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of Ontario**

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Jedi 25 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1004.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO MARINE HERITAGE ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LE PATRIMOINE
MARIN DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to preserve Ontario's marine heritage and promote tourism by protecting heritage wrecks and artifacts / Projet de loi 13, Loi visant à préserver le patrimoine marin de l'Ontario et à promouvoir le tourisme en protégeant les épaves et les artefacts à valeur patrimoniale.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): The purpose of the Ontario Marine Heritage Act is to enhance the protection and preservation of Ontario's marine heritage resources and to promote tourism.

By way of introduction, I wish to take you back 320 years. On September 18, 1679, the French explorer LaSalle watched his ship, the Griffon, set sail on Lake Huron, only to vanish without a trace. To this day, the Griffon remains the quest of countless divers and historians. Since 1679 there have been hundreds of storms and collisions on the Great Lakes, sinking thousands of ships and resulting in countless lives being lost.

On November 10, 1999, the 24th anniversary of the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald, I announced my intention to introduce the Ontario Marine Heritage Act. For years divers, historians and conservationists have argued that a new Marine Heritage Act is needed to ensure that the hundreds of wrecks lying in Ontario's waters are protected. These views pushed me to draft a bill that deals specifically with the protection of marine heritage.

The first European explorers came to Canada and Ontario by water. Trade in our country was built on furs and years of endless travel along inland waterways. Later, the Great Lakes became one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, the backbone of commerce in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and neighbouring US states. For example, in 1880 there were over 3,000 commercial vessels on the lakes, compared to approximately 200 today. This vol-

ume of traffic on the Great Lakes in the mid- to late 1800s was astounding.

Unfortunately, this also meant a higher incidence of disaster. A sudden and raging storm, a collision or an error of navigation can sink a vessel all too easily. Some say the Great Lakes have an almost insatiable appetite for sailors, passengers and ships. From cargo ships to canoes, our lakes and our rivers have not played favourites. Once a boat leaves port, there is always a chance it will run into a stiff gale, an exposed rock or another ship. Lack of communication, navigational aids and ship wreckers made travel especially dangerous in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The dangers faced by sailors differed throughout the lakes. Lake Erie is shallow and vicious, especially in the Long Point area. Lake Superior, as we know, is deep and cold, with a history of furious November gales like the one that took the Edmund Fitzgerald. Lakes Ontario, Huron, Michigan and St Clair have proven to be no less treacherous. Georgian Bay is filled with scores of camouflaged reefs and thousands of rock-encrusted islands. They have laid many a good ship and her crew to permanent rest.

In the two decades between 1878 and 1898, the US government reported 5,999 vessels wrecked on the Great Lakes, and of those 1,093 were total losses.

1010

Very recently, this summer, a Port Dover resident, Jim Murphy, wrote to me urging tougher marine heritage protection for the shipwrecks and the artifacts that lie in Ontario's water. Mr Murphy pointed out that the dive tourism industry was booming in Lake Erie partly because the water has cleared in recent years due to the zebra mussel and quagga mussel activity.

In his letter Mr Murphy stated, "With a province-wide diving community of several thousand divers, it is imperative that we have a strong protection mechanism in place to protect these sites from looting divers and salvors."

Marine archaeology has also gained attention with the 1996 court decision concerning the steamship Atlantic and Port Dover diver Mike Fletcher. The collision and sinking of the steamer Atlantic in Lake Erie occurred on August 20, 1852, and with up to 250 lives lost was one of the worst disasters on the lakes. In that court case, the court ruled that all shipwrecks and their associated artifacts located on Ontario's crown land are the property of the province. The court case of the steamship Atlantic

was publicized across North America and this Atlantic decision put divers and salvors on notice that the wrecks and the artifacts lying in Ontario lakes and rivers are the property of the crown. These factors, along with the importance that divers and marine historians across the province have put on protecting marine heritage, led me to draft a bill that would ensure that shipwrecks and other marine heritage sites are protected.

Under our current laws, the Ontario Heritage Act legislation does not specifically address marine issues. For example, the words "shipwreck" or "marine" do not appear in current heritage legislation. While it is well-meaning, people have told me that the heritage act needs to be supplemented with a clear message on the protection of heritage sites. This bill deals with current weaknesses in marine archaeological protection that I and others have identified.

This proposed Ontario Marine Heritage Act will make it illegal for anyone to enter a heritage wreck unless he or she is licensed to do so. It will also be an offence for non-licensed people to move part of a heritage wreck or remove silt or other naturally occurring substances in or around marine heritage sites. The Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation can exempt specific sites from these rules if the site is deemed to be less historically significant or if the site has been explored repeatedly.

Under this proposed legislation, it will be an offence to remove a protected artifact from a marine heritage site unless the person is licensed to do so. The act is meant to ensure that divers are careful, and makes it an offence to damage a marine heritage site or a protected artifact.

Currently, a person who finds a shipwreck is not required to report the location of that wreck. Some divers use this fact to keep newly discovered wrecks and artifacts to themselves. My bill requires that anyone who finds a shipwreck notify the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation of the nature and location of the wreck as soon as possible. As well, the minister will be required to publish a record of known marine heritage sites.

There will be tough penalties under the Ontario Marine Heritage Act. Anyone contravening the act will be subject to a fine of up to \$5,000 and a jail term of up to one year. If a corporation is involved, the maximum fine jumps to \$250,000. The bill also gives the OPP the power to seize vessels or equipment used to contravene the provisions of the Marine Heritage Act. If convicted of an offence, the court may award any seized property to the crown.

However, this proposed legislation is not intended to be a barrier to recreational divers. It is meant to educate people that shipwrecks are a precious and non-renewable resource.

Ontario has a strong marine history. Many, unfortunately, have perished while on the water, shipping merchandise or protecting our country. One cannot help but admire and respect the sailors of the Great Lakes. I believe we should honour the memories of these men and women by respecting their resting places. This legislation

will do that, and help to ensure that others respect them as well.

Will this affect the salvage industry? The answer is no. Salvors still have the opportunity to put in a claim on a ship that sinks. The wreck only becomes the crown's property if it is abandoned. The legislation deals more directly with abandoned wrecks already on the bottom of our lakes and rivers. If a ship were to go down now, the owners, the insurance companies or any legitimate salvors would have rights to the ship unless it's abandoned.

With respect to other jurisdictions, I've researched this in both Michigan and Nova Scotia and they are going down a similar road. Only a few places in the world are in this situation, and Ontario probably has as many shipwrecks lying in its waters as any other place in the world.

In conclusion, I believe this proposed legislation will be a good first step in protecting and preserving Ontario's thousands of heritage wrecks. Protection of marine heritage sites is very important to our diving community and to our growing dive tourism industry. Dive tourism and shipwreck protection go hand in hand, and I call on all members to pass this legislation. I look forward to any comments or constructive criticism.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'm pleased to stand this morning and comment on this bill that has been brought forward by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

I wanted to support this bill, but I want to point out a significant problem. Oftentimes we have complex problems and we say simple solutions might solve them. But usually the simple solutions are wrong.

The member says the prohibited activities would be moving part of a heritage wreck or disturbing the silt or other substances that lie in a marine heritage wreck. That's pretty broad. It might cause some difficulties, but the intent is good. We all agree that removing a protected artifact or damaging the wreck should not happen.

The problem I have is that the one activity that would be prohibited is entering the physical portion of a heritage wreck. A huge part of tourism diving is being able to go into these wrecks, to go through the wreck, if you like. This says you have to be licensed. I'm not sure how the licensing would be carried out: who the licensing authority would be, what the regulations would be, and how a tourist from somewhere in the United States or around the world would get licensed.

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: I agree with that, but let me tell you what it's going to do. I'll give you a little history of what has gone on in our area.

In 1987 we started to look into diving as a tourism venture in the Pelee Passage. In 1991, in the Leamington area, we got the Windsor chapter of SOS, Save Our Shipwrecks, involved. In 1991 we also got the Ministry of Tourism and the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Windsor, Essex County and Pelee Island involved. In 1992 the town of Leamington made a decision to take a

lead role in this tourism venture. In 1993 they brought in experts to give advice on how this should be done, and in 1995 it was more or less completed. Not only will this create a problem, I think, for what is called ErieQuest in the Essex area, but for years we've had the Fathom Five diving park in Tobermory. Diver magazine, for example, says, "Leamington, located at the northwestern end of Lake Erie, is fast becoming North America's dive centre." It may interest you to know that since the mid-1800s, over 275 ships have been recorded as being sunk somewhere in the Pelee Passage, between Point Pelee and Pelee Island. To date, there are 50 known locations of shipwreck sites in the Pelee Passage.

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There is a great history to these shipwrecks. Of course, over that period of time and number of wrecks, the cargo that was lost included food supplies, wood such as oak and walnut, and grain, ore and coal. Much of that was salvaged at the time and/or washed up on the shore.

The majority of the wrecks in the Pelee Passage lie in waters that are an average of 12 metres or 40 feet deep, the deepest being the ship Willis, a wreck that rests in approximately 22.5 metres or 74 feet of water.

The largest ship at the Pelee Passage wreck site is a wooden steamer called the Case. It was built in 1889 and sank in 1917. The Case was a large ship for the day. It was 91.7 metres or 301 feet long, 13 metres wide—42 1/2 feet for those of us who are not yet into the metric system—and had a draft of about 6.7 metres or 22 feet.

Shipwrecks are in fact artificial reefs, which provide a very attractive habitat for fish and many other marine organisms. It might interest people to know that underwater visibility has increased in Lake Erie in the last few years, from a low of about three metres or 10 feet, to a sightline now of 12 metres or 40 feet or more. This is greatly due to the much heralded and somewhat maligned zebra mussel.

The town of Leamington spearheaded development of the preservation—and I emphasize the word "preservation"—of the local submerged cultural and marine heritage. The name of the project is ErieQuest Marine Heritage Area. Of the 4,000 documented shipwrecks in the Great Lakes and the 250 in the Pelee Passage, 50, as I mentioned before, have already been found. Of these wrecks, 15 have been marked with a mooring buoy system so that the tourism diving public can have access to them.

Shipwreck exploring provides a unique insight into the heroic and tragic stories, the history of life and travel on the Great Lakes, and features the marine life and geographical aspects of the lake.

Local dive shops and charter operations fully service the dive area. The industry is providing lessons, equipment rentals and excursions, and non-diver excursions are also available for those who are equally curious. A heritage interpretive centre has been opened in Leamington, so that the public can have an on-land experience of the shipwrecks in Lake Erie.

I would emphasize too that there are direct, indirect and included economic impacts for the Leamington area

that this piece of legislation would have a detrimental effect on if it were passed in its form today. For example, the annual gross spending on diving tourism in the Leamington-Essex area is over \$5 million. The value added beyond that is estimated to be around \$4 million. It employs almost 100 people, and the employment income exceeds \$3 million.

As I said at the outset, I think the legislation and the intent are good. The problem I see with it is that it would appear to prevent a diver, licensed or unlicensed, from actually entering a wreck. Some of these older ships, unlike the freighters that ply the lakes today, are smaller and probably prohibit the diver from going into them because of their very superstructure. Certainly, getting close to the wreck, being able to go through those wrecks that allow that, is part of the attraction for tourism diving.

If this bill is to proceed—and I have some real questions as to whether it should, in fact, proceed as a private member's bill, and a colleague of mine will speak to that—we have to be very careful in order to attain the objectives that we want. I re-emphasize: I agree with the objectives of not damaging a heritage wreck, not removing artifacts. In fact, had I had the opportunity, and I just didn't, to research this further, I suspect there are penalties in place now, either provincial or federal. If those need to be tightened up, that's fine.

We have a tourism industry that's just in its beginnings. Its potential is just starting. We have to be very careful that we simply don't shut that down. I'm afraid that this private member's bill, as it's drafted now, would do that, and I think that's the wrong thing to do.

The Acting Speaker: I would remind the members that if they wish to have private conversations, outside this chamber would be the better place.

Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to speak to this bill because I think it's an important bill.

As you say, rare are those moments when you can stand up here in the opposition and agree with something that the government does. It's a rare moment. It's almost a pleasure to be able to speak to something that this government member has introduced today, that I can support. I want to say to this member and to the Conservative members that a whole lot of people in the heritage community are very excited by this.

I've been speaking to Jane Beecroft, whom I consider a friend. She's from the Heritage Toronto establishment. She was excited when she heard about this proposed bill that was to be debated here today. The reason why she is excited is because it is a rare moment when governments speak to heritage and speak to how we protect that heritage, so when she has a member who is about to introduce this—and I can see that we're going to have support by the others—she's very excited and I'm excited.

I was the Minister of Culture many, many years ago. I knew it was very difficult in that ministry to give the kind of equity that everybody deserved. I felt heritage, those who worked in the archives, in the museums, libraries, deserved to get their fair share of funding that they

weren't getting in that ministry. In pursuing that objective of equity, we thought it was time to change the Ontario Heritage Act, because it's way overdue.

I began that process of consulting with a whole lot of people in the heritage field. We had many meetings, in fact. That was a long process of involvement in consulting people in the heritage sector about what we needed to do to update our heritage laws. I began that work; the minister who followed me continued with the work; the minister that followed that minister continued the work; and eventually we didn't introduce the act. That would have been a benefit. It would have been something that would have uplifted the spirits of those who calmly and passively and quietly, but greatly, do the work of heritage in our community.

I would say that the New Democrats at the time failed the heritage community. We did. It was a bill that could easily have been passed, but we didn't do it. Then this government had an opportunity to be able to do some of the work that we started. They had four years. Of course, they've done nothing.

1030

They now have another mandate. I went to the Minister of Culture and Citizenship and said: "Look, we would support you if you were to introduce a bill that has had a great deal of consultation. You've got the heritage act ready to go. You just have to present it. You would get the communities to support you. You would get New Democrats to support you." I said: "I suspect the Liberals would support you. If you have the support of the opposition parties, you could easily introduce this bill and pass it. It won't take long. We don't have to debate it for very long."

She was quite polite and said that she has a lot of things to do and was quite interested in talking to me again to see what could come of those discussions. I'm being polite again.

But I tell you, it's an easy thing. Member from—long title—Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, you could be helpful in this regard. You have initiated something that the heritage community likes. Archaeology in water is something that is very, very important to these people. It shouldn't be something that's just very important to them; it should be important to all Ontarians, because it's part of our history, part of the heritage you want to be able to salvage. You want to be able to protect it, learn from it.

I say to you that as much as this is an important first step, I am hoping that the Minister of Culture is behind this or at least is supportive of this. I'm hoping in the discussions you have with her you can convince her to move to archaeology on land, natural heritage, which is as important as heritage in the water. We should worry about archaeology in rivers. I don't think this covers rivers; I don't think it does. But if you think it does, then say it. If you think it's ambiguous, then include it. But if it is, it's something that would excite me and would excite the heritage community.

You see what I'm saying, Toby, member from Norfolk? If this is good for archaeology in water, move to the

next step. There shouldn't be complications in doing that. While I concede that this is a good thing to do, I'm not quite sure why the Minister of Culture isn't saying to you, member from Norfolk, "We're going to take this bill over, because it's a good bill, but it's a little bill in the scheme of things, and we're going to make it bigger."

I'm hoping you can help me today by saying to me: "Member for Trinity-Spadina, I've had discussions with the minister. She's supportive. I can tell you that we're talking about how to introduce this new heritage act." If you can do that, we are moving in the right direction.

I tell you, you guys, women and men there, you can do a great deal of good for the heritage community. You can, with very little wreckage to yourselves, do something good for yourselves politically. You can introduce a bill that is so harmless, but you will have satisfied so many heritage workers out there, who, by the way, are probably your supporters by and large. You can do something good. Salvage something from this wreckage by doing something better than what you're about to do.

I'm saying to you that you are on the right track. I'm saying to you, as well, in relation to divers, I don't think divers should be touching the wreck. They shouldn't be there.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): How do you find it?

Mr Marchese: I didn't say that, my good friend from Mississauga South. What I said is that they shouldn't be in the wreck. If they are able to find it, God bless, we say, "This is great." But they've got to report it. I don't think it's a problem for them to be licensed. I don't like the idea that divers—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): More red tape.

Mr Marchese: Yeah, right. My friend from Niagara Centre says, "More red tape." Sure. But this is something that you need to protect. You can't have divers deciding on their own: "This is a wonderful piece of work here. This is a nice wreck, and I just want to get a piece of the action. I want to be able to do what I want." I don't think that's right. I'm sure my friend from Mississauga South doesn't think it's right either. Is that correct?

Hon Mrs Marland: What was the last thing you said?

Mr Marchese: I'm sure you think it's all right for them to explore, but I think you would find it wrong for them to simply, after having explored and found it—that you would not find it right for them to actually go on to the wreck and either take things from the wreck or damage it.

Hon Mrs Marland: I think we're talking about preservation of our heritage.

Mr Marchese: Well, that's what I was talking about. My friend from Mississauga South said, "I think we're talking about preservation of our heritage." That's why your colleague Toby has introduced this bill, and I'm happy to say I support it.

Member from Norfolk, you've done a good thing here. The heritage community believes you have done a good thing, and they're hoping, given that you've had the courage to introduce it here today, that you go to the next

step. Protecting archaeology in water is one thing, protecting archaeology on land is equally important, and if you can make that move, you can make the next one. I urge you to do that. I'm looking forward to your doing that publicly, I hope, so we can see those efforts. Otherwise, I'll be deceived by this act.

I congratulate the Conservative members for supporting this, because I anticipate they will, and I hope the Minister of Citizenship will be engaged and will introduce an Ontario Heritage Act that I helped bring forward in 1990-91. With that, I leave my good friend from Niagara Centre to add his comments to this debate.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): I too wish to add my support to this bill and wish to congratulate the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for bringing this up.

This is very important in my riding. We have in our riding the city of Hamilton, which has taken ownership of two warships that went down in 1812. I'd like to read a passage from a note that was sent out in 1812:

"Wind during the night from the westward and after midnight squally. Kept all hands at quarters and beat to windward in hopes to gain the wind of the enemy. At 2 am missed two of our schooners. At daylight discovered the missing schooners to be the Hamilton and Scourge. Soon after spoke to Governor Tompkins who informed me that the Hamilton and Scourge both overset and sunk in a heavy squall about two o'clock, and, distressing to relate, every soul perished except 19."

That passage really says an awful lot about what we're talking about here. This isn't simply the preservation of a heritage site, this is the preservation of the last resting place for sailors who have travelled the lakes in Ontario.

These two schooners are sitting in 300 feet of water near Port Dalhousie and they are in almost freezing water. Many marine archaeologists have stated that these two schooners are the most pristine and well-preserved specimens anywhere in the world. They are intact. Many divers have gone down and surveyed them. They were found actually in 1973 by Daniel A. Nelson. He was a St Catharines dentist who was an amateur archaeologist. He discovered these finds back in 1973, and ever since there has been a great deal of controversy because the Hamilton city council would like to see them preserved. Actually, they work towards bringing them up from their watery grave and building a museum, but the costs are so exorbitant. Now the quest becomes to preserve them in their final resting place.

The laws that currently govern the sanctuary of the Great Lakes shipwrecks like the Hamilton, the Scourge, the Edmund Fitzgerald, the Atlantic and many others are vague, and they are open to legal challenge. Given the current laws, it's probably illegal to land a submarine on the deck of any of the aforementioned wrecks, but we're not sure.

There has been an awful lot of activity around these wrecks. The province has stated they don't want anyone near these wrecks because the concern was pilferage. Things are already missing from these wrecks. There are photographs showing very clearly that there are swords

and cannonballs—these wrecks are intact, but the skeletal remains are now missing. They were found back in the 1970s, and in 1983 they were featured in a National Geographic magazine, but more recently they're missing. That leads one to believe that there are unscrupulous individuals who dove and removed the finds. It's scary that this continues.

I urge that all members in the House support this bill. It's important that we put very stiff penalties in place so these wrecks are protected for our future generations.

1040

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I too would like to wish the honourable member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant all the best as he initiates this. My riding has 60 miles of the north shore of Lake Erie in it, and we have a long marine heritage also. Many of the ports—Port Stanley, Port Burwell and Port Bruce—have had ship-building industries and fishing industries, and much tragedy has been seen within those municipalities over the years as a result of the industry on the Great Lakes.

There are some faults in this legislation that need to be addressed. First and foremost, I just want to talk a bit about your government's record on heritage. It's a record that is not positive for heritage in the long run. We've seen over \$2 million in cuts directed towards heritage over the years. As recently as last week, many heritage organizations in this province faced another 1% cut. That is going to be harmful to heritage in the long run.

I want to echo the comments of the member for Trinity-Spadina. I compliment you for initiating a separate piece of legislation, but I think the better approach would be to make this part of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Ontario Heritage Act has not been updated since 1974. It's very inadequate in many ways, in the tools it provides to municipalities and others to protect heritage sites. The Liberal government in 1989 initiated a consultation process to revise and update the Ontario Heritage Act. This process was continued through 1995 by the NDP government, with a draft release of the new Ontario Heritage Act. But that's where it stopped. It didn't go any further. I implore the members on the opposite side to take a look at the Ontario Heritage Act.

I think it's wonderful that we have this marine heritage act in front of us today, but we need to look at heritage as a whole in this province and look at how we are preserving our heritage, whether it be the archaeological sites, the natural sites, the sites that are below the water or the sites that are on land. I would much prefer to see a total review of the whole Ontario Heritage Act. I know the heritage organizations in this province would prefer that, instead of seeing an approach where we only look at specific aspects of our heritage. It's important, as we look to preserving our heritage for future generations, that we look at the whole and not just bits and pieces.

I see some problems that I'd like to pass on to the honourable member, that I would really appreciate some further investigation of. With all the cuts that have taken place in the area of heritage—I look at the work being

done by the citizenship and culture staff, out of their Centre Street office in London. Those individuals are very overworked. We will have an act in place, but are the resources going to be available to ensure the enforcement of this legislation? My concern right now is that those resources aren't available, to ensure that there's going to be adequate enforcement of the site.

The other aspect of this legislation that you need to think very seriously about is the fact that if I was a diver off Port Talbot and I discovered a wreck, I'm obligated under this legislation to notify the minister. I think that's good; we need to have these archaeological sites registered. The problem I see is that the next aspect of this legislation is that it's incumbent on the minister to publish a list of these archaeological sites. My biggest concern on publishing this list is that it's going to lead to piracy. There are going to be individuals out there who aren't going to respect this act. On a six-month basis, they're going to contact the minister's office and say, "I'm curious to see all the latest shipwrecks that have been found," and they're going to use the information that a true diver or archaeologist has done to register that site to go out early in the morning or late at night with lights and they're going to pilfer and pirate those wrecks. Those artifacts are going to be lost.

In conclusion, I want to commend the member for his efforts. But I think there are some areas that we need to look at, and I would urge you to look at encompassing this in the Ontario Heritage Act.

Mr Kormos: Before I start, I'd please ask for unanimous consent to wear this white ribbon. This is the beginning of the White Ribbon Campaign, the annual weekly event in which internationally men, by wearing the white ribbon and joining together, condemn violence by men against women and promote—

The Acting Speaker: Mr Kormos has asked unanimous consent to wear the white ribbon. Agreed? Agreed.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't hear a no. Shall we try it again? Is there unanimous consent for members to wear a white ribbon? I heard a no.

Mr Kormos: I'm embarrassed. I can't believe that somebody would have—

The Acting Speaker: Just remove the ribbon, please, all members. Will members remove the ribbon.

Mr Kormos: I wanted to speak to this bill and I intend to vote for it. I think the bill should go to committee. I think the bill is a valid one.

But I've got to tell you, for the first time in I suppose almost a lifetime I'm virtually speechless. As I was compelled to, and I appreciate, I came here, along with some other colleagues this morning after attending the kickoff campaign, a pancake breakfast, as part of the tradition that developed around the White Ribbon Campaign. Of course, we've commenced the process of wearing white ribbons.

This is an event that now has acquired some tradition. It's an expression by men of their repugnance for and their condemnation of, and it's a statement of men's intention to be intolerant of, violence towards women,

violence in our homes, violence in our communities, violence in this province, in this country, internationally, violence that assumes forms that are not worthy even of dignifying by referring to it. I am shocked and saddened beyond belief that an expression as modest—believe me, there's far more that we should be doing besides wearing a damned white ribbon.

When permission is sought from this chamber to wear that white ribbon as an expression of regret about and condemnation of violence towards women, when that consent is sought and not given, when there's even one member of this chamber who would—

Hon Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think we're in private members' business and we're speaking to a resolution under the name of Toby Barrett, An Act to preserve Ontario's marine heritage and promote tourism by protecting heritage wrecks and artifacts. I would ask that you enforce the standing orders with the speaker.

1050

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. The member will direct his comments to the bill before the House.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker.

I am disgusted by this chamber this morning. I find this chamber repugnant. I find it hard to have any respect for anything that this institution should be standing for.

Only a week ago this government stood up, and only by virtue of compulsion apologized to the women who were victimized, abused, raped—

The Acting Speaker: Speak to the bill, please.

Mr Kormos: —assaulted on a daily basis over the course of decades while they were wards of the state, and today this chamber says no—

The Acting Speaker: The member will know he should speak to the bill.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker.

This chamber now says no to a campaign against violence towards women. You disgust me.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can I get a clarification, please, on the ruling that you made? Does that preclude us requesting a second time the ability to wear a ribbon?

The Acting Speaker: Are you asking for unanimous consent?

Mr Levac: I would ask for unanimous consent for the ability for us to wear the white ribbon today.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed? We have consent.

Further debate?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): First of all I would like to make it perfectly clear that I do not have any problem with anyone wearing a white ribbon this morning.

I rise today in support of this bill, sponsored by my friend from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, the Ontario Marine Heritage Act. I certainly appreciate having the opportunity to speak to this bill this morning, because my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex borders on the Cana-

dian-American border, separated by the great water bodies of Lake St Clair, the St Clair River and Lake Huron.

I would like to quote a couple passages from *Shipwrecks of Lake Huron*, by Jack Parker.

“There are two Lake Huron wrecks that have been unofficially identified as the Griffon, but formal recognition has yet to be accorded to either of them. One is the ancient wreck found in the 1800s in the then gin-clear waters of Mississagi Straits”—Mr Speaker, I would imagine you would appreciate that word and that name and that location—“at the western end of Manitoulin Island in northern Lake Huron.”

The other passage—and I give credit to my colleague from Bruce-Grey, because I’m sure if I didn’t mention his name or his riding this morning, I would be in his books forever thereafter.

“The other wreck lies approximately 150 miles east, where ancient timbers were found in a shallow cove on Russell Island, in Georgian Bay, just off Tobermory. This wreck was found by the late Orrie Vail, a commercial fisherman from Tobermory, who remembered his father telling of such an old wreck on one of the islands near his fishing grounds. Not too much of this ship was left by the time Vail located it....”

That’s what I want to seek. I would like to address three important matters that I believe are relative to this issue this morning.

The first deals with the importance of protecting these resources for their historical value. Thousands of shipwrecks litter the floor of the five Great Lakes, many of them for hundreds of years, while still others lie yet undiscovered. What is unique about these wrecks is their excellent state of preservation which, experts say, is due to the coldness of the Great Lakes waters and the relative absence of marine life.

With the increasing popularity of scuba diving and the use of advanced technologies like side scan sonar, combined with the relative shallowness of the wrecks, the sad fact is that many of our historical treasures are being systematically raped and pillaged. It is time we in Ontario followed the lead of other jurisdictions that have made wreck conservation a priority. In this regard, the state of Michigan in 1980 created nine underwater preserves, totalling nearly 1,900 square miles of Great Lakes bottomland. In Michigan, it is a felony to remove or disturb artifacts in the Great Lakes. Those caught stripping the wrecks or taking souvenirs are subject to having their boat, car and equipment confiscated, as well as having stiff fines or even prison terms imposed. The result is one of the finest sport diving locations in the Great Lakes. I would submit that it is exactly what the Ontario Marine Heritage Act seeks to duplicate.

Second, it is the importance of wreck conservation to the tourism industry, particularly in the small communities that dot the Great Lakes on the Canadian side. Lodging, campgrounds, restaurants, dive shops, charter operators and marinas can all benefit from the increased popularity of sport diving.

Finally, I’d like to address the sanctity of these wrecks as grave sites. As extreme an analogy as this might seem, imagine if you will the reaction of our citizens if vandals were allowed free access to a cemetery anywhere across this province to desecrate graves that marked the final resting place of loved ones. We would be outraged. I would challenge anyone to explain to me why shipwrecks should be considered any differently. Wrecks are the only monuments that mark the final resting place of thousands of seamen who moved goods and services and protected the people of Ontario over the last number of centuries.

In closing, it is important to our history, to our culture, to what we can learn in terms of preventing future tragedies, to the economies of small communities, tourism protection and for just the plain enjoyment of all citizens across our province.

I would be hard pressed to think of any downside in supporting this bill and I would encourage everyone in this House to give this matter your consideration.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 13, the Marine Heritage Act. I would like to begin by congratulating the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for bringing forward this bill to ensure that Ontarians may cherish their marine heritage resources for generations to come.

This bill is designed to protect the wrecks in our lakes—and our rivers, as one of our colleagues questioned earlier—from irresponsible explorations and pillaging. Preservation of Ontario’s heritage, whether it’s marine or on land, is important to all Ontarians and hopefully to this Legislature.

We have a naval and marine tradition we can be proud of. I think too often we limit our conception of marine heritage to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. We forget about the brave sailors who traversed the Great Lakes, who fought against gales with waves as high as this entire legislative chamber to bring goods back and forth to various communities all across North America. In fact, it could be argued that our province owes its existence to the brave sailors who fought battles on these very lakes.

This bill will ensure that underwater monuments to their sacrifices are preserved. It’s one way we can, as my colleague mentioned just a moment ago, demonstrate our respect for the Great Lakes mariners and the contributions they made to the growth of this province.

There was a time when you could look out over the lakes and see hundreds of ships passing. It’s still a very important industry to many towns, for instance, the town of Goderich, which is in the riding where I grew up. It’s now very ably represented by my colleague the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Goderich is a port actually prospering more as the years pass. Tonnes of grain and salt pass through this town’s port daily and it has never forgotten its debt to the sailors of years past. There are two memorials there. The Unknown Sailor’s Grave serves as a reminder of the sacrifices of generations of sailors. There is also a plaque that was erected by the Archives of Ontario, looking out

over the harbour to remember the great storm of 1913. This was a three-day storm in which 244 lives were lost in various freighters and ships that went aground or sank.

1100

Heritage is very important to this ministry and to this government. Last week, the Minister of Finance introduced legislation that will extend the tax rebate on building supplies purchased for renovations of heritage buildings. We know that we all benefit from the restoration and preservation of various buildings across the province. I'm delighted to see our interest turn today to marine vessels that are not visible to the eye for those of us on land.

This prohibits anyone who does not have a licence—and this is an important thing to note. Licences may be obtained through the ministry for entering, for removing artifacts. These licences are granted by the minister under the Ontario Heritage Act, and the fines that are to be imposed, should this legislation be passed, are in line with those that are granted under the Ontario Heritage Act.

I would like to close by saying that I think this is very important legislation. It has my wholehearted support. I would urge all members to join with me in supporting this legislation.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate with respect to a bill that would create a new act, the Ontario Marine Heritage Act, 1999.

I would just like to offer a historical context to this debate, because certainly the member has indicated what he's trying to accomplish here in terms of the historical past.

I want to read a passage here. It's called *Gateway to Oblivion: The Great Lakes Bermuda Triangle*, by Hugh F. Cochrane. I'll just read a passage from that.

"It is a strange place where ships, planes and people vanish into thin air, where weird fogs and globes of light abound, where ominous waters shroud sinister events. It is a place where eerie, negative emissions have gripped psychics and bizarre UFO events astound researchers. It is an enigma with a 200-year history of disasters that have drained insurance companies of millions of dollars in claims and set records for mysterious events that pale the famed Bermuda Triangle. Ship losses alone number in the thousands, yet authorities refuse to discuss the matter openly.

"Where is this realm of suspended reality? It is not in a remote corner of the earth. It is located right here in the middle of the North American heartland, the region known as the Great Lakes."

Certainly, we have a member here who is looking to do something about this. I think, in the historical context, it's about time.

I'd also like to read another passage, from *Shipwrecks of the Lakes* by Dana Thomas Bowen. It says:

"Voyages upon the Great Lakes are unsurpassed anywhere. The ports of call are usually large cities, most of them having their beginnings from the lake trade. The

great open stretches of fresh water are exhilarating, invigorating and, at the same time, restful. Travel the Great Lakes and enjoy for yourself the interesting experiences that await you.

"For any writer to attempt to put into a single book details of all the shipwrecks of the Great Lakes is sheer folly. Even if it might be possible to obtain or compile just a listing of the names of the wrecked ships with dates, locations and causes, it is doubtful that it could be condensed into a single, usable book."

I think what we're trying to deal with here is to put this into a historical context. Something needs to be done, and I think the member has accomplished this.

Mr Barrett: I wish to thank all the members who have spoken this morning, representing the interests of their various lakes, certainly Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, Lake Huron and Lake Superior. My neighbours to the west on Lake Erie, both the member for Essex and the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, covered the North Shore very well.

To the member for Essex, I just wish to clarify that the licensing system already is in place. The reality is that many of the wrecks the member for Essex speaks of are already dive sites. Many have been stripped clean, unfortunately, and they would be exempted from these regulations. That's why we are giving the minister that ability. The licence is for marine archaeology, not merely to dive or explore.

Member for Trinity-Spadina, thank you for your comments, and yes indeed we did draw on the previous consultation that was done by the ministry in drafting this legislation. I also point out that the legislation does cover rivers in Ontario, submerged vessels or partially submerged vessels if they are on crown land and if they are abandoned.

The member for Guelph-Wellington mentioned the big storm of 1913. That storm was on November 11. We know the expression "the gales of November," a quote from a song by Gordon Lightfoot. So many of these disastrous storms occurred in November, certainly the Edmund Fitzgerald. There was a terrible Armistice Day storm in 1940, and on November 30, 1905, 10 ships went down.

In memory of these lives lost, I ask you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: We will deal with this matter again at 12 noon.

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'm very pleased today to introduce my private member's resolution on access to trades and professions. In the House today are a number of associations and members of associations who have a direct—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): You need to read the resolution into the record first.

Mr Ruprecht: This will take away from my time to speak. Can I ask to forgo this, if possible?

The Acting Speaker: Your time doesn't begin until after you've read the actual resolution.

Mr Ruprecht: I'm delighted to read the resolution to the House. It reads as follows:

"That individuals have the opportunity to seek licensure or certification in professions and trades for which they have been trained, in the context of provincial human resource planning, and without additional barriers not faced by Ontario-trained individuals;

"That full information on the licensing/certification standards and appeal processes of licensing and occupational bodies be available and accessible;

"That any competency assessment of licensure/certification requirements be based on criteria relevant to performing adequately in the profession or trade;

"That candidates be provided with written reasons for denial of an application or appeal for certification or licensure in a trade or profession;

"That individuals have access to training opportunities when upgrade training would allow Ontario competency standards to be reached, based on occupational demand and financial feasibility; and

"That all self-governing occupational licensing bodies provide internal appeal processes which are sensitive to such matters as timelines and access to information, whereby decisions of licensing bodies can be objectively reviewed by staff other than those conducting initial assessment."

I am delighted today to introduce my private member's resolution on access to trades and professions, but first I would like to introduce some members of associations who are here today who have a direct stake in the system.

The organizations that are here today are as follows: The Association of Filipino-Canadian Accountants; the Filipino Dental Association; the New Canadian Forum on Access to Trades and Professions; Skills for Change; the Coalition for Access to Professional Engineering; the Ontario Network for Access to Professions and Trades; the Organization in Support of International Veterinarians in Canada; the Foreign-Trained Doctors' Association; and the Filipino Labour Attaché.

I recommend the passage of this resolution and here is why: Our parents, grandparents or in some cases great-great-grandparents came to this country to find a better life. They succeeded essentially because they had access to or were able to continue their professional life in Canada.

Then, of course, they come to this country, as it happens today, and they try to enter their profession. In this case, let's say they're physicians. The recommendation from the physicians would be, "Sorry, there are no internship programs," even though they've passed all the necessary examinations. In the case of veterinarians, there would be exorbitant fees and other barriers. We could go on and on, but I just say that when Ms Bassett was Minister of Citizenship, she said, and I quote, "In this field of access to trades and professions there is no standard or consistent methodologies." The conclusion is

that this system is not adequate. That's the conclusion of your former Minister of Citizenship.

1110

The report Access to Trades and Professions in Ontario is 10 years old. We all have a copy and we all see those recommendations.

What did this report find? It found, and I quote directly from the report, "These barriers to access are systemic, generally applicable to most occupations and rooted in the practice of self-governing bodies." It says, "Only a few professions are free from discriminatory practices." That is the conclusion of the report. It's a non-partisan report; it isn't Conservative, NDP or Liberal.

Let's look at another report, Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration, March 1998, just last year. It says, "Many licensing bodies have used their role as protectors of the health and safety of consumers as a guise to protect the interests of their members through exclusionary entrance requirements."

Let's see what Harish Jain says, Canadian human rights tribunal and professor at McMaster University. In 1996 he said, "This government has given the licensing bodies the power and they're using that power to exclude." Peter Cumming, Ontario Court justice, law professor at Osgoode Hall, chair of the Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades, is quoted as saying in the Hamilton Spectator, "Widespread and generalized practices which are discriminatory are evident in terms of trades and professions."

The conclusions are obvious, yet at the same time we are mindful of the necessity that this brain drain in Canada should stop because we need foreign-trained professionals. They come to Canada and are told: "Because you have a high standard of education and are a professional, we are giving you extra points to you come to Canada." However, when they then enter this country and try to enter their profession or trade, the door is shut.

Requirements are above the norm, and as I have just read, recommendation after recommendation, some of these bodies are very exclusionary. That means a lot of foreign-trained physicians, accountants, veterinarians, professionals, whether they're technicians or tradesmen or tradeswomen, are being used in menial jobs as a brain drain, menial jobs such as gas station attendants, pizza delivery persons or even restaurant cleaners. In some cases it boggles the mind.

Let me tell you what it says here in a quote from the veterinarians. They're also crying out. In terms of the physicians in rural areas, we know there's a big hue and cry, and we say, "Come, we need you here." But in terms of the veterinarians, we have another hue and cry. Let me read to you from their report, "The association started out this year with four priorities," and what are they? The top priority of the veterinarians in Canada is "the shortage of rural practitioners."

Here we have a number of them with us trying to enter the profession of veterinarian and they can't enter. In this case, we have some people here who have been practising, from Ukraine, Israel, Germany, Britain. They have

been practising their trade and their profession for years, and they come to Canada and we say no. In the meantime, the priority of veterinarians in this country is the shortage of rural practitioners. They say, "This is an ongoing issue that is not only of provincial importance, but also nationally," and they conclude, "even internationally."

What we're doing today by not permitting them to enter the profession is really a crime in terms of an economic issue. This is not only an issue of social justice, this is also an issue of economic participation. One thing we pride ourselves on as Canadians is we say our system is fair, it is just, it is open. If that's our proposition, if that's what it means to be a Canadian, then we have to act today. That's why I recommend to all of us to try to ensure that we do some justice not only to those who are present today but to those who will be here again next year and the following year and the following year. We know that people are only working right now to make a living, and that's why it's very important that we open up the system.

Finally, let me simply say this: As you consider voting for this resolution, I would like to remind you that this issue of those who are present with us today is an issue also of livelihood. People have to raise a family. People come to this country because they believe in opportunity. They don't wish to be told that it's the municipal level that's at fault, or it's the provincial level that's at fault, or it's the federal level, or that we don't have our act together.

I simply say to you today, please remember that we're dealing with human lives, we're dealing with justice, we're dealing with opportunity, and I, as a Canadian, would like to open up the system, as that you do as well, to those who are not only in need but who may be able in a real sense to help the economic development of our country. In the end, I think that is just as important as being able to make a living on an individual basis. Consequently, I urge all of the members to support this resolution and I thank you for it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A succession of governments have considered this matter, have prepared the reports, have done the studies, and yes, that same succession of governments have failed to act upon the information that's put before them.

Clearly New Democrats are going to be supporting this resolution, and I hope it's unanimous support for this resolution to make it clear that this chamber finally, once and for all, is saying, yes, it's time to move along from the reports to action.

My regret is that not only do we have to address this, because it should have been done a long time ago, but my other regret is what has motivated the failure to act. I put to you very bluntly that no matter how much we would like to wish other about ourselves, this is a manifestation, quite frankly, of racism, xenophobia and some bizarre ethnocentrism. The fact remains that there are hundreds and thousands of those people in this province alone, in

my own community, from across the world, trained in universities that have histories far longer than our Confederation, never mind our own universities, who are members and were practitioners of trades and professions in their countries of origin that have professional traditions going back not just a century but century after century.

1120

Not only, as has been noted, is the doctor shortage a rural phenomenon; it's an urban phenomenon as well. In the Niagara region, like so many other urban areas, we have a shortage of at least 100 doctors. It's even more acute in the rural parts of Ontario. If your doctor ceases to practise, retires or passes away, you literally can't get a new doctor. There are hundreds of trained, experienced doctors, who have taught in universities, who have specialties and who have great experience in those areas of specialty who, as has been noted, are driving taxis and cleaning hotel rooms. By no means do I diminish those jobs that hard-working people do in this and every country. But for us to express concern about a doctor shortage and not take advantage of the fact that there are at least hundreds and probably thousands of trained, experienced, qualified medical practitioners sitting idle in this country is a crime.

It's a crime to our communities that cry out for those medical services, and it's a crime against those women and men who, when they came to Canada, thought they came to a country that was democratic, that was open and that was accepting, that celebrated diversity. I have to mention Claire Gerencser, of the Welland Heritage Council, who worked with the Foreign-Trained Doctors' Association and facilitated my meeting with them, I think a year or a year and a half ago. I met many of these doctors, women and men, just an incredible variety of disciplines that they came from within the medical profession.

They also bring with them experience and training that many times is distinct and unique to the medical cultures of their country. Please, Ontario Medical Association, don't start calling and writing, but I have a suspicion that the theme of medical practice in this country tends to be very much pharmaceutically driven. The pharmaceutical industry drives the nature of our medical practice. I say that, not being a doctor and subject to whatever criticism might flow. But the fact is there are many medical cultures internationally, which aren't necessarily pharmaceutically driven, which have styles of treatment that vary and are certainly as effective and, quite frankly, in many cases have withstood an even longer test of time than this North American pharmaceutically driven medical culture.

These are also people who bring with them their mother tongue. These are people who can reach out to other members of their own mother cultural community and serve and accommodate them in their own language and in a manner in which they perhaps feel more comfortable. I say it's a crime that we have ignored this incredible resource. It's also unfortunate and more than regrettable, and it should be a source of some shame, that

the motivation is in no small part one of racism. I say that being so well aware that we—let me put—white Anglo-Canadians like to think of ourselves as so, dare I say, liberal—I won't—but oh so accepting of multiculturalism. I'm afraid the experience betrays that sense of ourselves. When I speak of ethnocentric, I talk about the fact that we seem to think that only our universities and our regulatory bodies can establish adequate standards. I beg to disagree. I put to you that the professionals and tradespeople about which this resolution speaks are as well trained and as well qualified, and I put to you that in many cases they could well be better trained and better qualified by virtue of having met the standards of the regulatory bodies and the professional and educational standards in their homelands.

I think this Legislature is compelled to unanimously support this resolution, to talk about and to address and to acknowledge the great wealth of skills that new Canadians bring to this country from across the world, not just western Europe, not just eastern Europe, but from Asia and Africa and Central and South America. I say that we all become stronger and our communities become healthier and our buildings become safer and our prosperity is encouraged once we break down the barriers to recognition of the trade and professional qualifications of the people spoken to in this resolution. Unanimous support is the only response that can be given to this resolution.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I remind our guests in the galleries that any applause or any act is not permitted.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I rise today to speak to the resolution put before this House by the member from Davenport. As Ontario's economy continues to grow and create new jobs, our need for skilled workers grows too. I'd like to welcome the members in the gallery today, as well, for joining us.

Our government is committed to meeting this need by ensuring that our province has a skilled workforce that will prosper in the modern economy. Facts show that more than half of all immigrants who come to Canada choose to live in Ontario. My government firmly believes that our province prospers when new Ontarians from around the world, as well as elsewhere in Canada, are able to contribute their skills and expertise to our economy.

While I must commend the member from Davenport for seeing the great potential of skilled newcomers, I must also point out that his party leader's official vision is not as clear. On March 24 this year, in fact, the Liberal leader issued a press release on this issue. In the very first paragraph, Dalton McGuinty called the recognition of foreign skills his top priority for involving Ontarians in the economy. Unfortunately for newcomers, the first Liberal proposal was, "Moving responsibility for improving access to trades and professions from the Minister of Citizenship to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade."

On this side of the House, we know that solving this problem takes more than reorganization of bureaucrats and printing new letterhead. We must take action to

ensure that the potential that skilled newcomers bring to Ontario is not wasted. That is why our government has taken firm steps to deal with this issue. We have sought proposals to create an academic credentials assessment service that will help newcomers to Ontario by quickly and fairly evaluating their foreign credentials. This service will set standards for recognizing foreign credentials and eliminate the inconsistencies and disorganization that often faces skilled newcomers today. With over 180 countries with different educational systems, it is important that the accepted proposal for the creation of the academic credentials assessment service will provide fair, accurate and consistent assessment for foreign secondary and post-secondary educational qualifications.

1130

Working in partnership with occupational regulatory bodies, we have developed fact sheets that outline specifically what qualifications newcomers need to practise trades in Ontario. The fact sheets are made available at visa offices worldwide and on the Internet and help immigrants prepare to work in Ontario before they ever arrive.

We support merit-based evaluation of certain skills to ensure that competence is fairly and rigorously proven.

This government also understands that some newcomers may sometimes need to upgrade existing skills or learn new ones to become certified to practise their trade or profession in Ontario.

Through our commitment to a skilled workforce and lifelong learning, we are expanding training opportunities for all Ontarians, no matter how long they have lived here or how much training they may need.

Bill 55, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, introduced by this government, brings flexibility and market responsiveness to the apprenticeship system so that we can train even more Ontarians for increasingly sophisticated trades.

We are expanding the Ontario youth apprenticeship program to help young Ontarians make an easier transition from school to work.

Despite record participation rates in our colleges and universities, most Ontarians do not go on immediately to post-secondary education. We are working hard to ensure that they are ready to take part in Ontario's economic growth and are not left behind their peers in colleges and universities.

If the member for Davenport is sincerely interested in helping Ontario workers learn new skills, he should take some time to tell his federal Liberal colleagues how important it is that the federal government sign a labour market development agreement with Ontario, as the Prime Minister promised.

The federal government called a pause in the negotiations. The new Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, who is responsible for this area, has continuously tried to get the federal Minister of Human Resources Development Canada to come back to the table to continue the negotiations to complete this agreement. As of today it's still not happening.

With the devolution of training and fair funding, we can integrate today's two-tier system of federal and provincial programs and reinvest the savings into serving even more Ontarians.

Ontario employers will benefit from the signing of this agreement, as they will be able to get more skilled workers to keep pace with global competition.

Ontario workers will also benefit from fair funding of training programs that will allow them to upgrade their skills, obtain better jobs in a growing, changing economy, and ultimately better provide for their families.

Overall, this government will never stop looking for ways to improve opportunities for Ontarians to train, retrain and upgrade their skills to prosper in the new economy.

In conclusion, while I must commend the honourable member for foresight well beyond his party, I must also inform him that we are already well on our way to addressing the issues raised in this resolution.

This government has done more to improve access to professions and trades for newcomers than any other in Ontario's history. So I must stand against the resolution put forward by the member for Davenport. The government's principles on this issue are already very clear.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): It's a pleasure for me to rise today in support of this very important motion. I want to start by congratulating my colleague Tony Ruprecht for his work, not only on this resolution but also for his many years of work and commitment to improving access to trades and professions here in our province.

Make no mistake, the issue of improved access to trades and professions is not a social issue; it's an important economic issue. As a province, we can no longer afford the luxury of leaving highly trained and experienced professionals sitting on the sidelines. We need their help. We need their help because Ontario can only reach its full economic potential when we have the full participation of already qualified, internationally trained individuals in our workforce.

When it comes right down to it, it's a matter of our collective self-interest. If people trained in other jurisdictions throughout the world, at the expense of other taxpayers, find themselves here in our province and they are not living up to their full employment potential, that is our collective loss. If these people do well here, if they find room at the employment table, we do well. We enjoy the benefits as well.

Last week Tony Ruprecht and I held a round table with many foreign-trained professionals. The personal stories we heard were very compelling. I was able to hear first hand about many of the unfair barriers faced by people who want to work in their areas of expertise.

I was able to hear from a doctor who received his medical training in the former Soviet Union, a doctor who had delivered over 1,000 babies, but who here today in Ontario simply cannot afford to write our tests. This man's talents are being wasted. At the same time, I might add, we have close to 100 Ontario communities which are going underserved, where thousands and thousands

of Ontario families can no longer get access to a family doctor.

We were also able to hear last week from an engineer who was responsible for the quality control of materials that were used to build two large dam projects in Iraq. In fact, as I recall, she was responsible for the quality control over a highway that extended some 1,000 kilometres in length. Today this woman is in Ontario and she is forced to work as a lower-paid technologist because her extensive experience has been completely ignored by everyone but her co-workers, who go to her when they need good advice.

Over the years, I've heard from a lot of people affected by this issue. Not once has anybody ever said to me: "The problem with Ontario is that your standards are too high. We want you to lower your standards." Nobody has ever said that. All they're saying is: "We want to be able to make a contribution. We want to make of ourselves and our families in this province, in our new home, a success. We want to contribute to the strength of your economy." We think that's a fair request. We think we should do whatever we reasonably can to ensure that these people can make their contribution.

As I said earlier, today in Ontario we've got communities that are begging for doctors, yet we continue to force foreign-trained doctors to work as cab drivers. That's a terrible waste. We have a huge nursing shortage, yet we refuse to let nurses trained in other jurisdictions help us meet the needs of our patients here in Ontario. That's a disgrace.

While the steps contained in this motion will go a long way to improving access, what we really need in Ontario, what would truly and deeply make a difference, would be a Premier who is willing to make this a priority issue. That's something that we will continue to work on, day in and day out. I want to tell you for the record, for all Ontarians to hear, but particularly a message that I want to send to our foreign-trained skilled and professional people who have graced us with their presence in our province today, that we will work ceaselessly and tirelessly on this issue, because when it comes right down to it, if you are doing well, our province is doing well. It is in the interests of my children that you find room at the employment table. We will not give up on that front until we have found success for ourselves and our foreign-trained skilled and professional people.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I would like to address the House with respect to this very important issue that has been raised by the member for Davenport.

I must say that we on this side certainly support the principle of foreign-trained individuals, no matter what their profession, coming to this great province and contributing to the growth of this province.

1140

With respect to the resolution, it is interesting to note that the leader of the official opposition has stood up. This was part of his election campaign. He had a flyer that went around during the election campaign. The

resolution almost comes word for word from that resolution.

Before I get into the very few moments that I do have with respect to the resolution, I would ask that the leader of the official opposition use whatever influence he has with respect to talking to his counterparts in Ottawa. One of the concerns that we have is that the federal government's percentage of additional training of individuals, whether foreign- or native-born Canadians, comes from employment insurance premiums. That is the main source of funding for training in the employment programs, not only in Ontario, but across the country. The federal government has offered Ontarians about 28% of the federal funding for the labour market programs while Ontarians contribute more than 40% of the employment insurance premiums.

I emphasize that. I'm not federal-bashing; I'm genuinely concerned about the amount of money that is something like—there's a surplus in the employment insurance fund of about \$25 billion that's not needed. They can put that money into training, no matter whether you're foreign-trained or whether you're native-trained, with respect to the jobs and professions in this province.

The resolution doesn't go as far as what the leader of the official opposition says. It's very general in its terminology with respect to training. We in Ontario have tried to eliminate the barriers across the province with respect to non-Ontario-trained people wanting to move to other provinces or people from other provinces wanting to come here. The member may not be aware that there was a social union that was agreed to by the federal and provincial governments, in February of this year, which committed the governments to ensure full compliance with the mobility provisions of the agreement on internal trade. That includes the requirements for mutual recognition of occupational qualifications and for the eliminating of residency requirements for access to employment. This is in the works, so that the provinces and the federal government have gotten together with this issue and have asked professional associations, unions and educational training establishments to comply with these provisions. That is with respect to the internal part of it.

With respect to the foreign-trained individuals, that's a genuine concern. Certainly we want to encourage foreign-trained individuals to come to this province, but at the same time, we have standards that must be met. If they meet those standards, we welcome them. If they don't meet those standards, we encourage training that would enable them to do whatever profession or trade they can in their other country in this country.

One of the questions—and I have very limited time to speak on this—that I am specifically concerned with is the issue of the appeal process. I have great faith in the self-regulatory bodies that we've worked hard to put forward in this province. I have great faith in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Law Society of Upper Canada, the engineers, the accountants, and it goes on and on—all of those professions.

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: Members of the Liberal Party, if you want to criticize those colleges and those professions, you go to it. You do that. You tell them to their face that you don't have faith in those professions. I wish you well.

The resolution seems to be talking about some independent form of an appeal. In many of these professions you write an exam, and you pass the exam or you fail the exam. If you fail the exam, you have to write it again; you may have to take more training. Hence some of the issues that the government is now getting into apply, or the individual colleges or organizations will provide training. That's a test of life: You pass an exam or you fail an exam; you meet the requirements or you don't meet the requirements. It's as simple as that.

I guess the other question is, they talk about an independent process, that these organizations aren't independent enough. It's almost as if they're suggesting some human rights issue. In fact, I think the leader of the official opposition referred to that in his comments this morning. We have a Human Rights Commission.

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: The member for Kingston and the Islands laughs at the Human Rights Commission. Good luck to him for laughing at the Human Rights Commission. Quite frankly, if someone's human rights are being violated—no matter if you're a landed immigrant or you live in this province, we have rights and those rights are being defended, and they're being defended by the Human Rights Commission.

What we're talking about is, are the standards of this province being met? I guess the question is, who's going to pay for that? Are we suggesting that the government provide an independent appeal process for every college, for every independent professional organization and we build up a bureaucracy that's going to pay for that? Is that what they're suggesting? Is that what the resolution is suggesting? I ask the member for Davenport to clarify that with respect to his comments.

We as a government have always encouraged these organizations to self-regulate and to keep their own counsel. To interfere with that would go against what we've achieved in this area. Most of the regulations for certification and licensing are based on exam testing and education. As I said, either someone is able to meet those standards set by these qualified exams or they're not. The process of the appeal is the ability to retake the courses or retake the exams. Even then, even after that, most of the professions and colleges have an appeal process. These standards in most cases apply to Ontario-trained individuals as well.

Those are the hesitations I have with respect to this resolution.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I only have a very few minutes. Let me first of all say that the government members just don't get it. This is not a partisan issue. Yes, perhaps the federal government should be doing more, but what you should be doing is going after each and every cabinet minister who has the responsibility for one of these boards, agencies and licen-

sing committees and make sure they deal with these applications quickly and speedily.

I can tell you of one situation with respect to a foreign-trained doctor who has passed all the necessary Canadian Medical Association exams, who has the experience we want and need in this country, who has the academic and educational qualifications, and he has to wait 11 months to write the Ontario exams. We have a shortage of doctors and we don't take advantage of this? No.

What we ought to do is to make sure each and every government department that is involved in one of these areas gets together with their self-regulating bodies and asks them and works with them: How can we improve the appeal process? How can we improve the speed of the appeal process and the speed of the applications of the foreign-trained individuals? That's what this is all about. It's as simple as that.

All that these people want are the same opportunities that many of us have had in this country. They've got the qualifications and we ought to be taking advantage of those qualifications, particularly in those areas where we have a shortage.

This country is a country of immigrants. I'm an immigrant. Many of the people in this House are immigrants. We want to make sure that the immigrants, who are looking for exactly the same thing that you and I and our forefathers looked for, which is a land of opportunity for ourselves and for our children, have that opportunity.

Anything we can do to speed up that process and where government can get involved to get these agencies to move on this, that's what we should be applauding. We shouldn't be casting blame on the federal government or on some other level of government. Do what you can in this House and within your own jurisdiction to make sure this problem gets corrected as soon as possible.

1150

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): No political party on this issue can afford to pretend to be pure, because we have all failed these communities. Liberals in the past, New Democrats when we followed them, Tories and the federal Liberal government have all failed you. I want to tell you that I'm a big part—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker: Just a moment. I would again remind the galleries that any kind of demonstration, applause or otherwise, is not permitted in here. Thank you.

The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to say that I take responsibility for that failure as well. We could have done something other than some mere demonstration projects that we did while we were in government. It wasn't enough. It was wrong. We had the report that the Liberals had, Access to Trades and Professions in Ontario, and we didn't act on it in the way that governments should. That's the failure of political parties.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Why is that?

Mr Marchese: There were many reasons; I wish I had the time.

But now that you have the wheels, the limousine and the cards to be able to enjoy yourselves, maybe you can explain to them, as you have, and I'll get to that. The problem is, all levels of government have failed our linguistic and racial communities and we continue to do it.

I heard the member for Thornhill use the words "merit-based evaluations." That is code for keeping the barriers up so that these people don't have the jobs they're looking for. It's code for maintaining the discriminatory systems that our regulatory bodies have in place, of which the member for Dufferin-Peel says, "I have trust in them." Then he argues, "But if we don't have trust in them, we have the Ontario Human Rights Commission that these people could go to in the event of discrimination."

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Come on, you're making fun of him.

Mr Marchese: That's exactly what he said.

Discrimination is here in this province and it's in Canada. By the way, you should know these Tories have cut the Ontario Human Rights Commission by \$700,000 in the past and they have cut it again, and they will continue to cut it as much as they possibly can. You know that when you take a complaint to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, if you're brave enough to take a complaint and have the fortitude and the money and the stamina, it might take you three to five years to solve your problem, if you have the courage to stick with it. But the member for Dufferin-Peel and this government say, "Oh, but we have the Human Rights Commission; we're all equal," and if somehow there is discrimination that you're facing, you can go to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and there you will find retribution and redress. You know that is not true. That's what we're talking about.

We're talking about an issue of human rights. We know that these people have a great deal of cultural capital to bring. They bring their professions with them and the spirit of those professions should give them access to jobs. We know there's a shortage of doctors, but that's not why you should be getting there to practise. You should be there to practise because you have the skills, and not use the argument that we have a shortage of doctors as a reason why you should be. The skills are there.

Speaking of red tape, which this government is very fond of talking about, I've got to tell you they've brought documents and documents of, "We are cutting red tape." The government members, who are not listening, will know that they're fond of cutting red tape. Here's Dr Aberman, the dean of medicine at the University of Toronto: "... under current regulatory rules, he would not have immediately qualified to practise here when he returned from the United States as an intensive care unit specialist.

"I and the majority of my clinical chairs would not have been able to practise," he says.

"Aberman, who has been at U of T since 1973, uses this example to demonstrate the degree of regulatory barriers faced by doctors, trained overseas and in the US...."

He says: "There are so many regulatory hoops ... you can't imagine ... There's red tape and high barriers...." This is Dr Aberman, the dean of the University of Toronto.

These Tories will tell you, "We love to cut red tape, except when it comes to your rights."

That's why I say to you, exercise your political rights. Get involved politically because you can bring these people down, and any government that doesn't address your human rights and the cultural capital that you have, that you brought here wishing to be able to extend those benefits that you have and that you want to share with us.

We are left with community organizations like Culturelink and Skills for Change to advocate on your behalf. It should be up to the government members to advocate on your behalf, not unfunded or little-funded organizations.

Imagine, Joan Kent, an employment counsellor at Culturelink's Toronto settlement agency for newcomers, says that she regularly advises her very qualified professional clients to dumb down their resumés to get their first jobs. Imagine, people with skills have to dumb down their skills in order to get a job because they're not qualified enough to be doctors or chemical engineers or veterinarians or whatever they might be. They've got to dumb down their skills to be able to get some pizza job somewhere. As my colleague from Niagara Centre said, not to diminish the work that those people do, but you were trained for other things.

I urge you, exercise your political rights because you have them, and your vote is the most important way to express your dissatisfaction with any government. As we support these measures through this resolution, that is moving in the right direction.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'd like to briefly add my strong support for the resolution. There are literally tens of thousands of extremely talented people here in Ontario who don't have an opportunity to contribute fully. It is well proven, without a shadow of a doubt. We worry about the brain drain to the US and at the same time we have enormous brain power sitting idly, not being able to perform the task they are adequately and purposely trained for.

It's in all of our interests to strongly support this resolution, to take advantage of these enormous strengths and to get on with building Ontario by using every single individual to the maximum of their potential. Other countries have trained and developed these people. We need their talents. Simply by passing this resolution, we will move forward in accomplishing that.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm very pleased to add to the debate today in support of my colleague Tony Ruprecht in bringing forward this resolution.

In my community, which is the second if not third city that attracts the most new Canadians, we have a huge community of individuals who arrive from all over the world. In our office we find many examples of skills and trades that are simply not being used by our community. I would very strongly urge the government members to support this.

In particular, I think of a friend of mine, Roberto Gonzales, who is now working in the medical field. I would like on record in Hansard to call him Dr Roberto Gonzales because that's what he is, a practising family doctor in his home country, who is now not engaged in that work here in Canada as he should be.

The barriers are there; the barriers are systemic. Some of the solutions for some of the trades are so simple. It's just absolutely bizarre that the government has not acted on this sooner.

On behalf of all those who are working diligently in my community to solve these problems, I would say to you, the government members, to be much more diligent in urging your ministries to act in this area.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I also rise in full support of the resolution put forward by my colleague. I particularly want to speak to the issue of easing the restrictions on the licensing of foreign-trained physicians. I want to commend Mr Ruprecht for particularly the first part of his resolution, in which he says that there should be an equal "opportunity to seek licensure or certification in professions" or fields for which individuals are "trained, in the context of human resource planning, and without additional barriers not faced by Ontario-trained individuals."

1200

That is exactly what the Liberal caucus has proposed for the licensing of additional family practitioners who have been trained outside of Canada. The opportunity for foreign-trained physicians to obtain a licence to practise medicine in Ontario has been particularly limited since the early 1980s, when the Ontario government at that point tried to totally restrict any foreign-trained physician from obtaining a licence to practise in this province. It was challenged successfully in court. The Ministry of Health was then forced to provide 24 residency spots for individuals who had not received their medical training in Canada; 24 positions to provide the training to qualify to practise in Ontario in all fields of medicine for foreign-trained physicians, including family practice. There are 200 to 250 individuals who apply every year for those 24 slots. That gives you some indication of just how restrictive these residency positions are.

The limitations on foreign-trained physicians practising in Ontario were put in place in the early 1980s in an attempt to control the escalating costs of OHIP, in the belief people had that somehow we were overserved for physicians, and that therefore we could reduce the number of physicians and reduce the increasing costs of OHIP billings. That seemed to ignore the concern about future population growth, because the government of the

later day also took further steps of reducing medical school enrolment by 15%.

Most of us would now agree that the result of those two steps is that we have a significant shortage of physicians in Ontario. It's a little difficult to persuade the Minister of Health and this government that indeed we have a supply problem, but most of us who see the fact that we have 99 communities that are underserved for family practice alone would believe that we have a shortage of physicians.

I would point out that it is particularly difficult to get a specialist licence in Canada, as the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons requires that all the residency training for specialists be done in Canada. The Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, recognizing that there is indeed a shortage, agree that there should be a lessening of these restrictions on foreign-trained physicians obtaining a licence.

We would encourage the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons to deal with these issues of restricted licences, to bring forward recommendations as expeditiously as possible in order to address what are real shortages of physicians.

No one is suggesting a lowering of standards. Mr Ruprecht's resolution makes that quite clear. Dr Wexler of the OMA is quoted as saying that we have to make sure that doctors, whether they are trained in Canada or anywhere else, meet our standard of training, examination and skills. We agree, and that's what this resolution says.

It also says that the opportunities to be licensed should be made available within human resource planning. No one is suggesting we go out recruiting and flood the physician market with an oversupply of foreign-trained physicians. What we are suggesting, quite simply, is that more opportunities can be provided to trained physicians now resident in Ontario communities to obtain a licence to practise here. There should be more residency positions open for foreign-trained physicians, far more than the 24 that now exist.

Moreover, we believe that foreign-trained family physicians could be given community-based residency positions, along the lines of the model that's been proposed by the Ontario College of Family Physicians in Ontario. That model would ensure that only qualified people enter such a residency and that they're in a supervised residency position until they are fully qualified to practise in Ontario. These fully trained people could be providing a needed service to patients in our communities within a matter of months. They would enter community-sponsored residencies in communities that are underserved and desperately need this service now.

We have not suggested that we license more foreign-trained physicians at the expense of training opportunities for Canadian students. We have recommended increasing the number of medical school spots back to the levels that existed before 1993. We are as many as 700 family physicians short in communities across this province. Surely there is room for a responsible expansion of both

medical school spaces in our Ontario schools and residency opportunities for foreign-trained physicians.

Until this government recognizes that there is indeed a problem with an undersupply of physicians, there will continue to be a refusal to deal with the supply issue and unfortunately there will not be any movement on easing the restrictions on foreign-trained physicians.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Davenport.

Mr Ruprecht: First of all, I want to thank the members for responding and for making their comments.

I am specifically interested in the comments that were made by the member from Thornhill, because she talked about merit-based evaluation. The member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey said, "If only they had the standards, things would be OK." That point was already addressed, friends, by the leader of the Liberal Party. Nobody is suggesting lowering the standards. In fact, the associations here today are telling us they could even raise the standards because they've had experience back home.

Please, get this right. We're not here to confront you today. This is not a confrontation. We're saying to you that the Minister of Citizenship herself has agreed there's a problem. She says: "As a society, we have not gone far enough to accommodate people who come here seeking to use the skills they used and developed in their countries. We have not gone far enough."

Therefore, if we haven't gone far enough, let's stop blaming the municipalities. Let's stop blaming the federal government. The solution to this problem is here.

Consequently, I urge you to please try to remember there are lives at stake as well; not only a brain drain, not only a question of making a living, not only a question of participation, but lives are at stake because people wish to participate. Today, it is incumbent upon us to remember this.

You have a vote, and I know that some of you on the Conservative side have seen the light and will support this resolution. I want to thank you for it, because you've gone beyond the banter of party politics. I want to thank you and congratulate you.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the allotted time.

ONTARIO MARINE HERITAGE ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LE PATRIMOINE MARIN DE L'ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item 5.

Mr Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 13. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I wish to make a motion that this bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that this goes to the standing committee on general government? Agreed.

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item 6.

Mr Ruprecht has moved private member's resolution 6. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1208 to 1213.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Ruprecht's resolution will stand.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn
Baird, John R.	DeFaria, Carl	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Di Cocco, Caroline	Mushinski, Marilyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Bisson, Gilles	Dunlop, Garfield	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Elliott, Brenda	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Klees, Frank	Skarica, Toni
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Smitherman, George
Clark, Brad	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Stewart, R. Gary
Cleary, John C.	Levac, David	Tascona, Joseph N.
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Conway, Sean G.	Marland, Margaret	Wood, Bob
Cordiano, Joseph	Mazzilli, Frank	
Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 pm.

The House recessed from 1215 to 1332.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There are two items that are of great interest to members of this assembly. The first is the price of gasoline. It's certainly of interest to my constituents. They all know that I have presented, to this Legislature, Bill 16, An Act respecting the price of gasoline.

What does this bill do? First of all, it calls the bluff of the government because it's strictly within the purview of the Ontario government. Mike Harris, who is so bombastic in his description of the oil barons of this province—he didn't call them that; he said the oil companies—of course said he would point to the federal government. I have something he can do himself.

He can pass this bill. I would be very co-operative in seeing this bill passed, all three readings in one day; it

only takes two readings in this case. What does it do? It prohibits the large oil companies, the oil barons themselves, from selling the price of their gasoline wholesale at one price to their own retailers and at another to independents. It helps to preserve those independents.

I well recall when Premier Bill Davis in 1975 invoked an act which froze the price of gasoline and heating oil at that time. He recognized it was fully within the jurisdiction of the provincial government.

I'm sure there are people across this province who would want to see these two bills, the bill of my colleague Mr Colle and mine, enacted by this Legislature. May I assure the government of my full co-operation and that of my party in expediting these two very progressive pieces of legislation through this House.

GREY CUP

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): I'm rising today to bring to the attention of all members of the House a race between the two provinces in Canada with the most booming economies, Alberta and Ontario.

As you are all aware, these two provinces are currently involved in a neck-and-neck competition as to who can ultimately attain the lowest tax rate in Canada. However, another battle is about to take place, the 87th annual Grey Cup between the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and the Calgary Stampeders to be held on Sunday in Vancouver, BC.

In a breathtaking last-minute touchdown last Sunday, the Ti-Cats rushed past the Montreal Alouettes to earn their first down against their arch nemesis, the Calgary Stampeders. These two teams have tackled each other before as they battled for the coveted Grey Cup last year. In the gut-wrenching last-minute touchdown in the final quarter, the Stampeders punted the Ti-Cats out of the competition.

In their return showdown, the Premier, in a show of support for our Ontario team, has entered into a friendly wager with Alberta Premier Ralph Klein. When our Tiger-Cats sack the Stampeders on Sunday and win the Grey Cup, Premier Klein's prize will be to travel east to Ontario and attend the Camp Trillium fundraiser. If things go the other way, the Premier would attend the Kids' Kottage event in Alberta.

I stand here today to ask all members of the House to show their support for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and wish them good luck on Sunday. As the Premier said yesterday to Ron, a real, live tiger nicknamed Tory the Tiger, "Go Tigers and eat 'em raw."

MANDATORY DRUG TESTING

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I want to stand today in my place and really condemn the government for its intention to test welfare recipients for drug abuse. I think this is the worst case of Big Brother attacking the most vulnerable people in our society. It

At the end of the day, we know that the American Civil Liberties Union has condemned this and, as a result, a US Supreme Court judge quashed the state of Michigan's attempt to initiate the same program for mandatory drug testing. They ruled that it was constitutionally invalid and that it violated individual rights in the US.

Here at home, our own human rights commissioner has said this is wrong. He has grave concerns about mandatory drug testing on welfare recipients.

Let me say to the government as well that US studies and studies in our own country demonstrate that drug abuse among welfare recipients is no higher than it is among the general population.

If you really want to help people who are drug abusers, then put resources into treatment facilities and into prevention, and help our police officers on the street deal with drug dealers, putting them behind bars. Don't pick on welfare recipients.

BENNETT HEALTH CARE CENTRE

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Seniors in Halton and across Ontario have made tremendous contributions to our province. I rise today to recognize these contributions and to celebrate the recent opening of the Bennett Health Care Centre in Georgetown.

The Bennett Health Care Centre has been a personal priority of mine for some time now, and on October 27 of this year, I had the privilege of officially opening the facility in Georgetown.

I would like to congratulate Connell Smith, chair of the board of directors; Ken Harris, past-chair; Paul Armstrong, a further past-chair; Judy Donnelly, the administrator, as well as many other people such as the Georgetown Hospital staff who have been instrumental in seeing this new 65-bed long-term-care facility to completion.

The provision of modern long-term-care facilities like the new Bennett Health Care Centre is a top priority for our government. That is why I'm particularly proud of the announcement last year of \$1.2 billion in additional funding to expand long-term-care community services and build new long-term-care facilities across the province. These initiatives are creating 20,000 new long-term-care beds, for a total of 35% more beds, and expanded community-based services in Ontario.

Once again, I'd like to extend my congratulations and gratitude to all of those who made the opening of the Bennett Health Care Centre a reality in Georgetown.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today on a very solemn and respectful occasion. The people of Ontario are truly blessed and fortunate to have a public service workforce who dedicate themselves to serve the public and ensure their safety, ensure that they are secure, something we take too much for granted all too often.

Specifically, I want to highlight the heroic job our firefighters do day in and day out across this province. At any given time, the men and women of our community fire departments know the risks involved in the performance of their duties in this very high-risk job. Unfortunately, in this very high-risk job there are accidents and, more tragically, even deaths. To go to work each day knowing that your job requires you to put it on the line is stress that not only is borne by the firefighters, but borne by their families and loved ones.

Today I solemnly ask all members of this House to join me in a pledge to honour the memory of fallen firefighters by having the government of Ontario erect a monument to those brave individuals and declare the first Saturday after Labour Day an official day of mourning province-wide.

1340

ALCOHOL AND GAMING INSPECTORS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's now been a month that our gaming institutions, be it Casino Rama, Casino Windsor, Casino Niagara, bingo games across the province, and licensed places that serve drinks, have effectively been operating without control or regulation because this government will not respond to the settlement offers made by some 200 alcohol and gaming inspectors.

These women and men who serve this province, the residents of this province and visitors to this province are the ones who make sure there is no slot-machine tampering going on in casinos. They're the ones who make sure that minors aren't being served alcohol in bars and other licensed places. They're the ones who make sure that the proceeds from charity bingos in fact go to charities rather than being skimmed off the top. These people have worked hard and served this province for a long time.

Their request is modest. They seek but some fairness in wages and some rights for part-time and contract staff. It's about time this government settled that strike and got these people back to work, to make sure people aren't getting ripped off in our casinos and that underage people aren't being served alcohol.

HURON HEIGHTS EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a pleasure to inform the House today of the official opening of the Huron Heights Early Learning Centre in my riding of London-Fanshawe.

In the previous mandate of this government, Premier Harris asked Dr Fraser Mustard, an acknowledged world authority on early childhood learning, and Margaret McCain, a noted child advocate, to lead a study of Ontario's system and offer advice on how to make it work better for both parents and children. The result was a comprehensive report, the Early Years Study.

This government is committed, in our Blueprint, to building Ontario's infrastructure by working with the private sector to provide funding through innovative, leading-edge financing techniques such as leasing arrangements, buybacks and private partnerships so that we can make better use of public dollars and maximize the benefits to our province.

I am proud to say that Huron Heights is a shining example of what can be accomplished. The cost of this project was \$1.2 million. No direct funding was received from any level of government. The centre will provide early childhood learning and child care for 120 children in London-Fanshawe. The centre is operated by London Bridge Child Care Services, a non-profit organization that has 13 licensed early learning centres in London and Sarnia, and employs 250 people and provides 1,000 spaces to families and their children between three and six years of age.

AUTISM SERVICES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I rise to recognize something that should chill every member in this House and alarm every parent in this province. We now have families with children with autism who have had to apply to the courts, who have taken a legal route, to try to get not special things but basic health care and basic education for their children with autism. Today they had to initiate proceedings against this government to get things that this country and this province have held to be available to all citizens.

They have done that saying it is their conviction that it's not the lack of ability of society to assist in the ways their children need, it's not because those things can't be done, but to quote their release, "It's because we have a government that does not want to fit the bill."

They have private schools now for children with autism, draining families of \$20,000 a year because we have a government that finds other priorities than children with special needs. All across the province there are families that the supervisors of our schools tell us are having to go without because this government has cut \$106 million. Shame on this government today.

Congratulations to the parents for bringing this issue to a point. But it shouldn't be resolved in court. It should be answered here.

PREMIER'S RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AWARD

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): The province of Ontario continues to be a major player on the research and development world stage. It gives me great pleasure to rise in this House today to recognize the researchers and scientists from Trent University, located in my riding of Peterborough.

Some of you might be familiar with the term "brain drain." This is when our best and brightest decide to leave Ontario or Canada for better opportunities else-

where. I am proud to say today that the initiatives of this government are keeping Ontario talent where it belongs, here in Ontario.

The Premier's Research Excellence Award serves that purpose, in addition to furthering their ongoing research of international significance. Recently, Dr Jim Parker of the psychology department at Trent University was awarded this prestigious honour, which will enable him to further his studies in the fields of emotional intelligence as well as mental and physical health.

It was not too long ago that another world-class researcher from Trent University, Dr Holger Hintelmann of the chemistry and environmental and resource studies department, also received this award.

I would like all members of this House to join me today to congratulate these and many other recipients of the Premier's Research Excellence Award from across this province. We should take pride that these great minds are the Nobel Prize winners of the future.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SERGEANT RICK McDONALD
MEMORIAL ACT
(SUSPECT APPREHENSION
PURSUITS), 1999

LOI DE 1999 COMMÉMORANT
LE SERGENT RICK McDONALD
(POURSUITES EN VUE D'APPRÉHENDER
DES SUSPECTS)

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act in memory of Sergeant Rick McDonald to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of suspect apprehension pursuits / Projet de loi 22, Loi commémorant le sergent Rick McDonald et modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les poursuites en vue d'appréhender des suspects.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: This morning I arrived in the chamber for the purpose of participating in private members' business, as is usual Thursday mornings. Earlier this morning I, along with many other members of this Legislature, had been at the kickoff breakfast for White Ribbon Week, which you're familiar with. It has become an international tradition. Of course, the white ribbon that men wear is a proclamation of their condemnation of violence against women and a proclamation of their intolerance of it, of their willingness to speak out and intervene and end violence to women here in Toronto,

here in Ontario and Canada and across the world, violence which is unspeakable and is not in itself the subject matter of this point of order.

I put the ribbon on this morning, as many others did. I arrived in the House quite frankly not being conscious—the ribbon was there; it had been there for several hours. No disrespect or criticism, but the clerk came over and very politely reminded me that I was wearing the ribbon without having sought unanimous consent. Fair enough; I understand her interest in doing that. So I did seek unanimous consent. There were a small number of people in the House. The Speaker properly put to the chamber my request for unanimous consent.

1350

To my embarrassment, shame and, quite frankly, sorrow, great sadness, someone—I don't know who, and I don't care who—said no. The chamber was well aware of what the white ribbon meant, because in the course of seeking unanimous consent I had made the explanation about the white ribbon.

Speaker, I understand the ruling that was made on April 5, 1997, by your predecessor the Speaker in the former Parliament. I understand the reasons for the rule. I have a transcript of his ruling from April 1997. You will recall that the ruling was made in the context of what had been a very intense partisan debate between opposition and government at the time, over a political issue. There were, I acknowledge, various members, especially of the opposition, who were sporting buttons and ribbons of a particular colour that identified with the partisan issue of the debate. It was in the context of that, and after a series of events, that the Speaker made the ruling that required unanimous consent. The Speaker also—and I would ask you to refer to that April 5, 1997, ruling—spoke about the fact that these were partisan displays. Notwithstanding that, he indicated that in the future any ribbon, button etc would require unanimous consent.

Let me put this to you, Speaker, and this is the point of order: In the context of the former Speaker's ruling, where a display of one sort or another is designed to attach yourself to a partisan issue before the House, and you're using it for a demonstration about an issue in the House that's currently being debated, I accept—not only accept, but I understand—that Speaker's ruling.

But understand what happened today. One member—and it doesn't matter who—out of 103, by virtue of denying unanimous consent, can prevent any one of us from displaying something so non-partisan, so apolitical and something that, quite frankly, in my view constitutes a relevance to the freedom of expression. I'm putting this to you, Speaker, with great respect to the former Speaker's ruling. It has been there since 1997. It has been tested. Today, I believe, with great respect, the full extent of the Speaker's ruling was shown to perhaps be overly broad in how it addressed issues. I'm asking you, Speaker, to please consider on this point of order that there are certain things—I'm speaking of ribbons; the one that comes to mind is in the context of today's scenario—about which there is no partisan nature and about

which it is so grossly unfair and improper to permit one member of the Legislature, for whatever his or her reason might be, to prevent the rest of the Legislature from making a statement that has no partisan nature to it.

I'm asking the Speaker to consider revisiting the ruling of April 5, 1997, so that never again should any member have to rise to seek unanimous consent, for instance, for a white ribbon in expression of men's solidarity with women and men's commitment to ending violence against women, so that can never again be the subject matter of what could be a purely partisan gesture by even but one member of the Legislature.

I think you understand the matter. I wouldn't raise this had I not reflected on it, had I not consulted with other members of caucuses and had I not considered it to be sufficiently worthy of your making the rather dramatic gesture of in effect moderating or modifying a previous ruling. I put to you that it's a precedent that is sound as it applies to a partisan debate, but it should not be applied so as to permit one out of 103 members preventing 102 members making a gesture that is in itself without partisan quality and has only as its goal the most genuine of human interests: protection of women—girls, teenage women, adult women—from violence of all kinds.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for his point of order. The government House leader, on the same point of order.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I understand this morning the member opposite asked for unanimous consent in this Legislature. It's clear that unanimous consent means unanimity in this Legislature. Parties have talked from time to time about whether or not that consent should go, notwithstanding one or two members would oppose it. But unanimity means unanimity. It means everybody in the House agrees to a particular matter. Do you draw the line at one member, two members, five members, nine members or whatever number of members, to override something that's occurring outside the ambit of our standing orders? My view would be that unanimity should be unanimity. If all the members of the House cannot agree to stepping outside the standing orders on which we run our business, then we should not step outside those standing orders.

I might say that this morning the reason the member was denied his unanimity was because he didn't give any kind of notice to the other parties that he was going to ask for this particular unanimous consent. In fact, the House leader for the third party has apologized to me that he did not let me know that the member was going to stand up, because we had agreed in advance that we would give unanimous consent this afternoon when unanimous consent was asked for.

So I want to make it absolutely clear that the reason unanimity was denied is because we were taken by surprise, that the members who were in the Legislature at the time did not know whether there had been any consultation on this particular matter. As you may know, Mr Speaker, it's almost every day in this Legislature that

somebody asks for unanimous consent to step outside the rules. We can't continue to do that and run this place in a competent manner if we continue to ask for unanimous consent and expect this to happen on a surprise basis with nobody knowing exactly what's happening.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the point that ought to be made is quite simply that there is a major difference between wearing a button advocating a certain position or being against a certain position than wearing a ribbon of whatever kind or nature. An argument could even be made that it's part of somebody's attire etc. There really is a difference between demonstrating something actively, either for or against a cause, or for or against a government policy, whatever—and I would seriously ask you to consider in your ruling that there is a difference between a button and an almost silent kind of response by way of wearing a ribbon. There are not only the white ribbons that we're talking about today but there are many other ribbons that are worn for different varieties of causes during the year as well.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr Speaker, just briefly on the same point of order: Speaker Stockwell actually set a precedent for the ruling that we're asking for from you today when he said that those buttons or ribbons that are not political demonstrations are acceptable. For example, he ruled that Kiwanis pins, Rotarian pins and poppies may be worn in the House. So already we have a ruling where there are particular kinds of ribbons or symbols that we are allowed to wear, as identified by the previous Speaker, that are non-partisan in nature. I submit to you that that is somewhat objective in terms of identifying for the whole House what is considered to be clearly non-partisan.

1400

In response to the government House leader, I believe it's quite possible that everybody forgot that the House was sitting this morning. When the member from Welland-Thorold got up and asked to wear this white ribbon, he explained exactly the symbolism of the ribbon.

It was done in a non-partisan nature and we were quite shocked when somebody said no. The point we're trying to make is that it is unacceptable to shut down freedom of expression in this House because of this ruling, and I don't believe it was the intention of the former Speaker to do that.

We would ask you today to take a look at that ruling and understand that there is already a precedent set by the former Speaker to allow clearly non-partisan symbols to be worn in this House. We find it unacceptable that one member can shut that down, whether he or she be disgruntled and wants to get even with another party's member or because they don't understand or because they're opposed personally to the particular cause. So I ask you to take a very serious look at this ruling, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Member for Niagara Centre, just before we go on, I think I have the gist of it. The member for

Niagara Centre made some valid points. A point of order on the same issue?

Mr Kormos: If I may very briefly, I heard the government House leader. I tried to explain the context in which I wore this ribbon. I wore it as a result of putting it on this morning. I wore it with great pride. The clerk, to her credit, brought it to my attention. I removed my jacket so as not to offend the rules of the House.

I appreciate that nobody gave the House leader notice. My House leader didn't know I was here wearing it. It wasn't a situation wherein one could give notice. I removed my jacket until I had an opportunity to seek unanimous consent.

I don't think there's a single person in here who doesn't understand what it was about. I explained the reason for the ribbon. I didn't come in here challenging the government members, and I appreciate I've done that from time to time. But I didn't come in here challenging the government members or the Speaker by wearing the ribbon and attempting to create an issue. I appreciate what the House leader had to say, but I must advise him that I find it unfortunate that he would perceive it in that way when I've explained how the course of events progressed this morning.

The Speaker: I have the gist of the situation. Point of order but very short, member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I just want to add one part to this debate. I hear what the government House leader is saying but I think you need to recognize that, Speaker, as you well know, the ability of members to participate in this place as it was under the old rules some 10 years ago is much changed. Members are not as free as they used to be to participate and do things in this place when it comes to debate etc. For the government to say we cannot operate if we were to go outside of those rules, we're not asking for the rules in this case to be pushed to the limit.

The issue is that it's very specific. Speaker Stockwell I think made a good point that was put forward by my colleague. I think it's important that we give the ability to members to do these types of things because they are non-partisan in nature.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their submissions. One of the difficult things for a Speaker—I understand what the white ribbon is about. On occasion I may not understand what another ribbon is about if it happens to be blue. I understand the red ribbon, on which we had unanimous consent last week for Mothers Against Drunk Driving. The difficulty for a Speaker is knowing what each of the ribbons means. We cannot know, and in this case we did.

I think what happened in this case is that when it was brought to the attention of the members, they did, through unanimous consent, give some consent. It was unfortunate that one member today for whatever reason spoke up, but the ultimate result was that the ribbons were allowed and we did get unanimous consent.

I have had a chance to read Speaker Stockwell's ruling and I agree, it gets very difficult for a Speaker to know

when a ribbon is non-partisan and when it is partisan—less so with the pins. So it's very difficult. What we have done, in situations like that, is ask for unanimous consent. It has been my experience in this House for nine years that that goes as it did last week with the Mothers against Drunk Driving and as it did today when unanimous consent was given, that there is some unanimous consent. But it makes it very difficult, with the number of causes and the number of ribbons, for a Speaker to know whether it is partisan and whether it is political or whether, as it is with the white ribbon, it is a non-partisan issue. That's the difficulty for a Speaker.

I have read Speaker Stockwell's submission of April 5 and I have to agree with that submission. It makes it very difficult when a Speaker doesn't know a particular ribbon and what the requirements are. He was very clear in saying that pins that were of a political nature, and the member from Niagara Centre was very clear.

I would hope, and my feeling is, that all members in situations like this will attempt to work together—it's been my experience that they have—but it is my particular feeling that if a member does want to wear a ribbon they should ask for unanimous consent in this House.

I appreciate the member raising the issue. I think he did a fine job in presenting that and I understand where he's coming from on this issue. The circumstances this morning were unfortunate, but I appreciate all members' indulgence and patience on this issue.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POLICE PURSUIT LEGISLATION

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): On November 15, I informed the Legislature of this government's intention to amend the Highway Traffic Act to make Ontario's streets safer and to ensure we have communities in which we can feel secure to live, work and raise our families. A few minutes ago I had the honour of presenting a bill which, if passed by this House, will accomplish those goals.

This bill is named in memory of Sergeant Rick McDonald of the Sudbury Regional Police Service. Sergeant McDonald was killed this summer, tragically, while placing a spike belt to stop a fleeing vehicle.

I'd like to point out that the members of Sergeant McDonald's family are here today in our gallery. His sister, Marlene Viau, his brother Danny McDonald and three members of the Sudbury police—his best friend, Joe Williams; Craig Moxam; and Rob Thirkill—are here with us today. Although his wife, Corinne, and Police Chief Alex McCauley are not here today, they are here with us in spirit and support for this bill. I once again offer my sympathies and those of the members of the

House to the family and friends of Sergeant Rick McDonald.

Sergeant McDonald was doing his job, and for that he paid the ultimate price. Sadly, while we mourn the loss of Sergeant McDonald, we must also remember all of the other victims, police officers and civilians alike, who have lost their lives through the reckless actions of those who believe they are above the law.

This bill, however, speaks to all Ontarians. It is our intention, with the introduction of this bill, to send a strong message to the public: Those who attempt to flee from the police can expect to face the toughest penalties in Canada under the Highway Traffic Act.

I was very pleased to notice that my friends opposite agree with the intent of the legislation and I hope we can look forward to speedy passage of this bill. For too long, we have seen the senseless loss of life that can result when drivers try to escape from the police. This bill, if passed by members of this Legislature, will get tough with those who think they can flee from the police and endanger innocent lives in the process.

If passed by the Legislature, the amendments will make those who wilfully continue to escape from pursuing police liable to: driver's licence suspensions of five years, up from the present three years, for pursuits not involving death or bodily harm; in the case of bodily harm or death, court-ordered driver's licence suspensions of not less than 10 years and up to life, with the suspension to be consecutive to any other suspension; a minimum jail sentence of not less than 14 days and up to six months, in addition to penalties under section 216; and a fine from \$5,000 to \$25,000.

Those who commit the offence of failing to stop at the request or signal of a police officer will also face increased penalties. Fines will be doubled to the range of \$1,000 to \$10,000, and a regulatory change will increase the demerit point penalty to seven points, the highest number of points deducted for other serious offences under the Highway Traffic Act.

1410

We will be the first province to impose such severe penalties on those who flee from the police, just as we were among the leaders in developing suspect apprehension pursuits regulations. We are determined to stop the senseless waste of human life that all too often results when suspects flee the police.

I would also like to take this opportunity to call on the federal Liberal government to take action. We have done all we can under the Highway Traffic Act and now we need changes to the Criminal Code. The toughest penalties will come by way of prison sentences, and the federal Liberal government has the opportunity to finally listen to our police and our citizens. I might say that Rick's sister Marlene has been currently trying to lobby the federal government to really see that we need to toughen the penalties.

Just by way of a personal note, I did not have the privilege and honour of knowing Rick McDonald, but at the funeral when listening to the chaplain speak about

him and in speaking with his family, Rick McDonald was a man who was larger than life. He was a great community person. He was very much like many police officers who serve our communities, who protect our communities.

One story that I do remember from the funeral was that Rick McDonald happened to find out about a young boy who couldn't afford to buy a bike, and although he was a newlywed officer and I guess with all kinds of requirements for his own needs and his household, he went out of his way and bought this young boy a bicycle out of his own money because he felt it was the right thing to do. This was the type of person Sergeant Rick McDonald was.

I say to all of us in the House, let's work together to make our streets safe for everyone.

In conclusion, I say to both opposition parties, hopefully we can co-operate in the passage of this legislation as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I stand of course in support of this legislation and to commend the Solicitor General for living up to the commitment he gave Rick's wife, his family, the Sudbury Regional Police Service and myself on the day of Rick's funeral.

Unlike the Solicitor General, I knew Rick McDonald very well. Our relationship goes back an awful long time. I remember so very well the day, as a police commissioner in Sudbury, we hired this very tall individual who was happy-go-lucky and came from Chelmsford. On the evening we presented him to the police services board as another new officer for the Sudbury Regional Police Service, I commented to the board that they grow them tall in Chelmsford. Without hesitation and with the humour we all learned to appreciate, Rick McDonald simply said, "Commissioner Bartolucci, you should have grown up in Chelmsford instead of Gatchell." It's with this sense of humour and this genuine concern for his fellow persons that Rick McDonald approached his policing with dedication, with determination and with diligence.

Rick worked in various departments within the service, including the uniform division, the old clothes division and the criminal investigation division. At the time of his death, he had attained the rank of sergeant.

It is an understatement to say that he was highly respected by his peers, his supervisors and our community. I worked closely with him in his role as the president of the Sudbury Regional Police Association. It is ironic and sad today that just last year, during the police association lobby day, he and Officer Craig Moxam, who is in the gallery today, were in my office lobbying for the type of legislation the Solicitor General has introduced today.

Rick married his beautiful and devoted wife, Corinne, in 1995. Corinne, who is also a sergeant with the Sudbury force, is dedicated to ensuring that Rick's memory and policing is enhanced. The bond between them was special and it was based on unconditional love for each other. Corinne, Rick, Chief Alex McCauley and Deputy

Chief Cunningham worked closely with me on my private member's bill with regard to child prostitution. I considered Rick more than a policeman; I considered him to be a very good friend, and I speak for the entire Sudbury community when I say that he is greatly missed.

Rick is the second officer from the Sudbury force to die in the line of duty in just over six years. Joe MacDonald, Rick's very good friend, was fatally shot during a routine traffic check in 1993. Both of these tragedies have resulted in tougher legislation. But as legislators in this province we must all commit to being proactive in the protection of our police officers and the public they serve and protect.

Rick was taken from us while we slept in the early morning hours of July 28, 1999, but his family, Marlene and Danny, his very good friend, Joe Williams, and Officers Craig Moxam and Rob Thirkill must know that today his memory will never be taken away from us. In death, he is still making a tremendous contribution to the policing profession to which he was so devoted.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to issue to the Solicitor General our party's hand in saying, yes, we will support and, yes, we commit ourselves to ensure quick passage of the bill.

To the family, I would like to say, on behalf of the official opposition, thank you for the gift of Rick McDonald, thank you for the gift and the celebration of a dedicated life to the public service. Our sympathies are with you, and our prayers are with your family and with Rick.

In co-operation, we will ensure that the bill will be passed, and I want to say to you, Minister, that in the near future we would like to offer some suggestions about how we can improve and look forward to the next situation that we need to deal with in policing.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My colleague from Niagara Centre will speak to the details of the legislation that the minister has spoken about today and about policing matters in general.

For my part, I want to very briefly acknowledge the presence of the family members who are in the gallery today and the friends of Sergeant McDonald who are here as well. I also would like to acknowledge that Corinne is not here for very good reasons; we have no doubt about that. It must be very difficult for all of you to be here today, and so I want to acknowledge the courage of all of you.

I want to say that Rick McDonald was a very dedicated and committed police officer. He performed all his duties, regardless of what department they were in at the Sudbury Regional Police, with enormous pride.

On an early morning in July 1999, he was in the process of performing what he loved to do most, and that was to ensure and guarantee the safety of the public in our community. It was during this very duty, which he always committed to with much pride and energy, that he was killed when he was trying to place a spiked belt to stop a fleeing vehicle.

It is fitting that the contribution he made in our community and the contribution he made to the Sudbury police department was recognized by the Sudbury Police Services Board several weeks ago. There was an annual awards ceremony, and at that time an honour was posthumously bestowed upon Rick McDonald, and his family was there to accept it. I was tremendously proud that the police chief and the police services board made sure that that was done. It was very important.

This death was a tragic loss to the family, to his wife, to all of his colleagues in Sudbury, some of whom are here today, and to the province generally. I want to say to the family that over and above what my colleague will mention here today, I can guarantee that we will do whatever we can to ensure speedy passage of this bill to ensure that a tragedy like this never occurs again in this province.

1420

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): As Ms Martel indicated, I anticipate support of this legislation so it becomes enacted promptly. Having said that, Solicitor General, it remains that the vast majority of police officers in this province, especially as new recruits come on to forces, have never had any practical pursuit training. It's tragic every time a civilian or police officer is injured or, even more so, dies, in the course of a police pursuit.

Cops are inevitably damned if they do and damned if they don't. We put incredible pressures on police. We have incredibly high expectations of them, and we hold them to incredibly high standards. But more often than not, and increasingly so, we're not giving them the tools to do their job.

I already told you, Solicitor General, about a Niagara regional police officer who stopped me and showed me the spiked belt loaded in the trunk of his car but then explained that he hadn't even received adequate training to remove the belt from its case with all the Velcro and tabs and gadgetry.

Please address those issues as well. Please ensure that Aylmer and its facilities are accessible to police officers from every municipality and every region of this province. Please ensure that those programs are provided in such a way that increasingly limited police budgets don't prevent police officers from participating in those training programs. Please ensure that, yes, new technology continues to be investigated and utilized, but that police officers get the training they deserve before they're called upon to use it.

I put it to you that in the city of Toronto there's been significant concern that a community this size doesn't have a helicopter available to its police force. I tell you here and now that this government has a responsibility, because our cops have told us that a helicopter can and will be an effective tool in the city of Toronto. In fact, its proximity to so many neighbouring communities, from the Niagara region all the way out through Oshawa-Durham, would make it available to them too.

Do these things cost money? Of course they cost money. But what price do you put on police officers'

lives? What price do you put on innocent civilians' lives? If we want adequate, competent policing, we had better be prepared to invest in it. That should be the goal. And this government has reduced the level of investment in policing to an unprecedented level.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will members please join with me today in welcoming, in the east gallery, Alan Robinson, who was the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere in the 32nd Parliament.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, before question period: I believe that Mr Peters had asked, under section 37, to have an opportunity for what we call a late show with the Minister of Citizenship. I seek unanimous consent that that be postponed from this evening to next Tuesday evening.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Agreed.

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN CAMPAGNE DU RUBAN BLANC

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent for statements by all three parties on the White Ribbon Campaign this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Martin: This morning I was pleased to join close to 1,000 people attending a pancake breakfast held to launch the annual White Ribbon Campaign.

The White Ribbon Campaign was started in the aftermath of the horrible tragedy that we know as the Montreal massacre. On December 6, 1989, nearly 10 years ago, 14 young women were shot and killed at L'École polytechnique in Montreal.

That incident, terrible as it was, served as a wake-up call. Men across this country were forced to take a long, hard look at the issue of male violence against women. In ridding society of male violence against women, it was clear that men must shoulder the responsibility.

On the first anniversary of the Montreal tragedy, commemorative vigils were held across this country, and by and large those vigils were organized and attended by women. Certainly throughout history it has been women who have organized against male violence. Women have worked in their communities, facing enormous barriers, to fight violence against women. They have shouldered that burden, and built the shelters, women's centres and rape crisis centres from the grass roots. They have chosen to speak out and have refused to live in fear.

The founders of the White Ribbon Campaign were men who, reflecting on those vigils and on what happened in Montreal, began to ask themselves about what role men could play and what responsibility men should carry in respect to violence against women. The idea they came up with, which became the basis of a country-wide annual campaign, was this: When a man puts on a white ribbon, it speaks of his commitment not to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women, and it challenges and encourages other men to do the same.

Men need to make that personal commitment, and they need to speak out to other men. The simple act of putting on a white ribbon can be the first step. This morning, after the White Ribbon Campaign breakfast, Howard Hampton took a walk up Yonge Street. As he walked, he stopped to speak with men about the campaign. He talked to them about the importance of men taking responsibility and taking action to fight male violence against women.

We can each do our part. I only wish that this government would put aside their rhetoric and hot-button politics and show some leadership in this struggle, because the fact is that they have taken away the support that abused women so desperately need to build for themselves and their children new lives that are free from violence. They will not even meet with the shelter and second-stage housing workers who deal with these issues every day. Because of their cuts to shelter and second-stage housing programs, women and their children are being turned away. Because of their cuts, 50,000 women each year get a busy signal when they call the assaulted women's help line. It's a disgrace and an outrage. The government could learn something from the White Ribbon Campaign. Take responsibility; do something.

The White Ribbon Campaign recognizes that only when more and more men take up that challenge will we start to see the end of this terrible epidemic. That is what the White Ribbon Campaign is all about. Although it addresses something that is horrible and ugly, it is a campaign with a positive message. It speaks to the better part of all of us. It works from the premise that violence against women is not inevitable or natural. It works from the premise that men are not naturally violent, that most men in our society are non-violent and that men as well as women can work together to build a society where no woman need fear violence at the hands of a man.

I have been proud to wear a white ribbon today.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I rise today to make members of the House and the public aware of the White Ribbon Campaign, which represents men working to end men's violence against women. This campaign runs from November 25 to December 6.

I would also like to recognize November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This day, which is declared by the United Nations, is observed each year in dozens of countries around the world.

1430

The United Nations has stated clearly that violence against women is a human rights issue. The UN also makes it clear that violence against women in all its forms constitutes a breach of women's basic human rights. This International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women falls in the final week of Wife Assault Prevention Month in Ontario.

This government will not tolerate violence against women. Across Ontario, the government spends over \$100 million annually on programs and services to prevent and address violence against women. Since the release of the government's agenda for action, more than 40 new initiatives in the areas of safety, justice and prevention have helped to meet the needs of abused and assaulted women in Ontario.

The chief coroner said that he is pleased with the response in changes that have resulted from the jury's recommendations in response to the May-Iles inquest. This government has created Canada's most extensive domestic violence court system. We have also established the Office for Victims of Crime. This is the first of its kind in Canada.

Many improvements have been made to the way women are served in our communities. Service providers are working together, sharing information and coordinating their programs so that women can obtain the services they need, when they need them, close to home.

We here in this province are not alone in our efforts to address and eliminate violence against women. Our provincial government's annual awareness raising campaign and ongoing efforts to respond to the crimes of wife assault and sexual assault are just one spoke in the wheel of change that extends throughout this continent and around the world.

I ask, on this International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, that we not only consider women suffering violence within our own provincial and national borders, but that we reflect on the global plight of women who endure violence every day, in many forms, in many nations on earth. I ask that we include these women in our thoughts, discussions and actions on violence against women because violence against women is truly a crime against humanity.

M. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): Cet après-midi, c'est avec beaucoup d'émotions que j'assiste au lancement de la Campagne du ruban blanc.

Il s'agit d'une campagne pour hommes voués à mettre fin à la violence faite aux femmes par les hommes. Pour la deuxième fois au mois de novembre, l'Assemblée est appelée à reconnaître la tragédie de la violence faite aux femmes, c'est-à-dire la violence dirigée contre la moitié de l'espèce humaine.

Let me quote from the White Ribbon Campaign brochure on violence against women:

"If it were between countries, we'd call it a war. If it were a disease, we'd refer to it as an epidemic. If it were an oil spill, we'd call it a disaster. But it's happening to women, and it's just an everyday affair."

Nous percevons notre société comme étant une qui est juste et équitable où tous et toutes vivent dans le respect mutuel de l'un et de l'autre.

We think we have a society of tolerance. We think we live in a place that is known for its civilization and its compassion. But it's with some sadness that we're called upon with this ribbon to reflect that that isn't the reality for over half of the people in our society.

If we look at the statistics, we see that there are 77 women in Ontario who have died at the hands of their partner or their spouse since Arlene May died on March 8, 1996. Those women don't share a rosy view of our society. They can't. For them, that conception held most of the year is false.

In 1991, a handful of men in Ontario and Quebec decided they had a responsibility to urge men to speak out against violence against women. They chose this symbol for their opposition to men's violence against women and it's worn for the entire week, marking the anniversary of the December 6 massacre of 14 women at l'École polytechnique in Montreal. Since 1991, this campaign is the largest effort of its kind in the world. Those who started it and perpetuate it have to be congratulated for the initiative they have taken to end men's violence against women. I applaud what they have done and acknowledge their role.

I want to appeal specifically and particularly to the men of this assembly to respect this day both personally and, because we are the legislators of this province, in what we do in our professional lives. What this day is about is the fundamentals. It's about taking the time, spending a tiny bit of effort, a very small amount of effort, to isolate some of the root cause of the horrific violence that has been perpetuated against women, to stamp out the vestiges of support that still exist, that are still there, that still shape the attitudes of some of the perpetrators of the awful violence that leads to the necessity of this day. That's all this campaign is about. It's about causing people to think. The organizers believe that large-scale educational programs can work, and I would like to believe that we support that, that we will help in ways official and personal to condition the thinking that condones violence against women out of society.

The campaign supports governments that fund programs for the survivors of violence, such as shelters for battered women and the rape crisis centres. As the 10 members of the Liberal caucus who were at the breakfast this morning learned, that's where any profits derived by the White Ribbon Campaign go: to women's shelters. It is absolutely inconceivable that this province today is in a position of less support for women's shelters, that they have been cut in a way that sees two second-stage housing projects closed. I would like to infer not a partisan comment but a challenge to come to terms with that kind of development in this province on a day like this.

Saviez-vous qu'une agression sexuelle est perpétrée toutes les sept minutes au Canada et que 90 % des victimes sont des femmes? Nous vivons en état de crise et nous ne l'avouons même pas.

Half of our society runs the risk of being a victim of that elevated risk of violence. It is extremely important that this government take measures to ensure the safety of women in our society on the street, in their workplaces and in their homes.

I want to encourage the efforts of this campaign. I am made hopeful, I know my colleagues are also made hopeful, including the women in our caucus, about the possibilities, the prospects if all the fathers, nephews, brothers and spouses are able to take some time today to reflect on that particular responsibility—not blame but the responsibility—that the statistics, the style, the leftover style of our society should make us willing to accept, that disproportionate responsibility we have for the violence that women have had to undergo.

Every man in this Legislature has been offered a white ribbon. I want to urge you to wear it; I want to ask you in the spirit of what is intended here. This is not an ideology; this is just simple, fundamental respect and recognition of a job not yet done towards women. I hope you will participate in this campaign. I hope that all of us in this House will embrace the movement to end violence.

1440

Each year I take part in a vigil that's held at Women's College Hospital. I am one of a number who hold a candle for the victims of the Montreal massacre. As the candle burns down and the wax drips, I am caused, at least in that time, to think about what it must be like to not feel safe, to think about what it must be like to cross the street when a man you don't know is following, even at a distance, behind you, to think about what it must feel like to have been a part of some of these tragedies and families in situations like the Montreal massacre.

All the White Ribbon Campaign asks is for a similar amount of time on the part of every man in this province.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Citizenship, but first I'd like to thank those members who unanimously supported my resolution today, especially those on the government bench. But now to the action part.

In the gallery today is Dr Golbuka from the Ukraine. He practised 15 years, he even published. He has been in Canada for three years; he is unable to practise. Dr Martinez, a veterinarian, practised in Israel, practised in Europe; four years in Canada, unable to practise here. Ifad Karim, 18 years' experience, six years in Canada, unable to practise. There are hundreds more, all unable to practise here in Canada, and yet we have a crying shortage of doctors and veterinarians right across this province.

I'd like to ask this minister, when are you going to act? These people here today are asking for your help. What will you do to help them today?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to refer this question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): To the member opposite, who I think shares the commitment of the members in this House to assist immigrants in accessing their trades or professions, including the immigrants who are with us as professionals in the gallery today: In 1995, this government made the access to professions and trades project, which existed at the time, a permanent unit of government, reflecting our commitment to addressing the issue. Just recently, after working with so many giving us the best advice, we have sought proposals to create an academic credentials assessment service that will help newcomers to Ontario to quickly and fairly evaluate their foreign credentials. This service will set standards for recognizing foreign credentials and reduce the inconsistencies and disorganization that often faces skilled newcomers today.

Mr Ruprecht: I'm really surprised at that answer because Mike Harris, as Premier, promised swift action in 1995. The Minister of Citizenship at that time, Marilyn Mushinski, who is present here today, in December 1995 said, "One of the most significant barriers to equal opportunity is access, and we will act in 1996."

The next minister, Isabel Bassett, guess what she said? She said, "I'm pushing up to attempt to work even faster so we can make sure that citizens who have been trained elsewhere in the world have their skills recognized here."

Today, this minister says, "We're going to create an academic assessment service," that is now over five years old.

My question today is simply this: Does she realize what she's asking those professionals from other countries who come to Canada to do? They're driving cabs, delivering pizzas and doing all kinds of restaurant cleaning jobs. Minister, you realize what you're doing. We are now beyond an academic credentials service. We're looking in terms of a special—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Member's time.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We have been working for the last four years to improve what already existed when the other two parties were in government, to the point that we've asked Price Waterhouse for their best recommendations. I said that we are working in partnership with occupational regulatory bodies and outlining specifically what qualifications newcomers need to practise trades in Ontario.

There's a lot of excitement in the community. The criticism from the other side is unwarranted because many of them did not accomplish this during their term in office. The information that has been put together with regard to qualification is made available in visa offices

around the world and on the Internet. This helps immigrants prepare to work in Ontario before they even arrive in our country.

We also support merit-based evaluation of certain skills to ensure that competence is fairly and rigorously proven.

Mr Ruprecht: The Price Waterhouse report is now one year old and you still haven't acted. I want you to know that you have on your desk also the report on Access to Trades and Professions in Ontario which is 10 years old and you haven't acted.

My question is the following: Does the minister realize that this is not just a point of getting jobs and changing professions, it's a question of economic rights? It's a question of human rights. To simply come to this House and say, "We're looking at it and we're planning to do an academic credentials assessment service," is not good enough. These people are here. They want answers today. They're not here because they want you to do more studies. They don't want you to look at the Price Waterhouse report for another nine years.

The question is this: Will you stand today and make a promise to these people and to the rest of Ontarians and say, "Yes, I will not only produce an academic credentials assessment service but I will implement at least some of the recommendations of the Access to Trades and Professions report which is 10 years old"?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The fact that we're in this position today is that the former two governments didn't move on that report 10 years ago. We have moved. We are not just talking about principles; we are talking about action. It's not just principles, as your motion put forward this morning, this is about action.

I will tell you that we have sponsored several projects in the meantime, on the best advice we had, in partnership with the occupational regulatory colleges and those bodies, to improve prior learning assessment as well. This is action. The proposal is out to create an academic credentials assessment service. The groups and individuals who we work with, immigrants across this province, were at a conference here in Toronto just three weeks ago and they are absolutely thrilled with our careful, thoughtful, active program.

That's the way you have to do things. We are moving slowly but smartly to move on something that the former two governments totally ignored.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday at the Ontario Hospital Association she announced that she was going to implement the new funding formula for funding hospitals across Ontario. What we know is that last week the Provincial Auditor reported that you are not funding hospitals according to the patient needs in those hospitals. We also know, as confirmed by your own spokespeople from your ministry, that \$100 million is being removed from hospital budgets in this coming year.

My question to the minister is simple. We'd like to know which hospitals will be taking additional cuts in their budgets this year. We'd like to know how you are determining what that efficient formula is going to be, as you reported yesterday at the Ontario Hospital Association's meeting, where you said that hospitals from now on will be funded according to how efficient they are. Our question is: Will it be those with the lowest case costs? Will they be losing funding? Will they be gaining funding? How are you going to implement this new funding formula?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm extremely pleased that the member opposite has mentioned the remarks I made yesterday at the Ontario Hospital Association annual meeting. This is an annual event. I will tell you that the remarks were extremely well received by the hospital sector because I emphasized that our government appreciated the partnership we had enjoyed with hospitals in this province.

They have worked very collaboratively in recognizing that they need strengthening. We need to modernize our system. They appreciate the fact that our government has set aside about \$3.2 billion for the restructuring, and that is very consistent with the figures they had identified were needed.

This morning I was at the North York General Hospital and I was pleased that they are beginning construction on a new emergency wing which will double their capacity. They have recognized that our government wants to work with hospitals to strengthen them and respond to patient needs.

1450

Mrs Pupatello: Minister, what I'd like you to do is answer this question: What constitutes an efficient hospital versus an inefficient hospital, since that's how you are now going to determine your new funding model? We want to know, is it based on a financially efficient hospital, one that's run in the black, or is it the 50% of hospitals that are currently running in the red? Is it those hospitals that cancel operating time so as to be more efficient or is it the hospitals that have a lithotripter sitting in a crate, like the one in Ottawa, because you aren't providing operating dollars? Are those the efficiencies you're looking for in order to provide money to hospitals now? We need you to determine how you are saying what an efficient hospital is. Is it according to how much each case costs the hospital, so therefore the sooner they're thrown out of the hospital, the more efficient that hospital is? Please answer this question: What determines an efficient hospital versus an inefficient hospital?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again I would be very pleased to respond to the questions of the member opposite. My remarks yesterday regarding efficiency and the need to reinvest in our hospitals, as our government is doing—in fact, we'll be increasing funding this year by about \$400 million—were well received by the hospitals and the hospital association. In fact, David MacKinnon, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, is quoted in the Ottawa Citizen today, in response to my remarks

about the new funding formula, which recognizes the needs of people in this province: "I think the minister is right to say that everyone should be as efficient as possible."

Of course, when we look at the new funding formula, it's going to be based on the demographics. It's going to be based on growth. It's going to be based on the age and gender of our population. We're going to be putting in place, and we're working with the hospitals to ensure we have a good—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm sorry, the minister's time has gone.

Mrs Pupatello: You won't mind if we don't understand what the minister has said. The last time you made hospital announcements regarding emergency care, it took you one year, and the money was still sitting in your ministry. The Premier had to bail you out and do a tour with emergency cheques, if the minister remembers that.

This year you have hospitals currently running in the red. We don't know what an "efficient" hospital means. The Provincial Auditor says that you are now no longer going to look at readmission rates to see how efficient hospitals are. This Provincial Auditor says that your funding of hospitals is not meeting patient needs. That means people are having cancelled surgery for cancer; hospitals with operating rooms like the one right here in the GTA—four operating rooms, beautifully built, with no money to run them—a lithotripter in a crate because you're not giving them operating dollars. You may make fine announcements but I doubt that the hospitals will believe you until they see the money arrive at their door-stop.

I am asking you again, what do you call an efficient hospital?

Hon Mrs Witmer: If the member opposite would care to check all of the information and try to ensure that it is factually as it should be, she would soon see that our government is the only government that has made more money available for health. As she knows, her federal cousins have taken away about \$2.6 billion in funding for health services.

Mrs Pupatello: Half of your hospitals are in debt.

The Speaker: Would the minister take her seat. Member for Windsor West, please. Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm pleased that the member opposite is going to be in Ottawa this week because, as you probably know, the federal government took away \$2.6 billion from the province of Ontario. They have only restored \$900 million, and at the present time they are only funding our health system at 11%, which is 11 cents on every dollar. Our province, our taxpayers are paying 89% of health costs.

The Speaker: The minister's time. New question, the leader of the third party.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Attorney General. Yesterday you tried

to deny that you were slapping a user fee, a tax, on women and children who have to utilize the Family Responsibility Office to collect child-support payments. Then you went outside of this chamber and tried to make excuses for that tax, that user fee, on women and children who are already struggling. This morning, you changed your story again.

Minister, this situation is a disgrace. It is wrong, it is unfair and it's mean-spirited to go after those women and children. Will you reverse your decision?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As the member opposite knows, if he has had an opportunity to check his facts in the last 24 hours or so, all the fees being proposed would be paid by the payors and not by those persons who are entitled to payments, who usually are women and children. He would know that and should, I suggest, be cautious about suggesting otherwise, because it is a serious issue and does cause worry to families in Ontario that are entitled to those payments.

There is one exception, and that is the proposed \$25 fee to obtain a written statement, which would be levied if it were requested by a payee. But there is an alternative in place for that. The individual can call, use the automated system and get a balance. If they need detailed information, they can speak to one of the persons who work at the Family Responsibility Office.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Minister, you had better check your facts. Because the facts are that women will have to pay a \$25 fee when they need a schedule A to prove to Revenue Canada how much support they received last year. They have to pay \$25 for a schedule A to see if the FRO is making cost-of-living adjustments when they're supposed to. Then they'll have to pay a \$100 fee to the FRO to make the COLA adjustment to the court order. They'll have to pay another \$100 for FRO staff to adjust support payments when a new court order is filed. They'll have to pay another \$100 to adjust their support payments to receive money owed to them from the time that a judge orders payments to be made in court to the time when the FRO finally registers that order, which is usually a delay of two to three months.

In every, single one of these cases, which happens every day, day in, day out at the FRO, you're going to force women and children to pay new fees and taxes for a responsibility that your government has to deliver these services.

Minister, why are you so intent on pushing these women and children into even deeper poverty?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Everything the honourable member opposite just said is wrong, with the exception of the \$25 fee that I've already described. I don't believe the honourable member makes the decisions with respect to policy at the Family Responsibility Office. I can assure the members of this House that in the fact sheet, which we have distributed to the members of this House, we have accurately set out precisely those fees that are proposed to be levied.

All the taxpayers of Ontario are paying for the services of the Family Responsibility Office. We want to improve those services. The phones are being answered more quickly now than they were before. More calls are being taken: 2,100 calls were answered in October, which is 20% more than two years ago. The phones are being answered more quickly than before. Record amounts of money are being collected for the women and children of Ontario families. That's what is important. That's the issue.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): And record arrears have been accumulating in the three years since you've dismantled the eight regional offices, and thousands and thousands more women and their kids are not getting even the support payments that are being paid into the office because of your mismanagement, your negligence, your incompetence and your disdain for the women and children of this province.

You have imposed new user fees, new taxes, on some of the poorest people in our province: women who are compelled to obtain hard copy schedule As for any number of reasons. There is absolutely no justification for this unfair and unjust imposition of new costs, new taxes on the people who can least afford it. Stand up today and tell us now that your policy of user fees, new taxes for women and kids receiving support payments is going to be terminated here and now.

1500

Hon Mr Flaherty: Once again, I think it's important for those families in Ontario entitled to these benefits to know that what the honourable member is stating is inaccurate. The only new fee with respect to payees is that \$25 fee for a written statement. That information is obtainable from FRO for free, without charge, by telephone.

I think the honourable member obviously would want us to have an enforcement fee for those payors who refuse to pay after being asked to pay, where extraordinary efforts have to be taken. I think the taxpayers of Ontario would not expect that they would have to bear the cost of those extraordinary enforcement efforts. There will be a fee in that regard of \$400 payable by those who are shirking their family obligations.

IMPAIRED DRIVERS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Solicitor General. You made some tough announcements today regarding penalties for drivers who flee police in chases. But you're not so tough on drunk drivers and other people who drive repeatedly while their licence is under suspension, because, you see, section 11, schedule R, of your red tape bill lets you reduce the period that the cars of people who are driving repeatedly while under suspension are impounded. What you've done is made it easier on people who repeatedly drive under suspension while their licence has been revoked by virtue of the Highway Traffic Act. You've gotten real

soft on suspended drivers, drunk drivers. Was it the fact that you were merely asleep at the switch or are you really giving a gift at Christmastime to drunk drivers here in the province of Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): First of all, our province has the toughest rules on impaired driving in the country. We have penalties that call for life suspensions of drivers' licences after your third offence. You have a suspension after a second offence. We have tough penalties. We strongly believe in the fight against drunk driving. We have already doubled the funding for the RIDE program in this province from 1995, up to \$1.2 million currently.

This morning I was at the launch of the festive RIDE program, at which we had a number of the police chiefs across the GTA and also all the advocates in this area, clearly on side in our fight against drunk driving. The province was applauded by almost everyone in terms of the tough measures that we've brought in to make sure that drunk drivers are penalized by way of losing their licences in Ontario, and the fines.

Mr Kormos: Solicitor General, I'd suggest that you please read section 11, schedule R, of your red tape bill. Right now, if you drive while your licence is suspended, your car can be impounded for 45 days, the second time around it's impounded for 90 days and the third time around for 180 days. That's the law as it stands. But your amendment in your red tape bill lets you wipe out the 90- and 180-day impoundments and lets these drivers get away with a mere 45 days, no matter how many times they've been caught driving under suspension. You claim to be serious about road safety? Is this an early Christmas present to drunk drivers? Tell us that section 11, schedule R, is going to be repealed.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: When I tell you that we have the toughest penalties against drunk drivers in the country, we do. We're talking about suspensions of licences. We want to get these people off the street. And when we can call for a lifetime ban against somebody driving in this province, I think it is a very serious thing. We also continue to fund, as I said before, the RIDE program, where we work with police officers to make sure that people who drive while they're impaired are not only given licence suspensions but also have to pay in jail time. It is important for us to get people off the street, because no amount, not one case of drunk driving, is acceptable to this government.

FOOD BANKS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday in the Legislature, the member for Brampton Centre introduced a bill called the Food Bank Accountability Act. The introduction of this bill was a lazy and insulting attack on all food banks across this province. Food banks were not consulted prior to the introduction of this bill. I remind you that food banks receive no funding whatsoever from this government, and they provide a valuable service.

This bill will force this government to bring in inspectors to go after food banks and their operations. It provides for \$25,000 fines and jail terms. It's a disgusting, disgraceful attack on food banks across this province. It is an attack on the volunteers, on the people who donate and on the staff.

On the behalf of your government, do you believe in the intent of this bill and, if not, will you ask your member to withdraw it?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the member is referring to a private member's bill, and I think every member in this House respects the right of a member to bring forward a private member's bill.

Mr Agostino: I found it amazing that the minister, representing the Premier today, did not take this opportunity to move his government away from this bill. Clearly, the timing of this is horrible, it is disgraceful. As we approach Christmas and difficult times for food banks, this member of your government decides to attack food banks in a sleazy manner. I'm asking you again—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): —a point of order.

The member for Hamilton East.

Mr Agostino: It is a sleazy, dirty attack on food banks.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

I ask the member to withdraw the word "sleazy," please.

Mr Agostino: I withdraw.

Clearly—

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): Does the member withdraw his entire comments?

The Speaker: I asked him to withdraw.

The member for Hamilton East.

Mr Agostino: Again, Acting Premier, you have an opportunity here. You can either stand by this bill, which implicates your government into supporting this bill and what is there, or you can, on behalf of your government, distance yourself from this bill. As I said earlier, as we approach Christmas, food banks need our help. They don't need to be kicked in the head. They don't need to be beaten up. This is a difficult time for them. What your government and your member have done is, in my view, disgraceful. You're talk about bringing police in, you're talking about charging food banks. We're not talking here about a few operators who are not food bank operators but basically rip-off artists. We're talking about food banks who do a service and provide service—

The Speaker: The member's time is up. It was well over a minute, I'm sorry.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'll be a little lenient this time, but I won't in the future. Very quickly, please.

Mr Agostino: Again, to the Acting Premier, will you, on behalf of your government, apologise to the food bank operators, volunteers, staff and users across this province for the introduction of this bill?

Hon Mr Hodgson: If the position of the member opposite or the Liberal Party is that they want to do away with the right of members to introduce private members' bills, he should talk to his House leader and propose that. Maybe he can bring in his own private member's bill to do away with the rights of members in this Legislative Assembly.

What I think is important to note is that he will have an opportunity to debate it and hear what the member has to say. It will be fully debated in this Legislature.

If the member is talking about what this government's record is, it's a record of growth, a record of jobs; it's trying to make sure that we have an investment climate in this province where people will create jobs and help everyone in society to create their own opportunities and live happy lives. It has improved this province. That's our record, and that's why it contrasts so much with the Liberal record.

1510

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is to the minister responsible for children. We've all been hearing reports lately in the news media about the state of child poverty in our country and particularly in Ontario. For example, the statistics I heard yesterday regarding the Campaign 2000 national report card seem grossly exaggerated. I've received numerous phone calls from my constituents in Scarborough Southwest regarding this issue. I'd like to ask the minister to clarify our government's response to these reports and the statistics upon which they're based.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank this member very much for this question. I really have been waiting for this question all week from the opposition, as a matter of fact. It's a very important question, and by their attendance this afternoon in the House I guess they're not interested in question period at all.

I've been reading these reports, and they have been very disturbing. Any child living in poverty is a serious concern for our government, but these kinds of exaggerated statistics distort reality and do a grave disservice to all children and families across this country. Many studies and reports on child poverty, including Campaign 2000's national report card, use the Statistics Canada low-income cut-off, LICO, to measure child poverty.

Statistics Canada itself insists that LICOs are not intended to be a poverty line. The United Nations also refused this measure of child poverty, and in its recent report it indicates 6% of Canadians are living in poverty, the second-lowest level among major industrial nations and one third the rate that the LICO measure would suggest.

Maryanne Webber, who is director of income statistics at Statistics Canada, says there is no—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Supplementary.

Mr Newman: As a supplementary to the same minister, obviously we're all concerned about child poverty. In my very own riding of Scarborough Southwest, there's one example where unfortunately some children live in poverty. I believe that having one child in poverty in this province is one too many. Minister, can you tell me what specific measures our government is taking to reduce child poverty across our province?

Hon Mrs Marland: This government takes all forms of poverty seriously, including child poverty. We believe that the best way of improving the lives of these children is to improve the lives of their parents and families by creating an environment where they can have jobs and be financially independent. Since Mike Harris took office in 1995, well over half a million net new jobs have been created in Ontario and more than 451,000 people have ended their dependence on the welfare system, and that number includes 190,000 children.

We are moving forward and taking action, but there is still more work to be done, and our commitment to these children is clear: We have an Ontario child care supplement for working families that helps 350,000 children.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Marland: But finally, what I would like to say, over the heckling of the Liberal members, is that we must all—

The Speaker: Order. The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale come to order, please. The minister's time is almost up.

Hon Mrs Marland: What we must all remember is that this is not about numbers, it's about real children. The Mike Harris government is—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. Order. New question.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): In the absence of the Minister of Health, I'll ask my question of the Minister of Northern Development.

Minister, I met last Saturday morning in my constituency office with representatives of the Kidney Foundation. They came to talk about the concerns of people from northwestern Ontario communities who have to leave their homes for dialysis and kidney transplants. If someone from my community needs to have a kidney transplant, it can cost them over \$9,000 for the patient cost and the cost of a companion donor. Then they pay again for the follow-up visits that are needed. The northern health travel grant pays a maximum of \$420 to offset these costs. The Kidney Foundation can help a very little bit with patients most financially in need, and ironically they tend to be people on government social assistance.

Minister, I ask whether you think it is fair and right that someone from my northern community who needs to have a kidney transplant should have to pay \$9,000 to get one. If you do not think that's fair or right, will you join with me in urging the Minister of Health to review the

northern health travel grant and ensure there is equitable access to health care for people in this province?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I had the opportunity, as members of this House may be aware, to serve with Minister Witmer as her parliamentary assistant in the period 1997 to 1999 and have been very pleased with the opportunity to work with Minister Witmer and to know of her commitment to increasing access to health care services throughout Ontario and, importantly as well, into northern Ontario.

The expansion of kidney dialysis services across the province is a goal that has had a great deal of gains, and we'll continue to support the provision of access to services across the province. Important too, the strategy of putting emphasis on improving access to services in the north makes a great deal of sense. To allow people to have access to care closer to home in the hospitals, whether it be in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie or small towns across northern Ontario, is the goal, and it's a goal that I'll support. I'll keep working with Minister Witmer and as well through my ministry and the heritage fund to support access to primary care and other types of health care in northern Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: If this Minister of Northern Development supports the right to equitable access to health care in northern Ontario, he's got some work to do, because in every single letter that I have had from the Minister of Health and to every single letter that my colleagues have written on their constituents' behalf, the answer back has been, "This government has no intention of changing the northern health travel grant." It is time for the Minister of Northern Development to look at this. It's not just that the grant is inadequate, it's the fact that it's administered in a way that makes people beg for the little bit of help they're going to get.

I want to provide just one example. A constituent of mine, Mr George Delmo, was referred to Dr Guzman of Winnipeg for the repair of an aneurysm. Dr Guzman is on the Ministry of Health referral list, but Mr Delmo's application for that minimal northern health travel grant has been denied because the surgeon who actually did the surgery on referral from Dr Guzman is not on your government's list. He's a fully qualified vascular surgeon, he's recognized by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba, but because he doesn't make your list he's denied the money.

Minister, if you believe that northerners should have equal access to health care, will you make the case to the Minister of Health to review the cases of Mr Delmo and to review the arbitrary rules and restrictions on the northern health travel grant?

Hon Mr Hudak: I'm very pleased at all times to continue to work with Minister Witmer to bring the views that I have heard from northerners to her desk on approving access to health care in northern Ontario and throughout the other parts of the province. In fact, over 100,000 applications for the northern Ontario health travel grant were approved in 1998 and 1999.

I thought I'd point out as well to this House that the mechanics for applying for the travel grant are the same under this government as they were under the previous Liberal and NDP governments. I think that's an important point to bring up. They had their chance in power to change that grant. They didn't make that change and are calling for that change now.

In terms of the work that has been done supporting the minister's work from the heritage fund, I was in Thunder Bay not too long ago for the improvements in the Northern Academic Health Sciences Network, which links up the Thunder Bay and Sudbury hospitals with about 30 other health care clinics across northern Ontario to help bring better care, to help eliminate that isolation that doctors can often feel in northern Ontario, and to ensure that diagnoses and such are improved. That's just one of many commitments in addition to the \$70,000 recently announced for—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. New question.

MAYOR OF TORONTO

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, I've been reading with great interest recent media coverage surrounding Mayor Lastman's latest crusade, I guess we could call it, entitled Operation Save Toronto.

Apparently the mayor believes that the people of Toronto would be better served if the city were to secede from the rest of the province of Ontario.

Minister, as the Minister of Labour and also of course as a member from Toronto, you must have some serious concerns, as do I, about what impact such secession would have on all of the good, hard-working people of Toronto. I wonder if you could explain to us what implications such secession would have on job security in Ontario.

1520

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you very much for the question. It's difficult to actually consider exactly what is driving Mr Lastman on this particular issue. Being a resident of the city of Toronto, I understand the benefits etc of belonging to the province of Ontario. Asking me to get inside the mayor's head and explain what his rationale is for providing this kind of fodder for the media, it makes little, if any, sense in my opinion.

Obviously, we know full well that if he is going to pursue this particular agenda, it's going to cost the taxpayers of Toronto money. I think before he goes around spending money on legal fees—

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): How is this a labour issue?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I hear the member for Oakwood bellowing over there. I presume he supports this secessionist action. I'm not sure why he would. I remember when the member was a secessionist for the city of York, as a matter of fact, so that doesn't surprise me too much.

I think when we analyze the situation, we know the benefits of being in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that illustrious and versatile response. According to today's Toronto Star article, the city's latest—

Interjections.

Ms Mushinski: Obviously the Liberals over there, since there are only eight of them in the House, don't consider this to be a particularly important issue, but it's certainly of importance to constituents in my riding of Scarborough Centre.

The mayor claims that the secession would allow Toronto to actually reduce its taxes considerably. My interest is in preserving and protecting job security and taxes. Could you elaborate on how you believe secession will actually accomplish that goal?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First, there is an argument with respect to the issue of the city of Toronto receiving or taking benefits from the province of Ontario, and who benefits from whose association—northern, eastern, western parts of this province. I think together we are a far better province than we would be individually. Each of us has opportunities to bring something to the table that benefits everybody in Ontario.

I think before Mr Lastman continues on this bit of tilting at windmills, maybe he would want to consult his own council, because I'm not so sure his own council would support such folly. I'm fairly certain the people of the city of Toronto would probably not support such folly either. In fact, he started musings about the GTA. I had an opportunity to speak to some of mayors locally, including the mayor of Mississauga and a couple of chairmen. They were never consulted on this tack that he was choosing to take.

The flat out fact is that Toronto is benefiting from being in Ontario. There are a lot of benefits. There are costs that we incur. I think rather than wasting taxpayers' money on this kind of stuff, he should spend more time working on bettering his position, balancing his budget and dealing with—

The Speaker: Order. The member's time is up.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Housing. You would know that today the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp issued a report that's long been awaited, the rent market survey that we get every year. You would know, as the Minister of Housing—because I'm sure you read it, as I did—that we're seeing vacancies going down across Ontario. In other words, we have lower vacancy rates in communities like Hamilton, Toronto and others, but what's more interesting is that rent increases are more than double what is allowed under your rent control legislation.

It's a simple question: Would you now admit that your vacancy decontrol legislation is not working, as it's

allowing increases way over what you're allowing under your legislation?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It's quite the opposite. Indeed, as the honourable member well knows, the province-wide cap is 2.6%, which is the lowest in 25 years. But because of some vestiges that were left over from NDP and Liberal legislation, there are some landlords who get an addition to that cap. We've been trying to phase that out as quickly as possible but unfortunately there are some rights that still reside with the landlords in this area that you don't want to take away, because there will be a charter challenge or what have you. We've been trying to get away from the NDP legislation as quickly as possible, but some things take a little bit longer. I apologize for that.

Mr Bisson: Minister, that's the nicest tongue-in-cheek answer I've seen in this House in a long time. That's a good joke; that was funny; we all had a good laugh. But the reality is that it's your government, under the previous term, that allowed vacancy decontrol. Under the NDP, you would know, there was an actual fixed cap that rents were able to go up every year. Why do we know? Because that was the norm. But quite frankly your caucus, when you were in opposition as the third party, railed at the fact that the NDP actually put in place real rent controls that put on real caps.

Under the vacancy decontrol system that you now have, when somebody moves out of an apartment a landlord can boost the rent to whatever he or she desires. That's why we're seeing rents go above what your supposed cap is. Minister, will you at least admit that your system doesn't work and it's a sop to landlords to allow them to increase rents to the point that renters can't afford?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member made a reference to "real rent control." If real rent control means a complete lack of affordable housing being created by the marketplace in our society, I'm against that kind of rent control. If real rent control means that people who are coming to our province looking for jobs, looking for prosperity, looking for opportunity, don't have an adequate housing supply, I'm against that NDP policy. So maybe we're on the same side; I don't know. All I know is that the system, when we got here, was broken. We're fixing it as quickly as we can. Five years of wrong policies by his government and another five years of wrong policies by the previous government take a little bit of time to fix, but we're doing it as quickly as we can. Maybe with the honourable member's help we could do it even more quickly.

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Today the Federation of Ontario Naturalists has asked that the Premier give responsibility for protecting the Oak Ridges moraine over to the Minister of Natural

Resources. If I can quote from their press release, they say:

"...Municipal Affairs Minister Tony Clement won't do the job...."

"Clement's claim that voluntary guidelines are working is contradicted by the facts. Municipalities, conservation groups and moraine landowners all want tighter controls on development. Clement just doesn't get it."

Minister, yesterday I told you about water being permanently in peril because of unbridled development. We're about to lose 70,000 hectares of good farmland because of unbridled development. Now the Federation of Ontario Naturalists is saying you won't do the job. Will you do the right thing and give over the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine to a ministry that might protect the moraine and its precious resources?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Our goal is a long-term solution. The honourable member's caucus obviously did not believe in that. That's not his fault in particular, but at the time they did not act except to approve the official plan. Our goal is to preserve the environmental integrity of the moraine. That's our goal. Our goal is to preserve the groundwater and the aquifers so that they will not be denuded, they will not be depleted. That's our goal. That's why we've changed the policies we inherited, to ensure that the permit-to-take-water system has strict rules in place so that every single drop of water that is applied to be taken out of the moraine or out of the aquifer or out of the groundwater supplies has to be scientifically proven to be replenishable before my government will act to approve that kind of permit. That's our policy; that's our commitment. I stand by those commitments. I'm willing to work with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and all the other groups to make sure the environmental and ecological integrity is preserved for our generation and for future generations as well. That's my commitment.

Mr Colle: As the Federation of Ontario Naturalists says, you don't get it. It's your unwillingness to stop all this development that's going to imperil the water supply. There are 55,000 people about to go on the moraine. As we speak, there are 14 developments that will split the moraine in half in Richmond Hill if you don't do anything. Your own report says that urban expansion and the associated expansions of sewer and water create a real possibility that the potential to obtain clean water will be permanently lost. Naturalists are saying you're not doing the job. Naturalists are saying you're not doing the job. The agricultural community is saying you're not doing the job. The 200 delegates to the clean water summit said "unbridled development." They have asked for a freeze on development. You have said no to all of them. All you're saying yes to are the developers.

Do the right thing. Step aside. Give over protection of the moraine to the minister next to you. Do the right thing. Give it up. Let someone else do the job.

1530

Hon Mr Clement: Again, our goal is to protect the environmental integrity of the moraine. That remains our

goal and has always been our goal. That is the goal that we are pursuing. We're pursuing it a lot more aggressively than your government did when they were in power. That's the fact. That was recognized.

Let's take a little bit of time to look at your plan for the moraine, because I did review your plan: quick fix; doesn't solve any of the problems; publicity stunt. That's why I rejected your plan. I defend that. I would say that if you want a plan that is for the long-term protection of the moraine, your plan is just not up to the job.

IMMIGRANT TRAINING

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): My question is directed to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. It concerns the whole issue of access and training for newcomers to this country and particularly to Ontario.

When you look at the problems faced by newcomers in this country and the immigration mess that has been created for newcomers by the federal government, could you tell us what type of specific Ontario government initiatives and services have helped to improve access and quality of training to newcomers in this province in contrast to the federal government's lackadaisical approach on the whole issue of immigration and training?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): With respect to the question from my colleague from Etobicoke North, I know that I've already stated in this House today the commitment of this government to assisting immigrants in accessing their trade or profession where they really are qualified and totally committed to doing the job. I personally feel it has been the inadequacies of the former two governments, which didn't moved quickly in this regard.

In 1995, this government made the access to professions and trades project a permanent unit of the government, reflecting our commitment to addressing this issue. Through a number of actions from 1995 to 1999, over that period of time—and I say "action." I'm not talking here about anything but action. We've now sought proposals. We're reviewing those proposals to create an academic credentials assessment service that will help newcomers to Ontario by quickly and fairly evaluating—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr Hastings: At least we're moving in the right direction in terms of helping newcomers to integrate into this society, to make a fully effective economic contribution to this province.

Not only is it that, but it's an issue of training. I'd like to know from the minister, where is our government going in terms of trying to help these newcomers in terms of access and training so they can get the good jobs in this kind of economy, in contrast to the federal government's perpetual foot-dragging on the whole training and access issue? That's what I would like to know.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The member from Etobicoke is absolutely correct. My parliamentary assistant, the

member from Thornhill, spoke eloquently in the House this morning. She actually felt that she could not support the motion from the other side because it was only about principles and not action. It was all about talk. It was all about what the government has gone far beyond accomplishing—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Take your seat. Minister.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I really think there must be something going on. If the Liberal members want to make a contribution in this area, they can do exactly what the member from Etobicoke North has decided.

We don't have a training agreement. As we speak, many newcomers to Canada do not have access to training. We are the only province without a training agreement. We need our fair share. We give the federal government \$8 billion in EI money; they give us back \$4 billion for training and wage replacement. That is unfair. We're standing up for those new immigrants—

The Speaker: Order. Would the minister take her seat. I'm sorry, the minister's time is up.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. I want to ask you about the situation of the children that you've abandoned in this province, special-needs children. On your watch you've allowed people across the province—in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Thunder Bay, Windsor, Ottawa, in boards all over the province, in Hamilton, in Windsor, there are children like the Youmans child who have had their assistance to be educated cut. They've had their educational opportunity taken away from them because of your cuts in special education.

