The expansion of the Riverside com-

munity to 4,600 homes will far exceed the existing school structure and will create more portables. There are clearly more residences with young families than the current school structure can support."

The voters who sent me to Queen's Park deserve an answer from the Minister of Education. I want to assure my constituents that they can count on me to continue to fight for a new elementary school in Barrhaven and a new high school in Riverside South. Our students deserve it, our families need it and our growth demands it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak to this matter.

I think the member from Nepean-Carleton very much knows that there is a process in place in terms of determining the capital requests of the boards. We know boards like the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, which I work with very closely with, submit regularly an updated list of their capital priorities. We recently received a new list from the same board. It is obviously important to respect this process and listen to the boards, who represent and better understand their community, and obviously the locally elected trustees, who know their communities very well.

We will be reviewing all the requests of capital priorities that we've received from all 72 school boards. We'll be evaluating all of those projects in consultation with the local school boards in an effort to meet the needs of students and communities across the province. I can assure you that we'll be working very closely with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board to review its process.

Because of this process that exists, I think it's important that the good people of Nepean-Carleton know that since 2003, since the McGuinty government came into office, there have been 13 new schools that have been built in Nepean-Carleton—13 new schools. Jean-Robert-Gauthier; Pierre-Savard; Michaëlle-Jean in Barrhaven; St. Jerome Catholic Elementary School in Gloucester; St. Francis Xavier in Gloucester; Steve MacLean in Gloucester; Briarbrook Public School in Kanata; St. Andrew Catholic Elementary School in Nepean; St. Emily in Nepean; Berrigan Elementary School in Nepean; Farley Mowat Public School in Nepean; Longfields-Davidson Heights in Nepean; and Bernard-Grandmaître—actually, I recently attended that school—in Ottawa: 13 new schools, because we have a process in place, that were built in Nepean-Carleton, the riding the honourable member represents.

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested \$5.4 billion to improve the energy efficiency and the condition of schools, and to build new schools and additions to them. We have, in fact, built 400 new schools in the province of Ontario since 2003, and 100 more are planned or under way. We are talking about over 18,500 repair and renewal projects that are under way or complete.

What did the previous government, the Harris-Hudak government, do when they were in office when it came to

education? Guess what? They closed about 500 schools across the province. They didn't open new schools; they, in fact, closed 500 schools across the province. Our kids lost about 26 million learning days due to labour unrest. I find it a bit rich being criticized when you have built 13 new schools in the last eight years alone in the riding of Nepean–Carleton.

Let's talk about the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. The funding for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has gone up by nearly 40% while enrolment has declined by 7.8%—funding up, enrolment down. Per pupil funding has increased by over 51%, and the funding for special education for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has increased by over 45% since 2003.

In terms of capital funding for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, \$178.4 million thus far has been invested. I can give you a breakdown, but it really demonstrates that in all of Ottawa we have built 34 schools since 2003. Out of that, 13 are in the member's riding.

Let me talk about another very important initiative that has been introduced by the government: full-day kindergarten, which we know that the Leader of the Opposition and his PC Party opposes. They are going to shut down and freeze all full-day kindergarten programs. In the member's riding in Nepean–Carleton, 17 schools will have full-day kindergarten by September 2012: seven schools already as of September 2010, two more schools in September 2011 and eight more schools in 2012. That's 54 classes and 1,349 students. I am sure that those parents are really not going to appreciate full-day kindergarten not being offered in those 17 schools serving 1,349 students.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1821.

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Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
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Continued from back cover

**Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry)
Amendment Act, 2011, Bill 163, Mr. Bradley / Loi
de 2011 modifiant la Loi Christopher sur le registre
des délinquants sexuels, projet de loi 163,
M. Bradley**
Third reading agreed to 5479

Estimates
Hon. Dwight Duncan 5480
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 5480

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Mr. Frank Klees 5480
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 5480

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Riverside Buick GMC
Mr. Steve Clark 5480

Elmira Sugar Kings
Ms. Leeanna Pendergast..... 5480

Environmental protection
Mr. Toby Barrett 5481

Summit Place Tavern
Mr. Peter Kormos..... 5481

National Soil Conservation Week
Mrs. Liz Sandals 5481

Public safety
Mr. John O'Toole..... 5481

Thunder Bay Community Foundation
Mr. Bill Mauro 5482

Assistance to farmers
Mr. Jim Brownell 5482

Municipal infrastructure projects
Mr. David Ramsay 5482

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private
Bills**
Mr. Jeff Leal..... 5482
Debate adjourned 5483