Minister, you've stood in this House and tried to say you've given them more money, but the superintendents, the supervisors running the boards all across the province have agreed it's because you've taken money away that these children are abandoned. You are at fault. You are responsible for these children not getting an education in this province. Will you agree today that you will act and restore the funding that they need?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I don't know how many times the member wants to ask this question. He asked it about 16 times yesterday in estimates, and my answer to him yesterday at estimates was the same answer as it was several times before in the Legislature.

First of all, we have not cut special-education funding. The supervisory officers did not claim that. Secondly, we increased special-education funding in this province last year and this year. Thirdly, we instituted a new policy for delivering that money that was recommended to us by boards and experts in the field. Finally, it is the boards which are making the decisions about the supports out there for those students, as he well knows.

I have also said to the honourable member repeatedly that we understand, we recognize, we accept the views from parents and the boards that we need to work together to fix challenges that are facing us in making this money, the more money, the new policy, work better, and we have undertaken to do that.

Mr Kennedy: This minister has been sitting in that chair since the summertime and has not responded at all to the needs of the boards across the province, the needs of the children across the province. The boards have told this minister that \$106 million was effectively cut from their budgets. In fact, I have here their report that says exactly that.

Minister, in your own riding in Durham, 23% less money was made available by your ministry than they used to spend under the old funding formula. In addition, there are children who are being forced to stay at home, directly as a result of what you're doing.

If you like—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Government members, please come to order. Member.

Mr Kennedy: There are members across laughing. Each of their ridings, every single one—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member take his seat. Stop the clock.

Order. Minister of Labour, come to order, please. The member for Kitchener Centre, come to order, please.

Start the clock. Member.

Mr Kennedy: The laughter of the members opposite is just a clue to the attitude that leaves 68 out of 72 boards having less money. In other words, virtually every one of these members' boards has less money than they require for special-needs students.

We are now three months into the education year. I want to ask this minister: She's busy cutting money from education; will she pledge to resolve this situation before Christmas? Will she make sure that special-needs children, like the Youmans child, who have lost 50% of their support, will get the support they need? Will you make that undertaking today?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I find it highly offensive what the honourable member would claim, that somehow or other members on this side of the House do not appreciate, do not understand and do not respect the challenges that families are facing out there—highly offensive.

1540

Secondly, the supervisory officers have made a statement about what they believe they are spending in addition to our special education funding—not that there is less spending because, as I have said very clearly, there is an increase in funding. We based our numbers on what the boards told us they were spending. So if they now claim that what they told us is wrong, they should perhaps say that.

Finally, the reason the Durham Board of Education is not spending as much on special education this year as they did last year—by their own admission at public meetings with parents, which I was at, not the member—

was because they increased the compensation package for their teachers. That's their claim.

We have given the boards more money because we knew they needed it for special education.

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. I'm sorry.

Applause.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, the time for oral questions is over.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to be recorded as standing to be recognized prior to the end of question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. I've heard the point of order. I'm sorry, the clapping continued and took the member's time. It was unfortunate. I'm sorry.

PETITIONS

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Henley rowing course in St Catharines is an outstanding rowing facility which has for several decades been the site of hundreds of international rowing competitions;

"Whereas the World Rowing Championship has been held in St Catharines in 1970 and 1999 and has been declared an outstanding success on both occasions;

"Whereas the municipal, provincial and federal governments, along with generous private donors, invested several million dollars in the upgrading of the Henley rowing course to enable the 1999 World Rowing Championship to be held in St Catharines and that as a result the Henley is a first-class rowing facility;

"Whereas the organizing committee of the World Rowing Championship, the annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta and other prestigious regattas, has the proven expertise to operate major, international rowing competitions;

"Whereas all taxpayers in Ontario will be compelled to contribute to any financial assistance provided by the Ontario government for the Olympic bid for the city of Toronto;

"Whereas the creation of a new rowing facility outside of St Catharines for the Toronto Olympic bid would result in the unnecessary expenditure of millions of dollars to duplicate the St Catharines rowing facility;

"Whereas the rowing facility for several Olympic Games has been located outside the sponsoring and host city;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to persuade the Toronto Olympic bid committee to pro-

pose the Henley rowing course in St Catharines as a site of the rowing competition for the 2008 Olympic Games."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition, which I think is in order.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, I guess I am not being recognized to ask a question.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it does follow the new protocol where the table clears petitions so that they are in order. So it is in order, and I am presenting it on behalf of the member for Leeds-Grenville, who happens to be my member.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas eight-year-old child Kayla Welch is deaf;

"Whereas North Edwardsburg Public School (NEPS), Kayla's school, has no presence of a principal for child discipline;

"Whereas at NEPS allocation of a vice-principal is six hours per week;

"Whereas Kayla was completely ostracized at NEPS because of her disability due to schoolyard bullies whose behaviour went unchecked for at least months; and

"Whereas an effort was made by the Upper Canada school board to rectify this problem; however, it remains unresolved because the board is having difficulty staffing principals in small rural schools under 300 students because of the funding formula for administrative staff allocation, ie, 2.75 principals per 1,000 students;

"Whereas Kayla receives only one hour per week of a teacher of the deaf;

"Whereas Kayla is entitled to a minimum of 1.5 hours per day under ISA funding;

"Whereas the board did not apply for ISA funding on behalf of Kayla for 1998-99;

"Whereas the board is freezing ISA funding at this year's level; therefore Kayla can't get funding for the next school year even if the board does apply;

"Whereas the board is unable to provide sufficient services for the deaf in small rural schools because of the province's spending formula requiring clustered services for deaf children;

"Whereas the board is having difficulty hiring teachers of the deaf because the province cut out the Sir James Whitney training program for teachers of the deaf three years ago;

"Whereas the Ministry of Education and Training claims that they have no mandate to ensure a safe school placement for school children;

"Whereas Thomas Welch and Jane Scharf have had to withdraw their daughter Kayla from school to protect her emotionally and physically;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to act in the interest of the deaf child Kayla Welch to ensure her schoolyard safety, and as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray."

It's a very long petition. Thank you for giving me permission to read it.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas early in September of 1995 there occurred a series of events involving the Premier of Ontario and members of his government, the Ontario Provincial Police and demonstrators representing members of the First Nations at Ipperwash Provincial Park;

“Whereas the events led to the death of Dudley George, one of the First Nations demonstrators;

“Whereas these events have raised concerns among all parties in the Legislature and many Ontarians;

“Whereas there has been introduced in the House a piece of legislation known as the Truth About Ipperwash Act;

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

“In order that there is an answer to concerns of the Legislature and Ontarians regarding the events at Ipperwash, the members of the Legislative Assembly vote in favour of the Truth About Ipperwash Act.”

I affix my signature to that.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: During question period the Minister of Labour, in response to a question from the member for Scarborough Centre, I believe quoted from a document; I think he said the analysis done on the separation of Toronto into a separate province. I wonder if you could have that analysis tabled for the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will know that the rules are if a member quotes from it extensively. I did not hear him quoting from that extensively, so it is not a point of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Mr Runciman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to reduce red tape, to promote good government through better management of Ministries and agencies and to improve customer service by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting four new Acts / Projet de loi 11, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives, à promouvoir un bon gouvernement par une meilleure gestion des ministères et organismes et à améliorer le service à la clientèle en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant quatre nouvelles lois.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I believe we have unanimous consent to split this afternoon's time among the three parties. I don't hear any disagreement with that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is that agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Runciman: The Red Tape Commission defines red tape as any government procedure, policy or customer service that gets in the way of doing business and creating jobs. It's not only about regulation and legislation, it's also about licences, permits, approvals, standards and registration. It's about filing and certification requirements, guidelines, procedures, paperwork and enforcement practices.

1550

Each piece of red tape may be small and, by itself, may have little impact, but when there are dozens, or even hundreds, of such requirements, sometimes unnecessary or of very limited value, they can form a huge impediment to business in this province. It costs business time and money and it can seriously delay the launching of new products and services. Clearly, there's no place in a modern economy, in Ontario or anywhere else, for red tape.

This government has achieved considerable success in the battle against red tape.

Previous red tape reduction bills have, for example, made changes to allow mutual insurance corporations to hold annual shareholders meetings within the first three months rather than the first two months of every calendar year.

We've amended the Liquor Licence Act to eliminate unnecessary delays in granting of a liquor sales licence while maintaining regulatory control.

We've made changes to the Theatres Act to get films and videos into circulation faster.

We've removed a list of prescribed investments for trust funds and instead introduced a prudent trustee standard allowing more flexibility to invest funds and maximize income for beneficiaries.

Cuts in red tape have also benefited the consumer by streamlining government services and requirements. For example, the Corporations Act has been amended to allow not-for-profit corporations other than charitable corporations to dispense with an annual audit if annual income is less than \$10,000 and all their members consent in writing. Not-for-profit corporations can include, for example, hockey and bowling leagues and community centres.

The Loan Brokers Act was amended to strengthen the legislation to deal with unscrupulous loan brokers.

The bill before you today is the latest government attack on red tape. If passed, it would make more than 200 amendments to acts in more than a dozen different ministries.

At the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, it would amend the Consumer Protection Act to improve the cost of credit disclosure information. This would allow consumers to compare the costs of leasing versus borrowing when looking for a new car or truck. The Consumer Protection Act would also be amended to expand consumers' rights when buying products or services from a door-to-door salesperson. This includes

extending the cooling off period to 10 days from two days.

Also at the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Registry Act would be amended to allow consumers to register notarial copies of documents made from microfiche. Currently, only original documents can be registered. Consumers would be able to provide a funeral director's certificate or a notarial copy of a death certificate issued by a doctor when registering a will. Currently, only a death certificate issued by a doctor is accepted.

Other ministries have similarly important proposals in the bill before you today. I'm sure my colleagues will be happy to answer any questions relating to their responsibilities, but I'd like to mention just a few.

At the Ministry of Agriculture, repeal of the Artificial Insemination of Livestock Act would promote development of a more competitive business climate. It would remove barriers that have discouraged existing companies from expanding and prevented new companies from entering the business. Livestock producers would benefit from a greater choice of service providers and products at competitive prices.

At the Ministry of the Attorney General, amendments to the Statutory Powers Procedure Act would streamline the hearings process. These amendments would also provide agencies, boards and tribunals with alternative ways to resolve issues that come before them.

At the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, amendments to the Archives Act would correct translation errors in the French language version of the act.

At the Ministry of Community and Social Services, administrative amendments to the Day Nurseries Act and Ontario Works Act of 1997 would clarify the responsibility of municipalities entering agreements with those delivering services.

At the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the Technology Centres Act, the Ontario Telephone Development Corporation Act and the Massey-Ferguson Limited Act of 1981 would be repealed. These acts have not been used in at least a decade and have no current relevance.

At the Ministry of Finance, the Ontario Financial Services Commission amendments would, among other things, allow the financial services industry to provide better consumer protection and customer service. They would also make credit requirements consistent with those of other Ontario ministries and other jurisdictions.

At the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, amendments to the Ambulance Act would be made to reflect the recommendations of the Land Ambulance Transition Task Force. One of my colleagues will be speaking more at length to that particular issue.

At the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, amending the Building Code Act, 1992, would provide the minister with the authority to give province-wide effect to decisions of the Building Code Commission.

This would reduce the need for applicants to make repeat applications on matters that have already been reviewed.

At the Ministry of Natural Resources, amendments to the Fish Inspection Act would toughen fines and lengthen the maximum jail term for offenders.

At the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, amendments to the Mining Act would include removing the requirement to use red ink when filing a mining claim. These amendments would also eliminate the burdensome requirements of using prescribed forms—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent to have all the questions for question period next week given to the government members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I don't think that's a point of order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Runciman: I'm looking forward to next week.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Hold it. On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask that the last unanimous consent be withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker: Unanimous consent be withdrawn? Agreed.

See how much power you have, member from St Catharines. You just walk in and the whole thing changes.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Are you looking for more speakers?

Hon Mr Runciman: Look what you tried to do.

I was speaking about amendments to the Mining Act under the red tape legislation.

These amendments will also eliminate the burdensome requirement of using prescribed forms or registered mail for filing or sending certain documents.

At the Ministry of the Solicitor General, amendments to the Emergency Powers Act, 1993, would ensure there is clear authority for communities to formulate and implement emergency plans in the face of an impending emergency. Having gone through the ice storm, I know how important this particular amendment will be.

At the Ministry of Transportation, an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act would allow Ontario to join the international registration plan, integrating Ontario's commercial vehicle registration program with that used by US states. This would ease the movement of Ontario registered trucks and buses across North America.

At the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the number of members of the Ontario Educational Communications Authority could be fewer than the 13 members now required. Also, the Lieutenant Governor in Council could appoint a person other than the chair of the authority as the chief executive officer of the authority.

At Management Board Secretariat, amending the Official Notices Publication Act would enable the Queen's Printer for Ontario to publish notices and information in the Ontario Gazette in addition to what is re-

quired by law. Management Board Secretariat is also proposing a merger of the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario Casino Corp. This would continue the sharing of knowledge and expertise to deliver regulated, responsible and responsive lotteries and gaming in Ontario. At Management Board Secretariat, the Public Service Act would be amended to establish the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

Much has been accomplished in the fight against red tape, but the battle is not over. Much more needs to be done, and this government is committed to continuing this work. This is an important bill, and I urge all members to support it.

1600

Mr O'Toole: It's my pleasure to follow the minister with respect to this important and long overdue piece of legislation. It certainly takes strong leadership to make difficult decisions, and that is really what has been missing in Ontario for some time.

I start with our commitment as far back as 1995. At that time, the Premier and his cabinet clearly empowered a group that involved Frank Sheehan, the member from Lincoln at that time; Marcel Beaubien; Jim Brown; Jack Carroll; Barb Fisher; Gary Fox; John Hastings; Tim Hudak; myself, John O'Toole from Durham, for the record; Joe Spina and Gary Stewart.

I know how hard those members worked, without one cent of additional cost to this government, and how hard they listened. In January 1997, they produced a report which outlined a number of important recommendations for this government and this cabinet to pursue. I can assure you that, under the careful stewardship of our capable House leader and the cabinet, we are doing exactly that. I could go through a number of the recommendations, and in the time allocated to me this afternoon I intend to do that.

It could be commented that this is a war on red tape, and it's vital to the prosperity of the province. It's vital because red tape is so pervasive that has a stranglehold on business, and that will be the primary focus of my remarks. Of course, I'll be sharing them with Mr Newman shortly, for those who are watching, perhaps Dan's father, Victor.

Red tape prevents business from fuelling the economy, providing people with much-needed jobs. The esteemed Fraser Institute, a well-known think-tank, estimated that government rules and regulations cost the Canadian economy \$85 billion in 1993-94. Imagine: These barriers are costing every Canadian household \$12,000. In a recent review I did, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that three of every 10 firms spent more than six hours on government paperwork. Clearly, that's a burden on small business. A government that listens and acts, responds.

Almost two of 10 CFIB businesses spent 10 hours or more a week. That amounts to an average of 7% of operating costs. That's another tax. Red tape and regulations are taxes. They're a burden. Can you imagine: In some cases, some businesses spend as much as 40% of their

time filling out forms and conforming to certain unnecessary duplications of bureaucratic waste.

The Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, led by David Lindsay, in a Globe and Mail article talked about "untangling the knots that strangle business." Clearly, their final report has been well embraced in the business community not just in Ontario; it's being shared with all Canadians.

An article published on November 23, 1998, states:

"As the recession of the 1980s eased and businesses began to grow again, many obstacles remained in the way of expansion and prosperity." Those obstacles are what this legislation is all about.

"By the mid-1990s, the government of Ontario had determined that one of the biggest was the Gordian knot of government red tape that was strangling plans for businesses to expand.

"So, as part of the Common Sense Revolution, the government established the Red Tape Commission to eliminate red tape barriers to investment."

The article went on to say: "For example, a recent study by the Canadian Chemical Producers Association found that a one-day delay in getting government legislation for a construction project could cost a company as much as \$140,000." That's just one day, because of delays of licensing and other permits.

"The study estimates that the industry's cost of doing business in Ontario is increased by \$50 million a year to meet environmental and labour requirements that do not improve" or demonstrate improvement in "environmental or health protection." Needless duplication.

"These costs have helped limit Ontario's share of the estimated \$55 billion the chemical industry is spending in North America to less than 1%."

Clearly there were labour legislation initiatives by the last government that helped, and work with the union leadership as well, to find a solution in that industry. That's a responsibility of government, to listen.

The burden of red tape is an onerous one indeed. The government recognizes the dead weight of unnecessary rules and regulations. Government is determined to lighten the load. The problem of red tape is not unique to this province. Red tape is common in many countries in the form of regulations to fulfill promises, respond to crises and to protect its citizens, so they say. But the weight of the legislative and regulatory requirements in Ontario and Canada in the last 20 years has indeed been demonstrated to be a burden. This burden discourages economic growth and development, which is why the government launched a war, a rage on red tape in 1995, and I can assure you it continues to this day.

A great deal has been accomplished. For example, 11 red tape reduction bills have already been passed, 28 acts repealed and 149 other acts amended. If you can imagine the work that has gone into it just to this point. The job is clearly not done.

More than 13,000 redundant and outdated regulations have been revoked. Requirements for film projectionists, for instance, to train for more than 800 hours were

repealed. Imagine that, in this age of computers, press a button—800 hours of training because of regulation. Other governments perhaps would have looked at increasing them, by having further kinds of barriers. This is more than is required for a helicopter operator. My son is a helicopter operator, and I'm sure that if he had 800 hours of training, he'd be qualified to operate a projector.

Time spent registering a new business, for instance, is another initiative by the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. That has been reduced to 20 minutes from what was six weeks. Now that's responsiveness, and I think we should just dwell on that. Imagine, by streamlining and eliminating wasteful barriers, we've taken a six-week registration down to 20 minutes.

Mr Bradley: For what?

Mr O'Toole: Registering a small business. That's why we have over 600,000 net new jobs. I know it comes as a surprise to many that these were in fact barriers to jobs for people—for students, for young people, your family and mine—by slowing down the little store with the pizza oven that needed some regulation, some inspector to visit. Every week that they weren't operating was loss of investment. The list goes on. How it stops and the cost per hour are just not acceptable.

The hospitality industry can use credit cards now to purchase liquor, which has given them far more working capital, and with more working capital they can make more investments in their business, creating more jobs. Clearly, regulations effect job creation. This government knows, and it stands on its record. The greatly improved cash flow that resulted from this decision by the ministry reduces the capital outlay required. It's a very important economic stimulus, well accepted by the hospitality industry—the province's biggest employer, I might add—especially for young people entering the workforce for the first time. Creating jobs for youth is a strategic challenge at the federal level and at the provincial level. This is one small regulation change allowing the use of credit cards, freeing up working capital to create jobs—one small, effective decision made by this government which looks at the details and acts.

A quote from the *Globe and Mail* article earlier referred to the use of credit cards by licensees. It responds to the comments of one licensee who spent a minimum of \$8,000 a month at LCBO outlets. He said that the use of credit cards had tremendously improved his company's cash flow and he was looking to expand his business and create jobs. That's right from the *Globe and Mail*, the grey paper.

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The licensee was quoted as saying that this was good for business: "We're looking to grow in the future and having the increased cash flow will help us manage, plan and expand."

More examples: the elimination of more than 1,000 unnecessary annual licences, permits and reports in farm and food processing businesses; repealing the Sheep and Wool Marketing Act, which has not been used since 1985, when the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency was

established—we are sunseting regulations so that they have a regular review; amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act to reduce regulatory costs and make utilities boost productivity; 11 forestry-related acts reduced to five; repealing outdated legislation to simplify and enhance forest protection.

Significant as these accomplishments are, I'm sure the Red Tape Commission would like to remind members that cutting red tape is only one of its roles. Its mandate is twofold: not only to work with the minister and cabinet, but to devise ways to prevent more red tape from being created in the future. Government does not want to continue pumping new rules and regulations to the detriment of business and indeed the public and the consumer.

A regulatory impact test, through which all new regulations must pass, will be put in place. This will ensure the tentacles of red tape do not grow faster than they are being cut.

The legislation being introduced today by our minister, Mr Runciman, will build on the successes. As I said earlier, cutting red tape is vital to the future of this very province. It is important, and I urge all members to support the bill. Give it your full support. You're talking about our collective futures and the economy of this province.

I want to take this opportunity to officially thank everyone associated with the Red Tape Commission, both outside and inside government. They're too numerous to mention on this occasion, but special thanks are due to our new commissioner, co-chair Bob Wood, the member from London West; Frank Sheehan, the former member from Lincoln; and the many people in various industries who have devoted time and energy to help the commission do its work. They have helped to identify problem areas and make the job of cutting red tape so productive and worthy.

There are also examples in a number of other areas where the Red Tape Commission is looking at the micro-level issues that affect small business. I have a couple that have come to my attention that I'd like to share with the House before I share my time with Mr Newman: for instance, allowing the restocking of mini-bars in our hotel rooms 24 hours a day; developing a user-friendly information package for employers in understanding pay equity; working with other provinces towards establishing common submissions of requirements for the pharmaceutical industry and for economic information; removing requirements for minimum room sizes in buildings except where requirements are necessary for health and safety reasons.

I'm confident that the work that continues to be done by the Red Tape Commission will help to create jobs, hope and opportunity for everyone in this province. I look forward to unanimous support of this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Can I share the time? So there are no two minutes?

I would like to offer my insights into this piece of legislation.

Hon Mr Runciman: My understanding is that we would use our block of time.

The Acting Speaker: OK. The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): It's my pleasure to speak this afternoon on Bill 11, The Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999. It is certainly a very important piece of legislation.

The Red Tape Reduction Act contains changes which affect 12 separate ministries within Ontario. Legislation contained in this act will affect the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; the Ministry of the Attorney General; the Ministry of Community and Social Services; the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade; the Ministry of Finance; Management Board Secretariat; the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; the Ministry of Natural Resources; the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines; the Ministry of the Solicitor General; the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; the Ministry of Transportation; and of course the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

As a result, this rather large piece of legislation is 225 pages in length. I'd like to speak about a very important element of this bill, and that is schedule J, which deals with land ambulance. It's located on pages 129 to 146 of the bill.

I want to take a moment to inform members on both sides of the House of some of the things that have been going on within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Some time ago, the ministry and the Red Tape Review Commission set up the Land Ambulance Task Force. The purpose of the task force was to review and recommend a framework for the ambulance system in our province. The task force was well represented. It had representation from operator groups, municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, base hospitals, ambulance dispatch, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and other ministries as well. Through these working relationships, the task force has been able to bring forward many recommendations that we are confident will help us maintain a patient-focused, high-quality ambulance system that is accessible, accountable and responsive. That is our goal: to have an accessible, accountable and responsive ambulance service in our province.

A number of very important amendments to the Ambulance Act are proposed in this legislation. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, it is my pleasure to outline these changes to members here today in the Legislative Assembly.

The first amendment will change the current licensing scheme to a certification scheme. Bill 11, the new legislation we're debating here this afternoon, will introduce a new, competency-based certification scheme for ambulance service operators and replace the current licensing scheme. So we're going from a licensing scheme to a certification scheme in our province. This proposed scheme means Ontario will see a quality-based process that requires periodic recertification. This means we can

now confirm the competency of operators who will provide ambulance service to the people of Ontario. The details of the certification process will be spelled out via regulations. I can assure the members of this Legislature that the process will be quality based and designed to assure everyone that ambulance operators are willing and able to comply with those standards well before being allowed to operate an ambulance service. It is my firm belief that this change from a licensing system to a periodic recertification process will contribute to the excellence of ambulance services for Ontarians.

Another amendment contained in this legislation will empower the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish an advisory council to advise the minister on ambulance service matters. This advisory council will serve as a forum where ministry, municipal and other stakeholders can meet and discuss any issues related to land ambulance. This council would also provide advice to the minister to ensure that the continued high quality of service to the public is upheld. The public both expects and deserves this.

Let me say today that our experience with the Land Ambulance Task Force has proven this government's commitment to listening. I am intensely proud of the work that the task force has been able to produce and, as a testament to our willingness to listen in the first place, it allows me to stand up and explain these legislative changes to you today.

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The third amendment contained in this bill will broaden the existing prohibition against the charging of fees and copayments. Let me reiterate for the members that the government of Ontario announced in March its commitment to share land ambulance costs with municipalities. As well, the government also introduced legislation extending the deadline for the final transfer of responsibility to our municipal partners.

I'm proud to serve as the co-chair of the land ambulance implementation steering committee. I'm pleased to serve in that capacity along with two other co-chairs: one of them my colleague in the House, Brian Coburn, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; and also the municipal representative, Roger Anderson, the chair of Durham region.

The steering committee's task is to ensure a smooth transition to municipal jurisdiction. There are several people who also sit on that committee, and I just want to name a few of them here today for the record. In addition to Roger Anderson and Brian Coburn, whom I mentioned, there is Jim Green, who is the commissioner of planning and economic development for the district municipality of Muskoka; there is Dan Ciona, the chief administrative officer for the county of Brant; there is John Cunnane, the director of the public safety division of the public health department of the region of Niagara; there is Joseph Moore, the general manager of ambulance and emergency programs for the region of Peel; and there's Marvin Caplan, a regional councillor with the city

of Hamilton. These are some of the people who serve on this committee.

As municipalities assume responsibility for providing land ambulance service, it is essential that this vital part of Ontario's health system remain universally accessible to all. As we all know, the Ambulance Act prohibits charging a fee or copayment in connection with transporting a person by ambulance unless that fee is permitted under the Ambulance Act or the Health Insurance Act. Under the legislation being debated today, fees and copayments will not be allowed even when that person isn't being moved in an ambulance. This will prevent any municipality or delivery agent from independently instituting user fees that may limit or prevent universal access to ambulance service.

I'm pleased and honoured to speak to the House today regarding this very important bill, the Red Tape Reduction Act, Bill 11. The purpose of the ambulance sections contained in this bill is to ensure that the people of Ontario have access to this very essential service. It will ensure public health and safety and the financial and economic well-being of the province and the municipalities. I'm pleased to support this bill, and I would urge every member of this House to do the same.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'm certainly glad to join in this discussion regarding the Red Tape Reduction Act. I think the member for Scarborough Southwest and the member for Durham have certainly elucidated in some detail the significant benefits that are coming out of these red tape reduction bills, whether it be Bill 11 or some of the previous bills this government presented. I think it's most important to remind us that "red tape" sounds rather abstract. What difference does it make whether it takes a small business person or a professional or anybody who is attempting to access an apprenticeship training program, what does it matter whether it's a number of months, days, weeks, years? That used to be the attitude of previous regimes in Ontario. They were oriented and had a love for what you'd call "process."

Interjections.

Mr Hastings: Results? No, not too important. As the member for Scarborough Southwest has reiterated and the member for Victoria-Brock-Durham has reminded us, think of some of the examples of how the idea, the abstraction of red tape translates into practical benefits for small business people.

If you take the hospitality industry, in my riding of Etobicoke North this particular removal of the requirement from the Liquor Control Board of Ontario that you couldn't purchase any type of alcoholic beverage without the actual cheque or money order. Can you imagine? In an Internet age, in an age in which we are interconnected in the sense of telecommunications, in the sense of the whole computer industry, until the last year and a half, if you were a hotelier, if you were a restaurateur, you couldn't go and buy stuff that you required for your industry. You couldn't use a credit card. You couldn't buy alcohol or booze—

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Booze, booze. Just say the words.

Mr Hastings: Are you satisfied, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence?

Interjection.

Mr Hastings: Tell it like it is, because I know the member across the way wouldn't give a hoot whether we'd stayed like that for the next century.

The significant benefit here is that when an operator like that, a small business person—

Interjection.

Mr Hastings: I know the member for St Catharines finds it totally irrelevant, because he's never had to operate a business. He doesn't understand at all the precious capital it takes to get a small business going.

What is the advantage of that? When you can use a credit card for buying equipment or, in this case, alcoholic consumption stuff, you can use that money for other things you need in your business for an extended period of time, because most businesses function this way.

It doesn't mean we're advocating that a business go into debt. It's simply a means of facilitating making business more effective. It also allows you, if you're a small business operator in the hospitality field, to hire perhaps one more person you need for your peak times in the hotel industry. I have a whole set of them out on the airport strip, and back in the last 10 years if you talked to the people from the hotel industry, the general managers, the people who worked in the industry, hotel-room utilization back then was down to under 50%, yet our commercial property taxes at that point in time were killing these companies. We're not just talking about hotels that are owned by chains; we're talking about the mom-and-pop operations, and there are lots of them around this city of Toronto, in the greater Toronto region and across southern and northern Ontario.

The removal of that requirement has facilitated and made things a lot easier for these people to operate in this particularly competitive field.

Another particular advantage of red tape reduction—I was involved with the Red Tape Commission. You look at the chemical industry, and I know the member for St Catharines has a quiet disdain, probably, for this industry, but if you look around you, practically anything you wear, the leather in this assembly, the books I see on the ministers' desks, probably has some kind of plastic involved in the containment of that particular item.

What the chemical producers were able to document in the last number of years is that it would take a huge amount of investment to get a new facility going. But guess what? The member for St Catharines' beloved environment ministry back in those days had a unique classification for the use of certain chemicals. I know that when he gets to speak on this we'll hear very strong denunciations of how irresponsible the chemical industry is and that I'm probably some kind of a fob for them. But when you really look at it, they employ a significant number of people. If you look at the number of chemical

facilities around this area, you have to have very astute, very knowledge-based individuals to deal with emergencies in the way they handle these particular, some of them hazardous, chemicals. There are some very strict requirements environmentally that they have to adhere to.

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The industry told us they're not afraid of obeying those particular restrictions. It's the ones in which you classify certain materials such as—the one I recall with great fascination is the inert material of an aggregate whose chemical name eludes me right now. It was classified under the James Bradley, member for St Catharines, environment ministry that you couldn't move any of this material from one place to another. I know he is a strong advocate of the contrast of what we said in this government, that is, to retain the red tape status quo. For example, I'm sure he wouldn't be in favour of the kiosk we set up for business registration in this province, because he prefers that you run around to every different spot getting your licence requirement. That's the way it should function.

I'll be interested to hear the member from St Catharines speak about this bill and how the federal government hasn't moved ahead in terms of reducing red tape. What they've done is institutionalized it and made it even slower to get things done.

The prime example involves a tremendously adverse impact in terms of newcomers to this great country. If you could see the sadness, the deep disappointment, almost what I would call betrayal by the federal government in the way in which the Ministry of Immigration handles newcomers to this country. It takes years and years to get an issue settled in terms of family settlement. It would be interesting to know if he would advocate the continuation of that kind of approach that's almost stultifyingly, maddeningly, leisurely, lackadaisically indifferent to the very people who want to bring their families and get them unified here in Ontario, so they can get on with creating a really good quality of life, so they can qualify for the jobs that are in this booming economy. They can't do it because of some of the misinformation that I have personally seen provided by immigration counsellors at embassies abroad.

Who was it who had to come up with accurate information as to the labour market in Ontario today? The provinces, not the federal government. They are telling people—I just had a gentleman in my office two Fridays ago who was told literally, "When you land in this country with an engineering degree, you will have a job within 60 days." They're still telling these people those kinds of inaccuracies. It's terribly misleading in the sense of being backdated.

It isn't the reality. You have to have the equivalencies today. When you look at the requirements from the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario, it takes quite a while. But here we have a federal government that's telling people: "You're going to be a doctor," "You're going to be a lawyer," "You're going to be a nurse," "You're going to be a technologist," automati-

cally, in no time. Well, that's not the reality at all. That's why they're ending up in some of the jobs they weren't trained for and why they aren't producing the income they require for their family.

That's why this provincial government has moved ahead with these red tape reduction bills which are so essential. It will be interesting to hear from the members opposite what their alternatives would be if the status quo is such a fulfilling entity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's my pleasure to rise on Bill 11. I certainly want to give my appreciation to the staff in the minister's office and all the members who worked on putting together this bill. I know the intricate, complex work it involves. Even though we're on the other side of the House, we acknowledge the fact that this did take a lot of cooperation and work on the part of the government and the stakeholders. I certainly want to put that on the record before starting.

I would just like to make a number of comments about the bill. It is a very extensive bill because it changes so many acts. Therefore, it is quite intricate. There are a few errors I'd like to comment on, but I'm not going to comment on them all in my short time.

I don't want to get into talking about federal responsibilities. The problem in this House lately seems to be that many of the members on the opposite side keep on spending their time trying to prop up their Reform brothers in Ottawa. I guess they're not doing a good enough job of holding the Chrétien government to account, so they feel they have to pick up the slack here. I'd like to stick to provincial issues and the provincial mandate. There are very serious provincial mandates here that Bill 11 deals with.

The elimination and regulation of red tape is something we all applaud and we certainly require, because there's nothing more frustrating for private citizens or people in enterprises who have a great deal of difficulty making a living because of government bureaucracy and red tape. I know the member for Etobicoke North mentioned the item that people who own liquor establishments can now use credit cards. I think that's a good idea because today, who really does business in cash? I know in the past that's what the LCBO required.

The context too is very interesting. A lot of these old, antiquated regulations which this bill is trying to change and which some of the members criticized, were actually a by-product of orange Ontario, the old blue Ontario that ruled this province. When one of the members was speaking, it brought to mind the just-deceased mayor of Toronto, Allan Lamport, who had to battle all the powers that be when he was mayor to allow youngsters to play baseball on Sunday. The blue laws, we called them. Those were laws not put in by New Democrats or Liberals. Most of those laws which prohibited sports on Sundays—you couldn't even go to a movie on Sunday—were put in by Conservative governments. That was what

Ontario was like 30 or 40 years ago. So it's not something that we've put in; it's something that old or Conservative governments put in. It was a by-product of the traditions of Ontario.

The same with the liquor laws, which this updates in part, because of some of the purchasing requirements.

Those restrictions at the LCBO were put on, again, usually by Conservative governments, so when they stand up and criticize regulations and traditions, they're criticizing themselves. I just want to put that in that context, because certainly as Allan Lamport knew, Ontario is a changing province, a dynamic province that you had to change. Sometimes you have to make changes to make it more effective, more efficient and more representative of the people who live and work here. I hope the government respects that.

Some of the specific things that I wanted to raise here that this bill deals with are in the area of leasing. I know there are some changes and attempts by the minister to make some changes in leasing contracts. As you know, over 40% of all automobiles that people drive in this province are a result of a leasing contract. I think it's something that the government certainly is going in the right direction on, trying to make it more understandable, more accountable, more transparent in terms of what you're actually paying for when you lease the car. But I really don't think it's gone far enough, and I'll tell you where I really don't think it's gone far enough.

There still is too much interpretation of the leasing contract in terms of what residual values are of automobiles. What that really means is the wholesale price. You lease a car, you make your payments, and at the end you can either buy the car outright or you can continue to lease and there's a price flip. That's still very vague for the average consumer. Certainly some people are more attuned to values, but they really have no idea what these values are in a leasing contract.

The other thing in leasing contracts or the way leasing works in this province is that the whole advertising mechanism for leasing vehicles is very misleading. They're what I call the fine print ads and I think they should be outlawed. Basically you'll see a thing that says, "You can lease a new Cadillac for \$299 a month," but then when you read the fine print, the \$299 a month ends up being about \$600 a month because they forget to tell you that there is a \$10,000 down payment—they do tell you, but in very small print, that the \$299 does not include the down payment, the GST, the PST, all the other added-on charges. By the time you get out of that deal, you pick up the car that in the newspaper ad said was \$299, you're all of a sudden stuck with twice that.

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That's why I think fine-print leasing ads, which are in every newspaper in every city in this province, should be eliminated. Give us the whole price. If that out-the-door price is \$699, put the \$699 in there. Don't mislead people by saying, "This is the price." It is nowhere near the price, in most cases. That's one of the inclusions that could have been in this bill when they dealt with leasing.

Also, in terms of door-to-door sales: Door-to-door sales are still very problematic. I had a case in my riding this past year where an elderly woman who wanted some repairs done to her home ended up paying over \$125,000 for minor repairs. That has basically depleted her whole bank account. It wasn't until after the fact that she went to the police and the police apprehended the two individuals.

The problem was that these two individuals, who said they were bona fide renovators, had no licences and had no need to give any resumé's. As you know, seniors are sometimes caught up in the hype of door-to-door sales, and this poor woman was. She ended up basically out of pocket for \$125,000 and all they did was repair a back shed.

Door-to-door sales and taking advantage of vulnerable people is still taking place. I would hope we would have more restrictions on people who go door to door to offer not only products, but things like renovations. There is a lot of room and I think there should be more awareness. Maybe the minister can put out more information in terms of "Buyer beware." If that person is going to offer repairs to your home or your apartment, you should check references and you shouldn't sign any contract or you shouldn't have any work done until you see the completed contract and have someone verify that the contract is a valid one. A lot of seniors have no one to help them. They're on their own and they're being taken as we speak.

The other thing that's happening in consumer affairs—and I've written to the minister about this; I know he made mention of this part of direct sales—is the telephone sales that are taking place. We know that in almost every province, including Ontario, there are companies that are misleading people by telephone promotions.

First of all they mail these scratch and win cards. I don't know if you got one at your door, but thousands of these are mailed out. It says, "If you scratch this and win, phone this 1-900 number and find out what your prize is." When you do it, what happens in every case—in fact, I'm going to scratch this right now. It says, "Win up to \$5,000." I bet there is a king and four aces here. Let me bet. OK, I'm scratching it: a king and four aces. All these cards make you a winner. Then what happens? The trick is, they then ask you to phone the 1-900 number. They don't tell you that while you're on the phone it's \$3.99 a minute. There's a recording at the other end; by the time the recording is completed and they tell you that you'll win basically a bag of jelly beans, six minutes have gone by. So you've essentially been duped out of \$24 because you thought you were a winner when this came to your door.

This is happening all over the province. This is one type that is taking place. I know that Project Phonebusters—I've talked to them—at the OPP are trying to do their best. This type of telephone, door-to-door type of sales is duping all kinds of unsuspecting Ontarians. I've written to the minister asking him to outlaw this type of thing, because it's misleading. This company was operat-

ing out of Kitchener, right here in Ontario. We couldn't get hold of anybody. They wouldn't answer the phone. I've brought it to the OPP's attention. You can imagine how much money you could make by sending out hundreds of thousands of these; at \$24 a shot every time someone phones, the money that is made on these misleading things. I'm just warning everybody out there, if you get any scratch cards in the mail, do not phone, because you'll pay for that phone call. It could cost you a lot more than that prize.

This type of thing should be outlawed by the minister, and I hope he can work and produce an amendment to his legislation that will outlaw this type of solicitation on the phone.

I'm glad of the cooling-off period. I think that's a good part of this legislation. It's been increased to 10 days. It was two days. Someone comes door to door; they're selling you a vacuum cleaner; they're in there and they're vacuuming that carpet like you've never seen before; they're having coffee with you; they're schmoozing you. In many cases, it's unsuspecting seniors again and they end up buying a vacuum cleaner. Then when their husband or their partner comes home, the partner goes, "Well, why did you pay \$600 for this vacuum cleaner?"

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Six hundred? Twelve hundred.

Mr Colle: The member from Welland-Thorold says some people pay up to \$1,200 for these vacuum cleaners and you can get the same vacuum cleaner, or a better one, down on the corner at the local hardware store for \$200. The only trouble is, the purchaser is too embarrassed sometimes to admit they've been duped by this door-to-door salesperson. So I like the idea of the 10-day cooling-off period. It gives them time.

I think, though, that these aggressive, door-to-door sales are still taking place. I've got complaints from the small town of Wardsville, near London in Lambton county, where they were saying they had a super-aggressive salesman going to every door in Wardsville with this vacuum cleaner again and preying on people in that rural community. Literally, he wouldn't leave the house until they signed the contract. To get rid of the person, they were almost signing this contract for this huge amount to get this vacuum cleaner.

I hope the minister will continue to monitor those complaints, and I would hope that this type of aggressive door-to-door sales of products is monitored. It's not something we should outlaw, but we should outlaw the bad door-to-door sales techniques that basically take advantage of people who can't afford to pay \$1,200, as they're paying in Welland-Thorold, for vacuum cleaners door to door. At least in this bill there is a move towards giving people more time to have second thoughts, the 10-day cooling-off period.

There is a very important section about ambulances. As you know, the ambulance services have been downloaded to the upper tier, regional government for the most part, county government, so they're going to have a

have a huge responsibility on their shoulders. A lot of the details in the legislation on ambulances and the regulation of ambulances at the municipal level is now basically the jurisdiction of the municipalities. I just ask people out there to monitor it, because now you don't have province-wide jurisdiction. Therefore, we've got to be very careful that we don't have an ad hoc approach in terms of the level of service or the quality of service that you get in your ambulance and critical, obviously life-and-death, services. They're so important.

I would hope that the minister, again, ensures that the province, in this transition of responsibility to municipalities, will be ready to step in if some of these services are not delivered properly to the people of Ontario, because now you just can't rely totally on the province for ambulance services; you have to rely on your local municipality.

1650

This is one of many critical parts of a bill which a lot of people say is just a regulation bill and so forth. There are so many parts of this legislation that affect not only businesses but ordinary people right across Ontario.

The minister has had stakeholder meetings etc, but I would hope that the public is aware that in these 220-odd pages of the bill there is something for everybody. Hopefully most of them are improvements, but it's something that should be monitored because, as government makes changes, we are all affected by them downstream, no doubt about it.

The only concern I have about the ambulance section is in terms of the concept of downloading that service, which is a health service. Certainly in our party we don't feel that health services should be at the local level, because the property taxpayer has enough to worry about—garbage and road repair and other essential lower-level services. We think in the long run that's going to be an open door to privatization, which we don't think is good either.

I would like to mention that we've heard talk about helping business do their business, and this is one of the objectives of this bill. Perhaps one of the pieces of advice I'll give the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations is that I wish he would take a look at the red tape in the eight property tax bills that this government has passed. Those eight bills are the most complex property tax bills in the civilized world. I've been told there are only two people in Ontario who understand our property taxes at this time. Peter Tomlinson is one of them and the other one, I'm told, is Ernie Eves, and I'm not sure about Ernie.

Those eight property tax bills—as you know, another one has just been introduced, another amendment—are going to be even more complex because there are these caps on the commercial. In Toronto we have 2.5% and outside of Toronto there are different caps: 5% and up.

Are these caps going to come off or not? A real estate agent phoned my office the other day and said: "I lost a \$2-million sale because, when the prospective purchaser saw what the taxes would be on the property when the

caps come off in another year”—I can't remember the exact figure—“he saw that the taxes were unaffordable. He then walked away from the sale.”

There is uncertainty there in property taxation. The business occupancy tax has been taken off. Landlords are now responsible for it. All over Ontario there's conflict between landlords and small business people who are renting space from landlords on who should pay what for rent, who should be paying for the property tax, who should be paying for the old business occupancy tax that is now folded into the property tax.

I challenge the Red Tape Commission, if they really want to help small business in this province, to look at that property tax mess. It is not understandable. You have to hire a team of Bay Street lawyers or the best lawyers in Listowel to figure out even one of those eight tax bills. I hope that the minister will direct his staff and maybe direct the Red Tape Commission to look at property taxation in this province. If there's anything that is costing small business money, sleepless nights—in fact, as we speak, 300 municipalities in this province have not gotten their final 1999 bill for taxes. Usually they get that in June or July. Three hundred have not gotten their 1999 bill and some of them have not even got their 1998 tax bill on the commercial side because of the changes.

It's so complex, even the greatest computer geek in the world cannot figure out how the software works for property taxation, how the system works. It is unbelievably complex. Talk about red tape. Go look at it in your property tax legislation. I hope that the Red Tape Commission and the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations sit down with Minister Eves and try to explain those eight pieces of legislation—I hear there's another one coming; it's going to be nine pieces of legislation on property taxation. On top of that, we're going to have another reassessment coming up for the year 2000, based on, I guess, the year 1999. So that's going to add even more complexity to the caps and the phase-ins. We're going to have phase-ins on top of caps on top of phase-ins. You're going to have to hire—I don't know who; maybe in Listowel you have people who can figure it out, but certainly not in the greater Toronto area. This property tax mess is really something that I hope the Red Tape Commission looks at and tries to explain to ordinary Ontarians, who essentially can't keep up with these Bay Street lawyers—even the Bay Street lawyers have been trying to find out who could explain the property tax bills to them.

In closing, before my good friend from St Catharines stands up—I know there was a reference to past ministries of the environment doing too much. A past Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Jim Bradley, as he was at the time, at least was there protecting the Niagara Escarpment. He was there protecting clean water. We've got an attitude now in this government that is basically do nothing, look the other way, pretend that water is not being impacted by all this unbridled development, pretend that the leak that's happening in—there's a big landfill in Sarnia; all this contaminate is leaking out,

going into Lake Huron. They're not doing anything about it. I would rather have a Minister of the Environment like Jim Bradley, who stood up for clean water, who stood up for the Niagara Escarpment, who stood up for the long-term benefits of clean air, good water and good farmland.

Mr Speaker, I know you have a lot of agricultural property in your riding and people there appreciate the fact that they have to make a living and provide food for the rest of this province from good farmland. As we stand here, another 70,000 hectares of good farmland in the GTA, some of the best in the world, is about to be paved over and gotten rid of because we have a government that's not willing to stand up and protect this very vulnerable agricultural land in the GTA here.

I'd rather have, as I said, a government that's at least proactive in protecting the public interests in terms of good farmland, good water and good sustainable development.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'll be sharing the time that's been allocated to us with my colleague Mr Kormos and my colleague Mr Martin. I will make a few brief comments and then they will carry the rest of this debate.

I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon with respect to Bill 11. I want to begin by saying that the greatest irony of this so-called red tape reduction bill is that it itself is really a classic case of government red tape. I ask the people who are watching out there to think about the fact that this bill is some 225 pages, not one that you're going to easily pull off the Internet. I suspect that if you went to the government bookstore and paid for this, you would pay a pretty penny for the ability to review what the government wants to do.

I heard the members talk about how, “We want to cut through red tape,” and, “This is getting rid of the status quo,” and, “The public will be happy with this,” and on and on and on. I say to the government members, if you were serious about hearing from the public about the initiatives, about where red tape is going to be cut, you certainly wouldn't come forward with a bill that's this lengthy, that will have a significant cost to those who want to purchase it at the bookstore because they don't have access to the Internet. Clearly you're not really interested in hearing what the people have to say or making it available to them in a form and a manner in which they can review what the government is doing.

What's even more interesting than the costs that might be incurred if you tried to pick this up at the government bookstore because you don't have the Internet is that if the bill is so effective as a red tape bill—the government itself doesn't even know what's in this bill.

I point out to people who have a chance to access the Internet that if you go to the Internet, the government has a Web site which informs us about Bill 11. There's information on the Internet about the bill. The backgrounder that appears on the Internet with respect to the bill says, “The Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999, if passed, will repeal the Oleomargarine Act, the Abandoned Orchards Act, the Fur Farm Act and the Policy and Priorities Board of Cabinet Act.”

1700

The truth is that none of these acts appear in Bill 11. They can't be found in the explanatory notes, in the various schedules that make up the bill, in any of the details in any of the schedules. As a point of fact, at least four of those bills that appear on the government Web site as part of Bill 11 aren't a part of the bill at all. Isn't that effective cutting of red tape?

What's even more interesting is that the Policy and Priorities Board of Cabinet Act that is referred to on the Web site was in fact already repealed by the Conservative government in December 1998. We all know how the government likes to announce and reannounce, and reannounce, its various initiatives, but this is just a little bit more than silly for the government to have on its own Web site, in the bill that's supposed to focus on red tape reduction, the appearance of an act that the government has already repealed. If the government itself can't figure out what's in the bill, has a Web site that people can have access to that has major flaws in it—major mistakes, omissions, however you want to describe it—does the government really think that they can have Ontarians figure out what's involved here and make sound judgments on what's involved?

It really is a classic case of red tape when you've got a bill this size that won't be easily accessible to the public. On the government Web site they give false, improper, incorrect information about what's included. How can you really expect the people to make up their minds, to have a judgment? Aren't we seeing that the government really didn't want people to have their say, really didn't want to know what was happening, and that's why the bill comes in the form it does?

I want to focus on two of the schedules in particular and a red tape item that is missing that I would have thought the government would have had in here since it relates directly to its Red Tape Commission. The first is schedule N, which relates to the section on natural resources, particularly the section regarding the Niagara Escarpment. Subsection 17(1) of the bill says, "At least once every 10 years, the minister shall establish terms of reference for a review of the Niagara Escarpment plan and shall cause the review to be undertaken." The change in that section has to do with a change in the time period for the review, because under the current act a review of the Niagara Escarpment plan has to be undertaken every five years. Our government undertook its review of the Niagara Escarpment plan, as per legislation. I suspect that we are seeing a change in the time period in this bill right now, because this government is probably overdue in terms of complying with the Niagara Escarpment act to have a review. So with this change the government gets to put off reviewing that very important plan.

I don't know why the government wants to do that. I cannot understand that kind of change. We should, as a province, be exceptionally proud that the escarpment is a designated UNESCO site. We should be privileged and remember that we are privileged, that UNESCO has designated the escarpment as a world heritage site. It

becomes even more incumbent then on the provincial government, which has the plan and which has the act, to ensure that development issues that continue to crop up all of the time on an ongoing basis and how they may or may not impact on the escarpment are reviewed, that the plan is in effect, that it's in good force, that it's taking into account changes that may have to be made. Maybe it's taking into account things that should be changed because they're not good for the purposes of the escarpment and protection of the escarpment and protection of the designation as a UNESCO site.

I can't understand what the government gains by saying essentially that a review will now not take place on their plan except for once every 10 years. I think the issues that surround the escarpment are much more important than that. I think the government should continue to have an important monitoring role with respect to the escarpment. One of the ways they do that is through the terms of reference for the review, which up until this point would have happened every year.

I hope we don't see these kinds of continuing changes with respect to the environment, where the government, through red tape bills, through cutbacks in enforcement, through cutbacks in its ministry staff, ends up really whittling away the protection that is so important not only for the escarpment but for clean air, clean water and other things that Ontarians care very deeply about.

The second schedule I want to touch on briefly is schedule B. These refer to a number of changes that the Attorney General is making under various acts. Specifically I would refer to the changes to the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996. The changes that occur from section 8 on have to do with ensuring that a payor who is in arrears will have his or her name filed with the Ontario Lottery Corp so that if a prize with a value of over \$1,000 is obtained by that payor, any arrears that are owing will be deducted from that lottery winning, or if the arrears are greater than the prize, all of the prize will be taken, will be sent to the director of the Family Responsibility Office and paid out to the recipient who is owed that money, and there will be nothing left for the payor who has won the prize.

I want to point out that it has taken a full three years for the government to get its act together to put this change into legislation. In the fall of 1996, the former Attorney General talked about ensuring that arrears were deducted from lottery winnings and that those winnings were then sent to the recipient who was owed that money. It has taken the government three years to do this one single small enforcement item, to put it into place in legislation. Why is it that something the government dealt with in a bill, Bill 82, over three years ago is only now finally making its way into law? That's pathetic.

What's more pathetic is for the government to focus on this small item with respect to enforcement, something that should have been done three years ago, at the expense of the numerous other enforcement activities that the FRO should be undertaking and is not.

The auditor was very clear in the comments he made several weeks ago in his report with respect to the complete lack of enforcement activities occurring at the Family Responsibility Office right now. The auditor made it very clear that enforcement actions at the FRO only take place as a result of complaints being made by recipients, or by people acting on their behalf, who demand that enforcement activity be undertaken. There is nothing proactive about enforcement at the FRO. Enforcement activities are undertaken when recipients get on the phone, stay on the phone for hour after hour, finally talk to a live body and demand that some action be taken on arrears.

The auditor was even more specific. He said that on many cases, when enforcement action was finally taken—after the recipient called in and demanded action be taken or his or her advocate called in and demanded action be taken—there were often gaps of more than six months before there was any activity on a file. I suspect the only reason there was another set of activities after six months is because the recipient or his or her advocate called again and asked the FRO what they were doing.

What was even more compelling was that the auditor said more aggressive enforcement alternatives such as driver's licence or passport suspensions, bank account garnishments or a default hearing are seldom pursued. That is probably why, under this Conservative government, the amount of arrears owing has almost doubled on their watch. Despite all the foofaraw three years ago when the then Attorney General brought in Bill 82, the fact of the matter is that three years later arrears have almost doubled at the FRO under this Conservative government. The auditor also pointed out that in 75% of all cases on file at the FRO, arrears were owing. Surely, if the minister cared at all, primarily about women and kids, because they are usually the recipients, he would do something about this very serious situation at the FRO, where it is clear that his staff is doing nothing about enforcement, nothing about ensuring that women and children get the payments they are owed.

1710

We've got a bill here today that puts in effect something that should have been passed three years ago, that the government promised to pass three years ago. We have a horrendous situation now that the auditor has just recently reported on, which clearly shows that all of the other enforcement activities that were also passed are not working.

Now the government is going to go ahead and use private sector collection agencies to try and collect arrears, after we have already been shown, by the pilot project that just ended in October, that the use of private collection agencies to collect arrears was a total bust. The private collection agencies collected a little over 1% of the \$450 million that was owing to women and children. So the government's response is totally inadequate, both with respect to what appears in Bill 11, with respect to their comments back to the auditor which appear in the auditor's report, and with respect to the most recent

actions of the minister to say that they are now going to shift even more files over to the private collection agency, which will just absolutely guarantee that women and children will never, ever see the money they are entitled to.

The other thing the auditor pointed out with respect to red tape—and it's curious that it doesn't appear anywhere in this bill, or it's not referred to—had to with the review that he undertook of the Ontario Substance Abuse Bureau. He focused on it in this context: He looked at the bureau because it is responsible for transferring millions and millions of dollars every year to transfer payment agencies, specifically those that provide drug and alcohol treatment programs to Ontarians right across the province, in all of these communities across the province.

What was interesting is that in the auditor's review, when he was looking at accountability, he made it very clear that in this particular case there was no accountability between the bureau itself and the many transfer payment agencies they provided funds to. It was interesting where he lay the blame for this. He said very clearly that through the accountability framework between the bureau and its transfer payment agencies, there should be an agreement with the transfer payment agencies about how funds would flow.

"The agreement should ensure that there is an understanding of the objectives and results to be achieved and the responsibilities for reporting performance. The bureau's draft operating manual, prepared during the 1996-97 fiscal year, requires service agreements with all treatment agencies outlining the ministry's expectations for each agency. A draft service agreement was developed in late 1996 but it could not be finalized until approved by the provincially appointed Red Tape Commission. The bureau submitted the agreement to the Red Tape Commission in early 1997. At the time of our audit," which was during 1998, "the bureau was still waiting for a response from the commission. Accordingly, no agreements were in place."

As far as we know from the auditor, those agreements are still not in place, because the Red Tape Commission, three years later, still has not provided a response to the work that the bureau did; three years later, a serious situation with respect to transfer payments being made from the substance abuse bureau to those many organizations that are providing services. The Red Tape Commission was given full authority to deal with service agreements, to change them if they wanted to, to make amendments and to finalize them, and three years later, they still haven't done that.

When we talk about red tape today and some of the actions of the Red Tape Commission, it's interesting that none of that was mentioned here, even though the auditor has very clearly outlined that in his most recent report to this assembly.

I will conclude by saying that if the government really wanted to have people have a good, serious look at what they were doing this afternoon, it would never have put forward a bill of 225 pages, with information about it on

the Internet which is incorrect. It's clear to me that the government is not terribly interested in hearing what people have to say and in finding out whether or not they really think reduction in red tape is going to be achieved from these initiatives. What's really disheartening is that some of the most important areas that should have been addressed, like what are we doing at the Family Responsibility Office when it comes to enforcement, are totally missing from this. Instead, we have part of a legislation that should have been passed three years ago that the government is finally coming forward with to make up its commitment to the people that it made at that time, three years ago.

I say it's a shame that this isn't in a format and at a price available to people that they might clearly be able to see what the government is all about. I suspect the reason for that was that the government really didn't want them to have a clear idea of what was happening under this bill.

Mr Bradley: The red tape bills are always dangerous because contained in them is always something that is extremely detrimental to the province and they hide it in one of these huge bills called a "red tape bill."

I should say that one of my great concerns about this government and the way in which it is proceeding, and I suspect this may be the case with governments in other jurisdictions, is that they, more and more, are coming forward with omnibus bills. I call them "ominous" bills more than omnibus, because they contain a number of items, and you would like to perhaps agree with some of the items in those bills and disagree with other of the items in the bills.

Not everything, I find, in legislation this government passes is not supportable. There are some things that are supportable in bills, and I like to be able to vote for them, but I can't vote for them because there's always a hostage somewhere in the bill that makes me vote against it. That's why private member's hour is usually pretty good, because not too many hostages are around. I even voted for a resolution from the member for Scarborough—used to be Scarborough-Ellesmere; it's Scarborough South-west now—Mr Newman, because it was a pretty good bill on that occasion. But I digress. I don't like getting away from the actual topic of a bill. I like to stay on topic.

I'm very concerned, first of all, when I see the downloading of ambulance services. This opens the door even wider, quite obviously, for an American-style health care system. You will have Rural/Metro, which charges a huge amount of money in the US, not just for the transportation but for the services provided in the ambulance. They're just lining up at the border. My friend from Niagara Centre will tell you, there's a lineup right at the border. It's clogging the border now with the American ambulance companies waiting to move into Ontario like vultures, ready to take over and gouge the people of this province.

What have you done? You've dumped it on local municipalities. They have a hard time coping because of

all the responsibilities that you have placed upon them and the additional financial burden.

One piece of red tape that you can get rid of would involve property assessment. It has been a mess. My friend from Scarborough-Agincourt tells me this is the seventh or eighth or ninth bill that deals with property taxes and the change in assessment. I know the Downtown Association in our area was very concerned because they, first of all, got a substantial reduction, and then the government came along and said: "Well, we can't give you that. We're going to implement a 10-5-5 rule." This is Mike Harris bringing this rule in, his government. Who do they blame? Of course, Frank Sheehan is there. Frank is pointing at the local government, saying, "We have too many politicians." I love hearing that: too many politicians. What you have to have, of course, is a sufficient number to be able to reflect the views of the people.

Another piece of red tape that people want to get rid of is that there's a great push on by the forces of the right wing in the Niagara Peninsula to have one huge Niagara region. My friend from Burlington-Halton-Wentworth—it used to be Wentworth North. The member formerly of Wentworth-North and I know the problems this can cause. We both want to see local communities thrive and continue on. There's no need to put the boots to the smaller municipalities and to force huge regions on people. Of course, it's now almost a self-fulfilling—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Prophecy.

Mr Bradley: Prophecy. I like the word the member uses. That's what it is.

What you've got is a ludicrous situation where some local politicians are saying, "Well, Mike Harris is going to force this on us, so we'd better do it before he forces us." Why would you do that? Why would you say, "We better amputate ourselves at the knee because if we don't, Mike Harris is going to amputate us at the hip"? I'm saying you don't need an amputation.

1720

Now, the Conrad Black newspapers across this province are all for it, because then they can have just one newspaper, wipe out all the small newspapers and have one big newspaper, one big everything. To me it doesn't make sense. I hope that when the Minister of Labour becomes the Minister of Municipal Affairs, he will understand the kind of arguments my friend Mr Skarica and I are putting forward in matters of this kind. I'm sure Mr Maves as well would want to protect Niagara-on-the-Lake from the Niagara region gobbling it up. He won election, and I think the difference was in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Those people will be holding him accountable on that, and he will be very sympathetic. I know him to be sympathetic to local government and local accountability.

Speaking of red tape, sometimes if you put your political sniffer up you find out what the government is up to. I'll tell you what they're up to now. They want to bring in four bills in one for restructuring. My prediction is that the Minister of Municipal Affairs will get up and have four bills in one. So the former member from Wen-

tworth North and I will have a hard time focusing on areas, because there's a different solution for each area. What's good for Ottawa, for Hamilton, for Haldimand or for Sudbury may be different in each of those cases, and yet I predict we're going to see one bill. I'll be fighting it, of course, and we have a progressive-minded Speaker who I'm sure will find my arguments extremely compelling and will likely accept my arguments, particularly when I say it's our turn to win one. As the last Speaker said, that was the most compelling argument I made on one occasion about a particular matter of procedure.

I heard the member for Etobicoke North, who interjects or grunts—whatever it is—several times at me from the other side. He was complaining about the chemical producers not liking my regime as the Minister of the Environment. I can tell you that polluters love this government. If there's one promise you have kept—and I'm a fair-minded person; I don't say you have broken all your promises. The one promise you kept was to get the Ministry of the Environment out of the face of polluters. You did that, and I'll say it. I'm fair-minded, and I'm prepared to concede that's exactly what happened. They said: "We don't like the Ministry of the Environment. We're going to get rid of it. Don't worry about that. We will tell them to be business friendly." As a result, they virtually abandoned environmental requirements on the other side and have reduced it. This is the red tape bill, which talks about that. I'm going to get to another area.

Let me first say what I don't find in the bill. I don't find any red tape for opening up new gambling opportunities in this province. I know those of you who are part of the family values crowd on the other side, who leave church as virtuous as ever and tell everyone, "Yes, our government is a virtuous government in tune with you." I know you have spoken to the Premier and said, "Please, don't bring in by the back door the new Mike Harris gambling halls," that is, don't allow them to put thousands upon thousands of slot machines in the racetracks and then say they're still racetracks. What you have converted them into are mini-casinos. This province is wide open now. When I hear some of the family values crowd out there, I say, "Where were you when Norm Sterling was allowing beer on the golf course or opening liquor stores on Sunday or allowing people to stay open till 2 o'clock in the morning?" That may or may not be a good thing, but I have not heard anything about that from the family values crowd, and I was waiting to hear from them.

Anyway, this bill affects the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. Now the escarpment plan review is only to be done every 10 years, not every five years. It should be done every five years.

A new maximum 60-day limit for commenting on the plan. I can hear the developers applauding for that one. They'll be scrambling to get their tickets to the next Tory fundraiser for that change alone, a limit of only 60 days for commenting on plan amendments.

Hearing officers must now report on issues that require an amendment to the escarpment plan in 60 days,

not 90 days. Instead of taking the proper time—remembering, as the Minister of Labour would know, that they've shrunk the staff there, that the commenting staff around ministries has gone way down in complement—they're now going to force them to come up with lousy decisions in a short period of time.

Mr Tilson and I are always worried about that, as is Mr Sterling, the former Minister of the Environment. You will recall, Mr Speaker—and you were probably as sad as I was—when they took the control of the Niagara Escarpment Commission away from the then Minister of the Environment, Norm Sterling—the one person in the cabinet who cared about the Niagara Escarpment—and gave it to another ministry. I know how concerned you are about that.

The minister or hearing officer can now dismiss appeals of development permits if they determine that they are frivolous or made for the purpose of delay. I wouldn't trust some ministers or some hearing officers with that particular power. Hearing officers must now report on development permit issues in 30 days.

Once again, we see a reducing of the Niagara Escarpment Commission as a significant protector of the environment in this province. All of those people, even those who are Conservatives out there, and there are many, who are concerned about the escarpment and its future, should know that snuck inside this bill, hidden inside the pages of this bill, is a provision which would enable this government to make it easier for development to take place on the Niagara Escarpment.

I want to save sufficient time for my good friend from Agincourt, so I'll now pass my time over to—an NDPer I think is next; Mr Kormos probably.

Mr Kormos: I have but a few brief moments to speak to this. Mr Martin, who's our critic in these matters, will be addressing it.

This, again, is an omnibus bill. Just take a quick run-through. Quite frankly, amongst other things, it's a "clean up the mess" bill: schedule B, subsection 2(1), rewritten to correct an error; subsection 4(1), an amendment to correct an error; subsection 4(2), an amendment to correct an error; section 5, an unproclaimed provision—unproclaimed—it never became law, is repealed; section 6, to correct an error; section 10—again, of schedule B—amended to correct an error; section 12, to correct an error; section 13, amended to correct an error; section 15, amended to correct an error; section 19, amended to correct an error; schedule E, section 1, corrects errors in the French version of three provisions of the Child and Family Services Act etc.

Having said that, in every one of these omnibus, so-called, misnamed, oxymoronic red tape bills, inevitably there is more and more delegation of what should be legislative authority to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, regulation which never sees the light of day in public debate—and it should.

You heard me talk earlier today to the Solicitor General about how his government is prepared to make exemptions for drunk drivers whose licences are suspended

and whose cars ought to be impounded if you get caught driving. The Lieutenant Governor in Council, as a result of this government's legislation, is going to be capable and will be prepared to make exemptions for certain suspended drivers. Merry Christmas to drunks.

Let me express the caution we should have about these omnibus bills. Back on June 25, 1996, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight omnibus bills, so-called red tape bills, were presented to this Legislature. The debate was but one evening. I can tell you the opposition parties voted against those bills—that many bills affecting literally hundreds of statutes, in many respects, oh so innocuously. But inevitably something has sneaked into here about which we and the public should be very concerned. It is only recently that I found out that this government, back in June 1996, when they rammed those one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight bills, all of them red tape bills the size of this, repealed War Veterans Burial Act. This government sneaks through this Legislature the repeal of the War Veterans Burial Act. The act was dated. It provided for compensation for indigent veterans of Her Majesty's military services during any war. It put a responsibility on municipalities to make a contribution. No, please.

1730

In my community, as in yours, we're losing these veterans on a daily basis. The passage of time is taking its toll. We have but a couple of hundred First World War veterans left in this whole country and our Second World War veterans are leaving us daily. Within a matter of literally a handful of years, we'll not have those with us any more either. And because of what has happened in this province, many of these are dying as indigents. The War Veterans Burial Act applied to any veteran of any war who died after the war—I've read it, my friend—and provided for a modest contribution by the municipality to their funeral costs.

The quantity of money, quite frankly, is modest, because the bill was dated. The bill didn't need repeal; it needed amendment. But this government, rather than doing the right thing, repealed it, and what little dignity a war veteran might have had by virtue of this legislation. Rather than correcting the bill and increasing—it's a modest amount; it dates back to the post-Second World War era. I'll be candid with you: The amount provided was \$15. That doesn't mean you repeal it. You amend it to reflect the real value of that person's life to his friends, his family, his community and his or her country.

This isn't an element of this bill. But I raise it because, after that rushed debate—the bill only went to committee of the whole House rather than to committee hearings where this could be exposed. But just as the repeal of the War Veterans Burial Act was contained in that bill, in this bill and in every other so-called red tape bill that has been presented by this government there has been an underhanded and insidious attack, government going through the back door where no government would dare go through the front door.

I apologize to the veterans of this province and this country for what this government did to them by virtue of their last set of red tape bills. I apologize, and I express deep regret at having been forced with my colleagues to participate in such an abbreviated debate and not having been able to bring the matter to the attention of the public during committee. The bill says, "In the event of the death of any person who was an indigent person and who was a member of Her Majesty's naval, military or air forces in active service during any war and the burial was ... paid for from the Last Post Fund, the municipality in which the person resided at the time of his or her death shall pay the expenses of such burial," and it includes a modest, a trivial, sum that reflects the reality of costs of the '40s and '50s. But you don't repeal it, you amend it. That's red tape? No, that's an insult to veterans.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On Bill 11, an act to reduce red tape, I'll begin by saying that it's important that governments have the tools to expeditiously update statutes, regulations and bills that have fallen out of currency. As a matter of fact, one of the first of these that I saw was the omnibus bill submitted by the NDP; I think it was about 1994. I was supportive of it. It was a bill where essentially the government of the day said to the opposition: "Listen, we're trying to bring forward several non-controversial issues to get the laws updated. We believe all of these amendments and changes are non-controversial so we'd like to pass this bill as an omnibus bill." I was supportive of that, and indeed that was a useful exercise.

You may recall that one of the very first pieces of legislation the new Harris government brought in was Bill 26, the omnibus bill. It became known as the bully bill. It was taking an idea and then abusing it. Fortunately there was a substantial demonstration here in the Legislature and that bill, rather than being rammed through, was forced into fairly substantial committee hearings. I hope the government learned a lesson from that exercise.

I'm concerned now that the government is moving back into its old ways. I have no difficulty in dealing with legitimate omnibus bills that update statutes. But now, in my opinion, the government has decided to use that technique to pass bills and to achieve things that really should be out for some public debate.

I'll take several examples in the bill. The first example is that this bill combines the Ontario Casino Corp and the Ontario Lottery Corp, puts them together. In the bill—I haven't added up the pages—there are probably 30 pages dealing with that specific issue.

Let me just say to all of us, in my opinion, gambling today is not a huge, high, public profile issue. I personally predict it will become one. The government has introduced 10,000 slot machines. I was in London, Ontario, the other day and the headline in the local paper was that the money is absolutely pouring in. People are lined up to play the slot machines. It is a bonanza. There is twice as much money being taken out of the Ontario economy this year on slot machines as the tax cut theoretically put into it. If the government believes that the

tax cut is helping to create economic activity, the slot machines are taking out twice as much as the tax cut is putting in.

This bill is 225 pages. It's buried in here. It is taking the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario Casino Corp and ramming them together. I've got some severe reservations, by the way, about the Ontario Casino Corp owning casinos. I personally think it's only a matter of time until there is some casino—as in the US where there are casinos that have fallen on hard times. It will happen around North America. Yet we're going to pass this bill, almost without debate on that aspect of the bill. I think that one deserves far more attention than we're providing today. As I say, today the issue of gambling seems to be on the back burner, but the government, I gather, is planning another 10,000 slot machines. It will take another huge chunk out of the economy.

As I said earlier, I have no difficulty with omnibus bills that deal with real red tape and with expediting a change in the government. I want to talk about two or three other aspects within the bill. They've been touched on briefly by some of my colleagues.

1740

Another significant aspect of this kind of “red tape” bill has very little to do with red tape and eliminating red tape. It implements the downloading of ambulance services from provincial responsibility, by and large, to municipal responsibility. We're going to deal with that with the stroke of a pen.

I remind us that the Who Does What panel, the group of 14 people hand-picked by Premier Harris, respected people drawn from around the province. They came together and Premier Harris said to them, “You tell the government what things should be handled municipally and what things should be handled provincially.”

That panel said to the Premier, “We are strongly opposed to moving ambulance services to the municipalities.” In fact, they were unanimous. They used the word “unanimous.” Why? If we think about it here, does it make any sense that the quality of your health care depends on the size of your local property assessment base? It doesn't. To use the language, we all want equality of health opportunities regardless of where we live. But this bill further implements or helps to implement the downloading of ambulances on to property taxes, and that's not right.

The third thing I want to talk about in the very limited time we have—as I say, I would urge the public to at least be aware of the fact that there are 225 pages of, in many respects, very substantial changes—is that we heard a week ago from the Provincial Auditor, who expressed real worries about something called the Family Responsibility Office. That office is supposed to help mainly women to get from their spouses money that the spouses should be, but are not, paying them.

We heard that the arrears had gone up from about \$700 million to \$1.2 billion. One of the NDP members talked about a 40% or 50% increase in the arrears. We have the opportunity today to deal with that, but all we

have in here and the only thing the government has moved on is to go after lottery winnings. We pay the auditor \$7.5 million of taxpayers' money. The auditor has given his recommendations that we should have in this bill, but we're dealing with only giving the government the authority to go after lottery winnings of dead-beat dads. We should be dealing with several other recommendations the Provincial Auditor has made to us.

I just say to all of us, I guess governments of any political stripe love to find ways that minimize the debate. I think that's unfortunate. This bill minimizes the debate we should be having on some extremely important issues and it's all masked under something called red tape. I have no difficulty with cutting out red tape, but much of this is not about red tape, it's about fundamental programs we should be debating.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have to agree that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt is absolutely right when he says we should be debating stuff of more fundamental value to the people of the province.

Here I am, in a matter of four to five years, up for a third time as the critic for consumer and commercial relations, debating a red tape bill. Usually they wheel them over here in a wheelbarrow. They're about this thick and give the pages a hernia getting them to us, just a stack of stuff and great whoop-de-do about it. In the end there is not a whole lot of stuff that in any way changes the situation for the ordinary Ontario citizen out there, but it certainly makes some significant changes where it comes to the powerful and the rich in our province getting their hands on more of the goods and the wealth and the booty of the government and of the province.

We have a bill here that is, as I have characterized in earlier speeches, a bit of a Trojan horse, particularly when you listen to the rhetoric of the government. It presents as an attempt by this government to streamline the way the government works and to make doing business, as they say, easier in the province, to make access by constituents to government services easier and all those kinds of things. There are in fact probably a couple of nuggets in here that are worth supporting, and we're glad they brought it forward. Some of the members earlier have talked about that.

We're here this afternoon, the same as we were for the first two really huge red tape bills that we debated, pushing this through in one afternoon, second reading. It's been referenced already this afternoon, but I think it's important to point out again that we really don't have time here to get into the detail and the nitty-gritty of these bills. So such things as the member for Niagara Centre presented just a few minutes ago get by us, sneak by us, and we don't know about them until we get a call from a constituent. Or perhaps we're having a beer one night in the Legion Hall in our community and some of the folks who have been smacked straight in the face by one of these pieces of business that are contained in these huge acts comes and tells us: “Look at what this is doing. Look at what this means to me. The little bit of money that I

thought I was getting or the little bit of assistance or help that I thought I was getting, all of a sudden is being in a very mean-spirited way taken away.”

These oftentimes are folks who have given their whole life to creating the economy, to working very hard, to participating in their communities, actually going off to war, in the instance presented by the member for Niagara Centre, for the freedom that we all take for granted today. That's actually what happened.

This is, again, in my view, another Trojan horse, presenting as something friendly, interesting, in some instances maybe even perhaps exciting. But at the end of the day, when we open it up and the door swings open and the ladder comes down, we'll find that there's a lot of nastiness, there are a lot of nasty bits of business here that are going to affect a whole lot of people in some very negative ways, and that concerns me.

You can't pick up a paper these days without noting that there is a larger agenda at play in Ontario that I think we should be paying close attention to. I raise it here this afternoon in the context of this bill because it's bills like this, with the stuff that's in them, that we sometimes miss. They are so detailed and so large that they are actually playing into the phenomenon that's seeing a gap between those who have and those who don't have grow exponentially as each day goes by.

If you think for a second that this isn't well thought out, that there isn't somebody in the Premier's office—the member for St Catharines often refers to them as the whiz kids—who hasn't got this thought out bit by bit—it's like a jigsaw puzzle. It all fits together in the end. When we wake up in the morning and read the reports that come out in the newspapers and by way of press conferences etc, we find that on one hand our biggest corporations—our banks, our financial institutions—are making historically record-high profits, while on the other hand reports are coming from groups who are looking at the question of poverty and families and children and homelessness and they're saying that the situation is becoming more and more desperate with each day and each week that goes by.

1750

The other day I picked up the *Globe and Mail* on my way home, Friday, November 19, and there were two articles here which present very clearly the contrast that's out there. On one hand we have “Ontario Puts Squeeze on Welfare,” and on the other hand, down here in another article, we have, “TD Rakes in \$3-Billion Profit.” So on one hand we have people on welfare, those who are the most vulnerable and marginalized in our communities, being hit once again for who knows what reason. I guess they make good scapegoats and it makes for good political rhetoric. On the other hand we have the friends and benefactors of the government side, the rich and the famous, the banks and the big corporations, raking in historically record-high profits.

How are they doing that? Is there some magic economic development plan that this government has pulled together that is actually stimulating and firing this in-

crease in the profit margin of these big corporations? When we dig into it a little bit we find that actually that's not the case either, because in fact what's happening is that as the banks post record profits they're planning to cut more jobs.

There's nothing magical about this at all. It points very clearly and succinctly to the fact that in this province today, because of bills like the one we have in front of us—and I'll speak a little bit in a couple of minutes about how it affects my community in particular, by way of example of the kind of activity that is contributing to the very difficult economic times that we're experiencing in northern Ontario because this government isn't willing to take the time to actually analyze what impact and effect their agenda is having.

It's plain to see that this province is moving towards being a have and have-not province at breakneck speed and if somebody doesn't do something soon—particularly as we now begin to hear more and more people speaking of the effects of the program that's in place to cut programs and cut welfare and change regulation by way of red tape bills, which in fact should be helping people access the services they need in difficult times. It's taking that away, raising the bar, changing the definition, and we have more people falling further and further into debt.

This evening, I just want to share with you how pieces of this legislation that we're debating here today are going to affect very dramatically and radically the ability of communities to actually diversify an economy, to take advantage of opportunity that's there and do something exciting and new. If you put a piece in this bill about amalgamating—and it presents at first blush as rather harmless and non-consequential, but if you look at merging the Ontario Lottery Corp with the gaming corporation, for all the reasons that perhaps people might want to do something like that, under the control of one man, a good friend of the Premier's, Mr Barbaro, we begin to see how this eventually plays into the hands of the high and the mighty, those who have, the powerful elite in this province.

We have the Ontario Lottery Corp operating out of Sault Ste Marie. We had a long debate in this House and across the province and particularly in Sault Ste Marie over the last three or four years about the future of that particular entity and whether it should be restructured. Studies were done and efforts were made by the then chair and president of the corporation, who happened to be two different people, because at that time the Liberal and NDP governments felt that accountability would be enhanced if you had two different people in those jobs. It was decided that, yes, there were efficiencies that could be had. They found \$50 million worth of them. I challenged that figure and I challenged some of the detail in that report. However, they went ahead anyway.

They made a promise to Sault Ste Marie when that report came out that they were going to leave the headquarters in our community. When that corporation was moved to Sault Ste Marie, it was moved there for a very definite

purpose, and that was to show to the rest of the province and to the rest of the world that you could take a corporation like that, you could take a business like that and move it to a community like the Soo, which is quite a distance from Toronto, and still make it work and generate profit. In fact, from the day that the lottery corporation arrived in Sault Ste Marie, it continued to make profit every year, ever-increasing profit year over year for every year it was there.

Now we see first of all, by way of the movements that we began to detect over the last few months in Sault Ste Marie, that more and more of the top-echelon executives are moving to Toronto. Mr Barbaro now has an office up on Yonge Street that has on its nameplate the Ontario Lottery Corp and the gaming corporation. That's where he is operating out of. You put that together then with the piece in this red tape bill today which is going to amalgamate the gaming corporation and the Ontario Lottery Corp and, alas, the writing is on the wall.

Here we have a government that says they understand that there is a challenge in the north and that, when you sit and talk with them off the record or behind the scenes, will commiserate and say, "Yes, we have to do something. We have to stimulate an economy up there. We have to develop new jobs. We have to work with communities to see if we can find some way of renewing that economy," while at the same time they're willing to take away what is already there. What is the point of attracting new opportunities at the same time as you're taking away what's already there and profitable, a crown corporation that is making money year over year for the government of Ontario, that has shown itself able to operate in a fashion that is efficient and effective, amalgamating it now with the gaming corporation and putting it under the guidance or tutelage of one gentleman who happens to be better situated, perhaps because of other things that are going on in his life, in the Toronto area, and remove from our community that one activity that gave us all such tremendous hope back in the late 1980s and early 1990s as we gathered and watched the building go up and the people who were going to work in that building, under the aegis of the Ontario Lottery Corp, move into town? The new energy, the excitement that it gave us all, the contribution those people made not just to the business community but to the cultural life of Sault Ste Marie was phenomenal.

But now we have a government, when you put together the amalgamation that's happening in this piece of legislation of the Ontario Lottery Corp and the gaming corporation with what we detect is happening in Sault Ste Marie right now—and we're going to lose that. We have to consider the impact that will have directly in terms of jobs, very highly qualified, high-paying jobs. As matter of fact, there was a time not so long ago in Sault Ste Marie that people aspired to working for the lottery corporation. It was the place to work in town. People were leaving other corporations to get a job at the lottery corporation because everybody assumed it was going to be there for as long as it was profitable, for as long as it was

generating revenue for the government that was acceptable and in the black.

Interjections.

Mr Martin: "Take a deep breath. Have a drink." I know. Thanks.

You put together the impact that taking those jobs away is going to have with the loss of the goods and services that corporation used to purchase and contract from the small and medium-sized business community in Sault Ste Marie, and you put that together again with the symbolic value that that corporation had in the Soo—we felt while the corporation was there that we had a chance of latching on to this so-called new economy that's out there that is based more on telecommunications and information sharing etc than what we've traditionally based our economy on up there, and we were excited. But you take that away and you send out a new message to the rest of Ontario and Canada and the world. In Sault Ste Marie, we have just finished a very aggressive, positive, constructive and exciting campaign of promoting Sault Ste Marie as a good place to invest in. We highlighted the lottery corporation. We even had a picture of Ron Barbaro in there, but he's not going to be there any more. The headquarters of the lottery corporation is not going to be there any more. It's gone. They're saying they can't do business up in Sault Ste Marie any more in the same way. They can't have the headquarters of a corporation of that nature that far away from the Golden Horseshoe. What kind of message does that send out?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Private sector.

Mr Martin: Yes, private sector, and to hell with everybody else. What kind of message does that send to the rest of the world re investing in Sault Ste Marie or northern Ontario or any place other than the Golden Horseshoe and Toronto? What sense does it make to hammer a community that is so important, a very essential part of this province, in that very significant and serious way? I have to say to you, alas and sadly, it plays in again to the program of this government, to clear the way, to open Ontario for business through the removal of red tape that's built up over the years, through inquests and inquiries about deaths and accidents etc so that business can come in and high-grade, as they always have, the best of what we have to offer and make off like bandits and leave the rest of us holding the bag.

I have on a couple of occasions in this House referenced the analogy that this is to what went on in Ireland some years ago, where the potato famine happened. It actually wasn't a question of there not being enough food, it was a question of who owned the food and who was making money on it. I just want to read one small piece in wrapping here today, because it certainly drives home the issue that I'm trying to raise. It says, "It is true that there is a potato famine in practically every part of the country, but there is corn and wheat and meat and dairy products in abundance. For putting his hands on any of this, the tenant is liable to prison, even to execution or to exile," which is what we're finding is happening to so many of us who don't happen to belong to the

elite class in this province, who don't happen to have the power or the money, and that's sad.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I just wanted a point of order with respect to the speech by the member for Niagara Centre on the War Veterans Burial Act. The question was about us repealing that act and no longer allowing a \$15 municipal grant to a person who is a homeless indigent to be buried. The point of order is simply that the bill was repealed because the municipality is totally responsible for the burial of all indigent people. Therefore, the fact is there was no point in—

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 11. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; there will be a 5-minute bell.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 11 be deferred until Monday, November 29, 1999." Signed by the chief government whip and deputy House leader. So be it.

It being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock on Monday, November 29.

The House adjourned at 1805.

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