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

**Ombudsman Statute Law Amendment Act
(Designated Public Bodies), 2011, Bill 183,
Mr. Marchese / Loi de 2011 modifiant des lois en ce
qui a trait à l'ombudsman (organismes publics
désignés), projet de loi 183, M. Marchese**
First reading agreed to 5483
Mr. Rosario Marchese 5483

**College and University Student Associations Act,
2011, Bill 184, Mr. Naqvi, Mr. Marchese / Loi de
2011 sur les associations étudiantes des collèges et
des universités, projet de loi 184, M. Naqvi,
M. Marchese**
First reading agreed to 5483
Mr. Yasir Naqvi 5483

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Wind turbines
Mr. John O'Toole 5483

Assistance to farmers
Mrs. Liz Sandals..... 5483

Protection for people with disabilities
Ms. Sylvia Jones..... 5484

Domestic violence
Mr. Yasir Naqvi 5484

Highway improvement
Mr. Norm Miller..... 5484

Paramedics
Mr. Bas Balkissoon 5484

Rural Schools
Mr. Jim Wilson..... 5484

Paramedics
Mr. Rick Johnson 5485

Multiple sclerosis treatment
Mr. Steve Clark 5485

Paramedics
Mr. Lou Rinaldi..... 5485

Health care funding
Mr. Jim Wilson..... 5485

Long-term care
Mr. Jim Brownell 5485

Oak Ridges moraine
Mr. John O'Toole 5486

Assistance to farmers

Mr. Jeff Leal 5486

Assistance to farmers

Mr. Steve Clark..... 5486

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011, Bill 179, Ms. Broten / Loi de 2011 favorisant la fondation de familles et la réussite chez les jeunes, projet de loi 179,

Mme Broten

Hon. Monique M. Smith 5487

Mr. Mike Colle 5488

Hon. Monique M. Smith..... 5490

Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group

Hon. Gerry Phillips..... 5490

Debate adjourned..... 5491

Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011, Bill 179, Ms. Broten / Loi de 2011 favorisant la fondation de familles et la réussite chez les jeunes, projet de loi 179,

Mme Broten

Mr. Steve Clark..... 5491

Mr. Michael Prue 5491

Mr. Jeff Leal 5492

Mr. John O'Toole 5492

Mr. Mike Colle 5492

Ms. Sylvia Jones 5493

Mr. Michael Prue 5498

Mr. Mike Colle 5499

Mr. Toby Barrett..... 5499

Mr. Peter Kormos 5499

Ms. Sylvia Jones 5499

Mr. Michael Prue 5500

Second reading debate deemed adjourned..... 5506

**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR
LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT**

Wind turbines

Mr. Ted Arnott..... 5507

Hon. John Wilkinson 5507

School accommodation

Ms. Lisa MacLeod..... 5508

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 5509

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 19 April 2011 / Mardi 19 avril 2011

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry) Amendment Act, 2011, Bill 163, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi Christopher sur le registre des délinquants sexuels, projet de loi 163, M. Bradley

Hon. James J. Bradley	5463
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	5465
Mr. Peter Kormos.....	5466
Third reading vote deferred.....	5468

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5468
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	5468
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	5468
Hon. James J. Bradley	5468
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5469
Hon. Aileen Carroll, P.C.....	5469

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Correctional facilities

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5469
Hon. James J. Bradley	5469

Correctional facilities

Mr. Robert Bailey	5469
Hon. James J. Bradley	5470

Northern Ontario economy

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	5470
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5470

Gasoline prices

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	5471
Hon. Dwight Duncan	5471

Child care

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	5472
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	5472

Renewable energy

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5473
Hon. Brad Duguid	5473

Health care funding

Mrs. Amrit Mangat	5473
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5473

Court documents

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5473
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	5473

Cancer screening

Mme France Gélinas	5474
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5474

Growth planning

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5475
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	5475

Laboratory services

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	5475
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5475

Child care

Ms. Andrea Horwath	5476
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	5476

Affordable housing

Mr. Rick Johnson	5476
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	5476

Executive compensation

Mr. Norm Miller.....	5477
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	5477

Heritage conservation

Mr. Rosario Marchese	5477
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	5477

Environmental protection

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	5478
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	5478

Visitor

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	5478
--------------------------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Securities industry

Amendment negated.....	5479
------------------------	------

Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011, Bill 140, Mr. Bartolucci / Loi de 2011 favorisant des collectivités fortes grâce au logement abordable, projet de loi 140, M. Bartolucci

Third reading agreed to	5479
-------------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover