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Jedi 2 décembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 2 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 2 décembre 1999

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

GREAT LAKES ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA
PROTECTION ENVIRONNEMENTALE
DES GRANDS LACS

Mr Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to regulate the discharge of ballast water in the Great Lakes / Projet de loi 15, Loi réglementant le déchargement de l'eau de lest dans les Grands Lacs.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Before we start, I have to say that we could be just a tad groggy this morning. Last night Dad was on night shift and Josh, my oldest boy, was waking up from about 2 to 5 and I had to take care of the scary monsters that were sucking on his thumb. But we've had our caffeine fix and we assured our oldest son, Josh, that there were no scary monsters under the bed or in the closet, although I can't really say that there are no scary monsters in the Great Lakes.

I can't say that to my son, Josh, of the things that are happening out there, that have taken place, such as the zebra mussel, where its accidental introduction through ballast water discharge has now brought in the zebra mussel, which is costing municipalities and agencies thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars in clearing these areas to make sure our water discharge or our water intake are clear, or at the nuclear plants, that everything is clear for the intake and the discharge of water there. There is a large number of invading species that have come into Ontario because of accidental discharge in the Great Lakes.

Essentially what we are trying to do here is address the issue of the accidental discharge and, as I did with Josh, or try to do with Josh on a nightly basis, do a little bit of prevention. To make sure there are no scary monsters, we check underneath the bed and in the closet, or we read a story about Winnie the Pooh and the gang on what goes bump in the night and explain everything to him.

The best thing that takes place is prevention. According to a federal study in 1991, 29% of the releases

associated with the introductions is through ballast discharge water in the Great Lakes. Essentially what happens, for those who are watching and don't understand, is that a ship coming from another port in another area will pick up ballast water to make sure if they're coming empty that they're stable within the ocean. While they are picking up this ballast waters in the ports, other than a Canadian port, or it could be on the other side, in the Pacific Ocean, for example, they would pick up new species such as the zebra mussel or the spiny water flea, which has had a significant impact in the recreational fishing industry in the Great Lakes. Then they come to Lake Ontario, to the ports in Lake Ontario where they would then discharge the ballast water when they pick up their cargo. When they discharge that water, whether it's the actual species that's introduced or whether it's the eggs that are introduced there, they now become part of our ecosystem in the Great Lakes. We have to do something about that.

According to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, there are three typical types of invading species and the way they come about. There are the natural invaders, such as opossum or the white-tailed deer; they normally just expand their territory and move into Ontario. Once upon a time, we never had white-tail in Ontario. It has now moved from Virginia north into Ontario and has expanded its territory, as has the opossum, along with others. So there is natural.

Then there are the accidental invaders, which are the ones we are trying to address now, such as the zebra mussel; or in 1959, when the St Lawrence Seaway was opened, the sea lamprey came into the Great Lakes and caused a great number of problems.

There may be some questions and I hope there is some debate later on about the onus of the federal government, being that the control of the waterways is under the jurisdiction of the federal government. However, a lot of these programs, for example, the sea lamprey program, are under a lot of pressure. Every year the province is pressuring the federal government to commit to doing the program to reduce the sea lamprey because of the impact it has.

1010

I would like to bring forward one area just to emphasize the extreme that this could take. For example, six years after the accidental introduction of the comb jellyfish, which came from a ship from the US from the Black Sea, they saw a reduction in the fish harvest of 90%. Think of the impact on the fishing industry within

the Great Lakes, both commercial and recreational. The recreational fishing industry in the region of Durham represents approximately \$75 million annually. That is being substantially impacted now by the spiny water flea. For those who don't know, it attaches to the lines of charter boats that are out and bends around the line. You can't even reel in your lines when you're fishing. So you have to regularly clear the lines. If something along the lines of the comb jellyfish were to be introduced, it could have a substantial impact on all aspects of the fishing industry.

I mentioned the accidental invaders, such as the zebra mussel, the sea lamprey, and there are others, of course. Then there are the intentional invaders, such as the ring-necked pheasant, the rainbow trout or the wild turkey, which has been reintroduced in Ontario. These are under controlled situations.

We get into problems with things such as the spiny water flea when it's accidentally introduced into the Great Lakes. There is no natural predator out there to control it. In the locations it comes from, it has controls and predators which, through evolution, now feed on the spiny water flea, but we don't have anything in the Great Lakes that will take care of that. It's the same thing with the zebra mussel, although we do have some diving ducks which are feeding on the zebra mussel now. Mind you, the population is still expanding, and the ability for the zebra mussel to expand is far greater, reaching into the Kawarthas and the other lake systems within Ontario. So it's not just the Great Lakes that are being affected; it's all the other lakes as well. The natural predator is not evident when the release takes place, and this is where we get into difficulty.

Essentially what we're asking for is a ballast water exchange. The preference is a deep-water exchange, where a ship coming across the Atlantic Ocean to Ontario, to the Great Lakes, would be asked to exchange its ballast water at depth levels of about 2,000 metres. The reason for that is the saline level, the salt level, of the water and the fact that there is a low concentration of wildlife or species concentrated in those depths. So when the ship comes out of a port, it now moves into the centre of the ocean, essentially, where it does a ballast exchange. It now brings in salt water, and when that is brought into Lake Ontario and exchanged in ballast because they're taking on their freight, there is less chance of introducing species, first of all because of the high salt content in those areas—when introduced into fresh water, they have less chance of living—and secondly because there are fewer species in those areas.

We also get into areas where the ships are not coming across the Atlantic, they're coming up the Laurentian channel. It is about 340 metres deep and has a high saline content as well, which will reduce the chance of species being introduced for the same reasons I explained earlier. Of course, there is the problem of rough waters. That is taken into consideration in the bill to ensure that in the event of severe weather, the ship is not obligated to do a deep-water exchange. However, quite possibly when they

come into the Laurentian channel they could do a shallower-water exchange to reduce the incidence.

There was a study, as I mentioned earlier, in 1991 that showed it was 67% effective in reducing the possibility of the introduction of species. As I mentioned earlier with Josh and his night—last night was one of those—prevention is the best method of stopping any of these from occurring.

There are some other areas, and I only have 10 minutes. I want to touch on areas that I think the people who may be watching can relate to. We have another introduction that has not been noticed very substantially yet. The reason I say “yet” is because the Eurasian ruffe, which has been introduced, will directly compete with walleye and perch. The other night we had an event here with outdoor organizations. There were a lot of them in attendance and perch was one of the items served. When you get into competition with walleye and perch, the average recreational or commercial fishing person will certainly have a greater say about whether we should or should not be trying to control this.

In closing, the one thing I'd like to say is: Don't worry, Josh, we tried to take care of the scary monsters or the big snake last night that was sucking on your thumb, but we're going to try and do something. Because that's what we're here for. It's the children of tomorrow we have to try and take care of.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join the debate for the private member's bill from the member from Oshawa. As an explanatory note, the bill “prohibits ocean-going ships on the Great Lakes system from docking in Ontario if they have not complied with ballast water control guidelines prescribed by regulations” in order to reduce the occurrence of invading species, which obviously have a tremendous impact on our ecosystem in the Great Lakes system.

I would also add that it has a tremendous impact in my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. We have Georgian Bay, Lake Simcoe, Kempenfelt Bay. We have seen zebra mussels invade cottage country and the water systems in our area. They start out on the shoreline, and in our area they now have moved to the middle of the body of water and have a tremendous impact on other species within the ecosystem of our lakes. What we have found is that the algae being removed from our water system results in a clearness of the water and actually increases the growth that would happen in the body of water as a result of the sun not being reflected by the less clear water. So we have tremendous impact in terms of the clarity of the water and also the other species within these bodies of water.

This particular piece of legislation has restrictions on ships that dock: “The master of a ship shall not dock the ship at a provincially or privately owned dock or wharf in the Great Lakes system if the ship has not complied with the ballast water control guidelines since it last entered the system,” and, “No one who has the management or control of a provincially or privately owned dock or

wharf shall permit a ship to dock there if the person has reasonable grounds to believe that the ship has not complied with the ballast water control guidelines since it last entered the Great Lakes system.”

The impact, as I think the member from Oshawa has indicated, is significant in terms of the species that enter. I have an article from the *Globe and Mail*, November 1999: “Asexual Flea Threatens Great Lakes.” It’s called the fishhook water flea. “The Great Lakes have some new inhabitants. Nesting side by side, 50 to 80 of them could fit within 6.5 square centimetres of space. But their small size belies the potential that these fishhook water fleas hold for causing big damage. The new inhabitant is a native of the Black Sea.” And now it’s in our body of water in the Great Lakes.

“The new arrival has worried scientists, who call it and other foreign invaders biological pollution that can be far more dangerous than the chemical contaminants often viewed as the biggest threat to the Great Lakes.

“Unlike chemical pollutants, which eventually break down, biological pollution can replicate and is almost impossible to remove once it becomes established.” That’s the threat we are facing with respect to our Great Lakes water system.

I fully support this piece of legislation by the member from Oshawa. It’ll have a tremendous impact. Obviously what we’re facing now in our ecosystem in the end also will affect tourism, cottagers, the economy of what we have in our waterway systems, which is a fundamental support in terms of the economic well-being of the tourism of this province. It’s going to be detrimentally impacted.

I would say that since the federal government is refusing to do anything on this issue, has raised a deaf ear, I think it’s about time the province has done something to regulate this area.

1020

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I’m very delighted to support this private member’s bill from the member for Oshawa. It’s certainly a very responsible bill. But I stand and wonder, where on earth has the federal government been, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Minister of the Environment? For 40 years they could have been doing something about this. Why is it a Legislature in the province of Ontario that has to come in and look after the waterways in Canada? It’s most unfortunate they didn’t act ahead of time and get this kind of thing looked after.

As a long-time cottage owner on the lake called Kashwakamak, just south of the Mazinaw, there’s an indication that we may have zebra mussels coming into that lake. I don’t think it’s a matter of will it happen in some of those lakes, like the Kawarthas, that were mentioned earlier, it’s a matter of when is it going to happen.

As a veterinarian, I see new diseases, new parasites, new organisms coming into our country without a natural predator. We all know the quantity of eggs—we’ve heard that in our biology class—that some insects can lay and

how they can multiply at just a phenomenal rate, particularly if there isn’t any predator there.

A good example of that is the fishhook water flea that has just recently been introduced. We hear about the clogging of fishing nets in the Black Sea, and that’s probably the kind of thing that we’re going to see here in the province of Ontario, at least in the lakes and rivers.

Just at a time when the Great Lakes are recovering from some of the pollutants that have been in there and we’re seeing a lot of new fish returning to the Great Lakes that haven’t been there for some time, it’s rather ironic that some of these other problems are coming in.

I think it’s interesting that Professor Paul Herbert, head of the zoology department at the University of Guelph, makes reference to this water flea. He says: “We are at risk of losing many of the native and novel species of North America. It strikes me as a tragedy.” I agree. Indeed, it is a tragedy.

Just simply changing the water out in the ocean—the salt water is going to kill these organisms, whether it’s zebra mussels or fleas or insects or whatever. The test on the water ballast is pretty simple, a little taste test. Is it fresh or is it salty? We don’t have to go to a great chemical analysis to sort out whether they did it or not. I just can’t believe that we’ve come this far and this long without this being in place. It’s certainly a federal responsibility.

Just in winding up, to leave some time for others in our party to speak, this kind of thing is so important to the waterfronts in all of our ridings, the tourism. I look to places like Campbellford, Hastings, Cobourg, Rice Lake, which want to upgrade their waterfronts, and then we have this kind of thing coming in in ballast water. I’d just say to Herb Dhaliwal, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and I say to David Anderson, the Minister of the Environment for Canada: “Where are you? What have you been doing? This is a most important thing. Why does Ontario have to bring in legislation to walk you into this?” I brought in a resolution on animal abuse roughly a month ago and finally, yesterday, it was released by Justice Minister Anne McLellan that they’re going to do something on animal abuse. They’re going to change the Criminal Code.

Why on earth does this party, the Conservatives of Ontario, have to hold the feet of these federal ministers to the fire and finally get them to do something by holding their feet to the fire? Here’s another example. Maybe the Liberals in this House could talk to their federal cousins to get things moving, to make things happen in Ottawa. They’re at their fundraisers. They were just down there last weekend. Surely to goodness they could do something with their federal cousins.

I look forward to this bill passing, and compliment my cohort from Oshawa for bringing in an excellent bill.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): It’s with great pleasure that I rise in the House to debate this bill and give my support to it. I want to compliment the member for Oshawa.

I want to do this in a little bit different fashion, if I may today. I'd like to talk to you about a specific micro-organism that exists in the sea. It's a very tiny micro-organism. It's so small that really it wouldn't take up much space on your nail on your baby finger, but it is one of the most powerful micro-organisms in creatures in the great seas.

This particular creature is responsible for controlling some tide patterns; it's responsible for creating tide pools. It actually creates spawning grounds for fish and separates predatory fish from smaller fish. It is a tremendously powerful creature and yet it's so small that you could crush it with your finger. It could dry in the sun within minutes, and it could be swept away in the tide or the wind.

The creature is a coral and that coral has created one of the biggest ecosystems in the world, the Great Barrier Reef. So when people thought talking about this particular bill, "You know this is a silly bill that doesn't make much sense because we're talking about micro-organisms. What impact can they have on such an infinite quantity of water as the Great Lakes?" The Great Lakes are not infinite. They are a finite resource and they can be impacted. If you consider the impact—the great impact, the positive impact—of coral on the seas, the Great Barrier Reef and what they have created, the reverse can also happen.

When you have micro-organisms come into our Great Lakes that are foreign species, the reverse can happen. The impact can be untold. When you have a number of these species come in and they start interacting with each other and impacting the ecosystem, you get a synergistic effect that is untold, unparalleled, and absolutely no scientist on earth can guarantee with any degree of certainty what the long-term impact from these creatures would be. So this bill is more about a motherhood issue. For many people it means nothing because it's such a tiny creature, but you have to look at the larger picture. You have to stand back and realize that the impact over a long period of time is devastating.

I hope the bill passes and I congratulate the member for bringing it forth.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): After hearing previous speakers to this bill, I must say that there is some silver lining to this cloud of controversy surrounding the arrival of the zebra mussel and the quagga mussel, and I'm now referring specifically to Lake Erie. Changes have occurred in Lake Erie, particularly since the arrival of the zebra mussel, and the lake has become significantly clearer. One positive in all this is the fact that the clearer lake has inadvertently given a real boost to the dive tourism industry, and around my town of Port Dover, divers like Jim Murphy have been advocates of writing new legislation to protect some of the wrecks that are much more accessible. Again, I thank the members for their vote last week on this legislation.

However, the fact that Lake Erie is getting clearer is not good news for everyone, particularly if you're a species of fish that thrives in an ecosystem based on low

visibility, Ministry of Natural Resources data collected from commercial fisherman daily test reports show that bass and rainbow trout are benefiting significantly from the changes to Lake Erie. Unfortunately, walleye, also known as pickerel, and yellow perch are being negatively effected.

Ministry data shows that commercial harvest has declined significantly since the introduction of the zebra and the quagga mussels to Lake Erie. This is particularly true in the east basin of Lake Erie, that section from Long Point east down towards Buffalo. Landed value of east basin fish harvest has declined by 59% since the zebra mussel and the quagga mussel have been established.

It's hard to believe that the invasion of our Great Lakes has been allowed to continue unchecked by the federal government.

I support this move by MPP Ouellette to force Ottawa to stop this invasion of the Great Lakes ecosystem. Ottawa needs to take immediate action to work with industry to develop the technology to effectively treat ballast water in a safe manner, to establish ballast water treatment facilities and to develop policy and regulations to stop this continued invasion of our lakes.

Once these exotic species become established in a large open system like the Great Lakes, they're almost impossible to eradicate, hence the importance of prevention as mentioned by MPP Ouellette. The best we can hope to do once they are established is to slow their spread.

As we've heard today, to date there are about 140 exotic species that have entered the Great Lakes, including the quagga mussel, the zebra mussel, the round goby, the ruffe has been mentioned, sea lamprey, plant material—purple loosestrife, for example—and more recently, the fish hook water flea. Many of these invasions have caused significant environmental and economic impacts to the Great Lakes.

1030

Most of the exotic nuisance species have been introduced through ballast water in ocean-going ships. Current federal guidelines require ballast exchange at sea to kill freshwater exotic species. However, these guidelines do not apply to the majority of ships. They do not apply to about 90% of the ships that carry exotic species in the slops down below in their empty ballast tanks. These exotic species are eventually released into the Great Lakes and, very clearly, constructive action needs to be taken.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to commend my colleague the member for Oshawa for his concern about this particular matter on the Great Lakes and inland waters.

He's quite a star now, I'm told. A lot of people have seen him in commercials, even on CNN—I can't remember if I've ever made CNN—the infomercial for the National Rifle Association that he's been involved with. He is really a person now, not only this bill. This bill comes right after the member being part of the National Rifle Association commercial. It must have to

do with gun laws or something like that if it's the National Rifle Association.

It's good to be able to be in the same room as somebody that famous. I don't think I would ever go on one of those commercials. It was on television. People are phoning me, and saying that they're seeing the member for Oshawa in this commercial with the National Rifle Association. I know that you wouldn't agree with their position of not banning assault weapons and some of the positions they've taken on such things as guns getting into children's hands. But I digress. I just wanted to say the member looked quite impressive in these commercials.

With regard to this bill, I want to say that it is a problem. He will recall, being a member who represents a constituency which is adjacent to the Great Lakes, the great problem with zebra mussels. There are other problems as well, we recognize, but that problem was one which focused a lot of attention on species that would come from elsewhere to Canada. We probably have some species here that others wouldn't want introduced in their inland waters either. But it did focus on a problem that I think is an important problem.

The dilemma is how to solve the problem. I looked at the bill and I said—maybe the member will clarify this in his final two minutes—did his bill go to the Red Tape Commission and to the economic policy committee of cabinet before it was developed? Because what usually happens with a bill of this kind, if it were a government bill coming through, is it would go and it would get some comment from those two bodies, because it does involve red tape. Sometimes red tape is required.

But my friend Mr Wood tells me that he would be concerned about something that would have any affect on red tape. I know he will probably want to even express his view on this if he gets a chance. Perhaps we can give him some of our time and he can do so.

I'm not trying to be negative, because I like to see members come forward with an issue of this kind. I talked to a few people about it. A person by the name of Reg MacGregor in St Catharines has done some considerable research on it. Again, we're on the shores of one of the Great Lakes. Listen, I can tell you, I'm not an expert on shipping and the oceans, but I understand there's a problem—and the member may have addressed it before I was able to be here today—of the exchange of ballast waters out in the high seas, out in the ocean and how there is some danger to that. Is it true that you have to take all of the water out and then new water comes in, something like that and the balancing of the ship and so on?

I understood that was a problem. There is some considerable research perhaps going on now. When you talk about tax cuts, for instance, I've been a person who's critical of these continuous income tax cuts which I think deprive us of the kind of government services that we require. One incentive I would like to see, either federally or provincially, is an incentive type of change to the taxation system—and perhaps it's there today—which

would allow people to conduct some research into this matter.

I think the member would agree with me and would seek this to happen as well: We could develop some technology to address this matter even without having to change the ballast water. People tell me that can be done. I'll believe it when I see it.

The very fact that you're raising it in the House is useful in that it may prompt individuals to go even further in the research into this matter. Somebody else has said to me—maybe the member knows this—what happens if a ship comes to Hamilton or Thunder Bay and we say it can't go in? Where does it go then? Does it go back up the St. Lawrence Seaway and so on? I wonder if the economic policy committee of cabinet would have given you a hard time about that because it's interference with business. Frankly I don't think it's valid to say that because something happens to interfere with a particular business operation it automatically should be rejected. I'd be interested in the member helping me out with that, as to what would happen in that case. To be fair, I didn't have the opportunity to hear his initial remarks, which I'm sure covered a lot of the territory I'm talking about now.

If you want to talk about water quality, I have a great concern and I hope we would see more work on the whole issue of water quality, which is important for the Great Lakes. One of the ways to improve that water quality is to continue to implement the Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement, which deals with the actual toxicity and quality of water around the province. That was a program which was initiated in the 1988 period, somewhere around there, and was designed to deal with all effluent going into the Great Lakes from any waterways in Ontario. It was to squeeze tight the taps on pollution going in. I suspect much of that program might have fallen by the wayside because what it requires, I can tell the member, just as any program that's suggested by any of us, is resources and staff to be able to do it.

I have a great fear that the Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement, the very substantial and important water pollution regulation, is not being enforced as it should be and that further work is not being done in that regard. That deals with industrial discharges, it deals with discharges from municipal sewage treatment plants and it even deals with some indirect discharges which come from streams and rivers going into the lakes.

The member has centred his remarks on specific species that come into this country from somewhere else. One of the solutions that is recommended and that I'm always very apprehensive about is heavy chlorination—I think that's the word—applying a lot of chlorine. The problem with that is that chlorine acting with other substances in the water can produce some toxicity we wouldn't want to see. While I know that in some cases in desperation people have tried more chlorine, or different ways of applying the chlorine, which is probably better; in that case it would be certainly something we could look at.

I would like to see more research. I'm hopeful that the member raising this in the House will bring about that research as to how we can solve this problem without actually having to prohibit ships from coming into our ports. Although he and I don't want ships coming into the ports that are going to cause problems for us, getting to stop them is another matter.

I understand as well—he may have said this—that there's a conference in February of this year, I think in Toronto, dealing with this matter. I was informed of that. It would be interesting if perhaps the member and I, and some others, could try to get to that conference. The member could talk about that with some of the people who are at that conference. Raising that issue with that kind of profile would be very interesting.

Developing the technology, I keep hearing from people who are more expert than I on this, is certainly going to be very important.

The complication of changing the bilge water in open seas is something I guess you're going to address; people have brought it to my attention. The Americans I think have the ships go to Massena, New York, and the coast guard inspects them there, but what they do if they don't pass the inspection I'm not really sure, whether they send them somewhere else. Massena is, as we know, quite a way up, as people are coming in. It's not as though it's in one of the inner Great Lakes.

1040

We have only voluntary guidelines now. I'm not a fan of voluntary guidelines at all. I think the member and I will agree that some enforced regulations, when they are agreed upon, would be the best way to go. The cost of shipping: Some of the more expert people in the business field on the other side, who often speak about the impact on business, may know this. Somebody told me it costs about \$25,000 a day to operate the ships, and if you stop them for a certain period of time, it costs them money. I don't know if that's true and the member may be able to help me out. I hope he can help me out on that, because that is certainly a problem they would put forward.

The member from Sarnia, by the way, left me some of her notes. She was not able to be here because of the crisis in her riding where there's a toxic waste dump that's leaking, a toxic waste dump that was expanded considerably, without a full environmental assessment. That's one of the problems we encounter.

I look at the total problem of Great Lakes water quality. This is one aspect of it that should be addressed. There may be other aspects. I certainly hope we work on water quality. I saw the last report of discharges in Ontario. It was abysmal, the amount of toxic waste going in. Sewage treatment plants are not being upgraded the way they used to be because municipalities don't get the money to do it any more. Sometimes we can add more sophisticated equipment to those sewage treatment plants.

There are many ways of impacting our inland waters. This is one way of addressing it, and I think we should address it, but I also hope members of the House will

want to address, through treaties with the United States, through federal-provincial agreements and actually through tough action on polluters, the problem of the poisoning of the Great Lakes with various substances which are discharged either directly or indirectly into the Great Lakes.

I hope we have in this province a renewed effort to press forward with the Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement, both as it affects direct discharges from industries and discharges from municipal sewage treatment plants, because that's where a lot of the material is being dumped at this time.

I have a note that someone else wishes to have a moment or two on this, so I'm going to relinquish my time right now.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I want to thank the member for allowing me to have a couple of minutes. As a former chairman of the Toronto Harbour Commission, I fully support this bill. I just want to raise a couple of concerns.

Members may know that when the St Lawrence Seaway was built, it was meant to turn Toronto and the Great Lakes ports into world ports. Unfortunately, by the time the seaway was built, it was already obsolete because the depth that it was built to was 27 feet and most of the very large ocean-going vessels have a draft of 48 feet. What that has done is create a problem for some ships; as they come in, they get rid of their ballast so they won't run aground.

One of the problems I really wanted to address—I assume there's both provincial and federal involvement—is that as a sailor I've noticed, this summer in particular, that the water levels are extremely low. Certainly in Lake Ontario and in the port of Toronto, I've been talking to the officials and there has been a greater number of small pleasure craft running aground because of this. Not keeping the water high enough compounds the problem. If goes down a foot or two, the big ships have to compensate in exactly the same way to make sure they don't run aground.

I think it's an area we all have to get involved in. There's no question—the data have been confirmed—that the introduction of zebra mussels into the Great Lakes water system has been traced to a foreign vessel offloading its ballast. That has done that, and who knows what other foreign marine life has been introduced into our system.

I really feel that this is a bill we should support. My only concern is whether we can get that message to the responsible authorities for them to do something about it. I think it's good that we're presenting this message; I just feel it really is something that has to be done in co-ordination, not just with Canada—you have to understand that the Great Lakes certainly border on the United States as well and they have to get involved. I want to commend the member for introducing it and certainly I will be supporting it.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I congratulate you on how

quickly you've learned all the new ridings of the members in your new job. I don't know if I've ever congratulated you on your new position.

I want to also commend the member for Oshawa for bringing forth this bill today which I'm happy to support. If you'll bear with me, I want to read a little bit from an article to put this in perspective, as many members have done, but even more so, why it's so important that legislators try to deal with this issue, which has been around for a very long time and in fact is getting worse.

There's a story by Martin Mittelstaedt in the *Globe and Mail*, November 22, 1999, called "Asexual Flea Threatens Great Lakes," and there's a subheading to that: "Creepy Infestation." I'm going to read a little bit from that story by Martin Mittelstaedt.

"A creepy looking, asexually reproducing water flea, translucent except for its single black eyeball, is the latest foreign animal to be discovered in the Great Lakes, alarming wildlife experts.

"First noticed by anglers on Lake Ontario last year, the fishhook waterflea, with its space-alien looks and long tail, has since spread to Lake Michigan and to six of the Finger Lakes in western New York.

"Large numbers of the flea clog fishing nets in the Black Sea. Nets become so coated the animal is called 'frost,' and stinking masses of the creatures have to be cleaned off before the gear can be used again.

"It is expected to infest the entire Great Lakes ecosystem eventually and could seriously disrupt sports and commercial fisheries."

That's just one example which I'm sure the majority of people aren't aware of. Most people are familiar with the zebra mussel, I believe. We've not addressed this issue very consistently throughout the years. It continues to grow, it continues to be a problem, and I'm happy to see the member attempt to address it. I want to say that I see it as a Pr bill, and I think that's important. It's important to raise those issues in the House. I think it's important to pass this bill today, but upon reading the bill, I have a lot of questions about the enforcement capabilities and who is actually going to regulate it and enforce it. How is it actually going to work?

The member talks about the federal government's responsibility in this, and of course he is quite right. He says in his preamble, which, by the way, I was very grateful to get—and I thank the member for Sault Ste Marie who quickly provided me with this background today. It means that I can talk more directly to the bill in the 15 minutes I'm taking here, although I will spend a little time as well talking about some of the other problems we have in the Great Lakes because I think it's all connected and all relevant, not just to our commercial industry but to our environment and to the people of the province as well.

It says in your preamble, "If ocean-going ships adhere to appropriate guidelines, such as the Great Lakes ballast water control guidelines of the Canadian Coast Guard, it should reduce the probability of additional non-native

species being introduced, that can be harmful to the balance of nature that now exists."

1050

This has been in existence for a long time, and I applaud the member for trying to get the province involved. But at the same time, I can't believe that a member of the government actually, when the government is cutting environmental protection like crazy—and I know you don't like to hear this, but it's true. There are not enough people left in the Ministry of the Environment now to regulate and enforce the Environmental Protection Act we have in place. I hear that daily as the environment critic. You don't hear me get up in the House a lot to talk about it—we only have so many questions a day—but I have a list this long of environmental problems that have not been dealt with by this government and the Minister of the Environment because the workforce is no longer there to deal with it. So I think it would be a legitimate question, even if the environment hadn't been cut so much, how this is going to work.

I know that the member would like, after this bill is passed, I'm sure, by all parties, for the government to actually take it seriously, even though it's a private member's bill, and work with the federal government to finally find ways to effectively deal with this problem. This bill isn't going to do it. However, what this bill does is raise the issue once again, up the ante, and say that the province does have to get involved.

The member for St Catharines raised a good question—and I'm sure the member for Oshawa thought about this and he does mention it briefly in his preamble—about what you do with a large ship that comes to port with a load of goods on a tight timeframe and it is discovered that the captain hasn't followed the guidelines. Right now we have guidelines, but if this is law, do you then send that ship right back into the ocean to dump before he can unload the goods? I don't know, but I presume that's what has to be done. Obviously a huge education program would have to be put in place so that ships coming into Canada, and into Ontario specifically right now, would know that not just a fine—because as mentioned in the act here, they might be willing to pay a fine rather than going back to the ocean and dumping, as prescribed by the law. The fine has to be significantly high enough that it will be seen as a big enough deterrent, so that they will either have to pay a very large fine or will have to go back out to the ocean and dump before they can come back in.

I want to talk a little bit about the water quality in the Great Lakes, and certainly the member knows—and I understand he's dealing specifically today with a problem—that the problems in the Great Lakes are much more complex than dealing with exotic marine species. There are still millions of tonnes of toxic waste going into our Great Lakes, and I would like to see the government bring forward strong bills to deal with that and to fund the citizens' body that has been dealing with the Great Lakes cleanup for a number of years, to deal even more effectively with the toxins that are going into our

Great Lakes. In fact, the government cut the funds for these bodies that have been working on this, and it is thanks to them that the cleanups that have happened over the years have come about.

The other issue that I want to touch on briefly is the taking of water from our lakes in Ontario. I understand that the Minister of the Environment just came back from an environment ministers conference in Calgary and that the provinces failed to reach an agreement with the federal minister on the wording. Who knows? Different provinces had different problems, but at the end of the day we're most disappointed, as I'm sure everybody in the House is, that the provinces and the federal government could not finally come to an agreement on how to prevent bulk water from leaving our provinces. They were unable to do that.

I would also like to see the government take this on, not just as a private member's bill—and I'm sure the member would appreciate that as well—

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): Private members?

Ms Churley: The member from Dufferin-Peel has something to say here. In fact, I would say that I had a private member's bill passed in the last term of office of this government on carcinogens, cancer-causing carcinogens. You may recall, when we were in government we did a study—Ruth Grier, then as the Minister of Health, did a comprehensive study—on cancer prevention. That was just released shortly before the election in 1995. That document has been shelved. I took one little piece of that and brought forward a private member's resolution, on which I got all-party support for the government to start the immediate phasing out of known or suspected cancer-causing carcinogens that are being released into our environment.

He may have more luck, because he is a backbencher in the government, in getting to meet with the Minister of the Environment and bringing this bill forward should it pass today, but I haven't had any luck in meeting with either the Minister of Health or the Minister of the Environment to talk about setting up—and part of my resolution was to talk about setting this up, which was one of the recommendations—a stakeholders group to start this process. That resolution, which was passed enthusiastically by the entire House, is still sitting there. There has been no action on it.

That is often the fate, as we well know, of private member's bills from all three parties, including the government party. I would say that the member for Oshawa, being a government member, probably has more of an opportunity to push his bill forward than I had. But I want him and the House to know that that was passed by all members in the House, and we have not moved forward one little bit.

I would say to the member that there are a number of questions that we asked today. Again, I want to say I recognize that this is a private member's bill. I'm sure the member for Oshawa knows that once it's passed, a lot more work has to be done. Some of the questions we've

asked today: How will this be enforced? Who's going to regulate it? How is all of this going to work? Will the ships have to go back out to the ocean if they don't dump their water? What kind of educational program will be put in place? Are they going to sit down and meet with the federal government? I don't think, frankly, this can work, and I think the member for Oshawa agrees, unless the federal government steps up its laws as well and its enforcement and regulatory power.

Having said all of that, it's really nice to stand here today and, for once, see a member of the government bring forward for us all to debate a positive—what I consider to be, yes, an environmental issue as well. Of course, he brought it forward—and very importantly, and I'm not dismissing this—for our commerce, our anglers, fishers and tourists. For economic reasons, it's important that we debate this, but it's also important to our environment. Our whole ecosystem is affected by these foreign and exotic marine creatures and plants being dumped into our waterways, which causes huge problems.

It's easy for us to forget about it as we debate daily and read stories about so many other things daily in our newspapers. It's important that we're debating it today. I'm sure it will pass. Who could not support this resolution? If I can be helpful in any way, I realize I'm just a lowly third party member here—

Mr Tilson: Oh, you're more than that.

Ms Churley: Thank you to the member for—what's your riding now, not Dufferin-Peel?

Mr Tilson: Wellington.

Ms Churley: Dufferin-Peel-Wellington. He assures me that I'm not just a lowly member in the House, that I actually do have some clout. I'd be happy to work with the member.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Pardon?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Every member is equal.

Ms Churley: That's right. "Every member is equal in this House," he says.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Some more equal than others.

Ms Churley: Some more equal than others, but I don't see too many of those in the House this morning, actually. I believe we have one cabinet minister here. Of course, she's more equal than the rest of us, I would say. She's not even looking up. She knows who we're talking about.

Coming back to the bill, I do support it. I look forward to its passage today. My offer still stands. If there's anything I can do to assist in making sure that the government actually, after it's passed, moves forward on it, takes some responsibility for it and works with the federal government to make sure that something actually happens here, I would be very pleased to do that.

1100

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate? The member for Oshawa has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Ouellette: I'd like to thank all members, the members for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Northumberland, Stoney Creek, Haldimand-Norfolk, Brant, St Catharines, York Centre and Broadview-Greenwood, for their kind words today. I'll try to answer some of the questions that were brought forward.

Yes, there is going to be some difficulty in dealing with the federal government on the enforcement of the actual act, but I should point out that the American coast guard currently stops and inspects all ships entering the St Lawrence Seaway to ensure that the ballast water has been exchanged. The difficulty is that they're dealing with US ports.

However, the Canadian and the American coast guards currently have monitoring or demonstration methods of showing ships coming into the Great Lakes how to do exchanges. So, since the Canadian Coast Guard is already doing it and the American coast guard is regulating what's taking place on the US side, although it doesn't have any bearing on what takes place on our side in Ontario, hopefully we can get the feds to work with the coast guard to push it a little bit further.

Some of the concerns that were coming forward from the member for St Catharines regarding deep-water exchange in heavy waters, I mentioned earlier that typically you try to do a 2,000-metre exchange, where the water level is about 2,000 metres, because of the saline level and the minimal species content in those areas. Also, in the event of heavy water, you have the Laurentian channel, which is about 340 metres deep. It has a high saline and a low species content in those areas. So the possibility is reduced, not as much as the deep-water one, the 2,000-metre one, but it is reduced. So when they come over and they can't do an exchange in deep water, they have the opportunity in the Laurentian channel to do an exchange there.

There is other work that needs to be done as well. There are some new methods of filtration coming forward, as well as treatment in the event that somebody comes in who has not exchanged. I thank all members for their support today.

The Acting Speaker: The time for this ballot item has expired. It will be further dealt with at 12 noon.

STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY
PROGRAMS ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 SUR LES PROGRAMMES
DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ
POUR ÉTUDIANTS

Mr Gravelle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students / Projet de loi 10, Loi visant à offrir des

programmes de santé et de sécurité aux étudiants de l'Ontario.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to have the opportunity to bring forward a private member's bill that, if successfully implemented, will have a positive impact on young people entering the workforce today and in the future.

Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students, is quite deliberately non-partisan and in fact is meant to bring together in a coordinated fashion many of the health and safety initiatives that have been developed over the years by government, safety associations, educators and injured workers' groups across the province.

This legislation will create a health and safety educational council made up of students, injured workers, workplace health and safety experts, employers, educators, school boards, labour and community organizations. This empowered council will recommend programs to educate secondary school students on their rights and responsibilities when it comes to health, safety and occupational disease in the workplace.

We believe this council will be able, at virtually no expense to the government, to take health and safety instruction for students, which is now an identified part of the high school core curriculum, and turn it into a reality in the classroom. As with so many aspects of the new curriculum, many educators and school boards have had difficulty figuring out how to realize these outcomes. This legislation can serve as that vital link between good intentions and real success by involving all key sectors in an effort to put the right health and safety information directly in the hands of students—the future workers and leaders of our province.

There's no question we must continue to find ways of reducing accidents and fatalities in the workplace. By properly educating our young people before they enter the workforce, we can hopefully move towards a time when these tragedies no longer occur on a daily basis. But as of today, the facts speak very clearly to the need for us to treat this issue of workplace health and safety as a top priority. It is on that basis that I am seeking the support of all members in the House for my private member's bill today.

Every day, 50 young workers are injured on the job in Ontario, adding up to 18,000 injuries a year. The Industrial Accident Prevention Association has confirmed that workers between the ages of 15 and 25 have an injury rate 35% higher than any other age bracket. In 1999, so far, five young people have died on the job; 19 more young people lost their lives over the previous two years.

It is for those young people whose lives were so tragically cut short, and indeed for all workers and their families who have endured tragedy in the workplace, that we have put together this particular piece of legislation. I say "we" because this bill has been developed through the hard work of so many people who have dedicated

their lives to the elimination of workplace injuries and fatalities, people who have lost a family member or who have experienced a workplace injury themselves.

Since first being elected to this House in 1995, I've had a close working relationship with the injured workers' support group in Thunder Bay. Together we have fought many battles on behalf of injured workers and, I will admit, have been strongly opposed to many of the measures this government has brought forward, measures that have impacted negatively on workers' rights and compensation to those injured on the job, battles that we will continue to fight. However, the main goal of injured workers' groups across this province has always been to work towards the prevention of workplace accidents, a goal that I know is shared by people of all political stripes.

In any event, about two years ago, I had a conversation with Ross Singleton, a Thunder Bay resident with the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, related to the need for provincial legislation to inform young people of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace; in other words, to take some positive action that could reduce or eliminate the accidents and fatalities that were occurring at a disproportionately high level to young people entering the workplace for the first time. After much work and consultation, we developed my private member's bill, with the hope that it would receive support from the Legislature and indeed from the government itself.

Let me make one thing very clear: While I recognize that private members' bills, and particularly those from opposition members, do not often receive support from the government, I am hoping that the non-partisan nature of this bill will allow it to receive consideration by the government members in particular.

In that regard, I am grateful to the Minister of Labour for meeting with me prior to today's debate and committing to arrange an initial gathering of interested parties to move forward on the goals of this legislation regardless of today's vote.

Let me once again be very clear: Our goal is to find a vehicle that will provide needed, appropriate and useful education to young people all across the province that will help reduce tragic and preventable accidents and fatalities in the workplace. I believe, as do Ontario's injured workers, that this legislation can be the vehicle by which we achieve this very important goal.

I am pleased to tell you that we are receiving support for this legislation from all across Ontario. I am grateful for that support and I want to thank everyone for their efforts and energies on our behalf. Particular thanks must go out to Ross Singleton, the true driving force behind this bill, and Steve Mantis, another Thunder Bay resident and national coordinator of the Canadian Injured Workers Alliance. I am pleased to have the strong support of Karl Crevar, president of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, who is with us in the members' gallery today. Special thanks also to Francis Bell, executive director of the Injured Workers Resource Centre in

Thunder Bay, who has worked so hard to rally support for this bill, and Muriel Poster of Thunder Bay, who tragically lost her husband in a workplace accident and has since become an extraordinarily effective advocate for survivor issues in this province.

I also very much appreciate the strong support of all the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups across the province who passed a resolution in strong support of this bill at their annual convention this year. I also want to thank Ken Jones, a Thunder Bay district representative for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers national safety task force. All of you, and countless others who are supporting us in our efforts, have lifted our spirits and made us determined to achieve our goals.

I'm very grateful for the input provided to me by Paul Kells, whose son Sean died tragically in November 1994 in a workplace accident. After the inquest into his son's death, Mr Kells committed himself to ensuring that this needless accident would not be repeated. He established the Canadian chapter of the Safe Communities Foundation, a non-profit organization that brings public and private sector organizations together with the goal of making Canada the safest place to live, work and play. His advocacy for safe workplaces has now extended into 13 Ontario communities.

Mr Kells's input into my efforts here meant a great deal to me, because in many ways it is young people like Sean who are the motivation behind this legislation. We need to work with organizations like the Safe Communities Foundation to coordinate access to health and safety education for all high school students. As Mr Kells pointed out to me: "It would be a surprise to me if any one person or group had a complete handle on all that is now happening within both the school and labour systems. If that is indeed the case, then it would be a major advance to quickly inventory what is happening, access what is working best and then help with co-ordinated implementation across the province."

1110

That is exactly what the Health and Safety Educational Council proposed by this legislation can achieve: a quick inventory of what is out there, a quick assessment of what works, and the ability to implement it across the province.

We know that Sean Kells's tragic passing, and the subsequent coroner's inquest into his death, also motivated the Ministry of Labour to put a great deal of effort into designing a student education package on occupational health and safety. This project, which unfortunately never saw the light of day, is remarkably similar to the goals set forward in my bill. This education package was developed in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Training, the Industrial Accident Prevention Association and various other internal and external supports.

The rationale for this project, as put together by the Ministry of Labour staff, said:

"The project's purpose is to instill at an early entry level into the student's work life an awareness of basic

occupational health and safety concepts, rights and responsibilities and locally available resources. Creating student awareness will assist in the transition from school to the workplace as it relates to the Ministry of Labour's mission of advancing safe, fair and harmonious workplace practices."

Fine words. It is indeed unfortunate that after so much hard work and devotion by dedicated ministry staff, the project never was implemented. But perhaps today we can properly honour Sean Kells, as well as the hundreds of Ontarians who have lost their lives on the job, by supporting this legislation I am putting before the assembly today, legislation that can potentially make a positive difference in the lives of all Ontarians and can make all of us here in the Legislature today feel that we have done our part for the people and the workers of this province.

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

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to congratulate the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North for bringing this piece of legislation forward, if for no other reason than that it gives us in the New Democratic Party a chance to get up and point to some of the very devastating and destructive things that this government has done where health and safety of workers is concerned in this province, and to encourage the government in support of this resolution this morning to begin to talk to people about health and safety in the workplace, and in particular talk to young people who will inherit in years to come the programs and protections, or lack thereof, that we have passed on to them.

Anybody who understands what is going on in the workplace knows that it's organized labour over the years which has fought and gone on strike and negotiated and worked with management and others to put in place the health and safety regulations that we now so often take for granted. They sometimes work their way, if you have a government in place in a province like Ontario—and we've had a few over the last 10 to 15 years, but certainly not in the last four years—which understands the need to enshrine in legislation through employment standards etc, through the development of offices like the Workers' Compensation Board and attendant committees, and structures that work with workers and others, to make sure we understand the health and safety hazards that are out there, and that we do things to not only minimize but to wipe them out altogether.

This government has the unenviable record of consistently and systematically, first of all, diminishing the role, the power and the influence of organized labour in this province, over four years, at a rate not seen certainly in my lifetime. Others I talk to in the labour movement, who have been in this business in a bigger way and for a longer term than I have, say to me that over a number of years health and safety regulations and other regulations fought for and negotiated for and agreed to by enlightened management, in some instances, have evolved and have been put into legislation and have become part of all

kinds of standards across this province. That came to a screeching halt in June 1995 when this government, with its anti-labour, anti-organized labour, anti-union rhetoric and program, systematically and slowly chopped away at that. It's there for all to see who want to visit Web sites from our caucus in this place. If you want to look at the record of the government, it's there as well.

The NDP labour law reform that was brought in with so much excitement and enthusiasm by all workers in this province in the early 1990s was totally wiped out by Bill 7, on Tuesday, October 31, 1995, allowing scabs to steal workers' jobs again in this province.

The card majority system of union certification, which has been in place since 1950, was replaced by mandatory certification votes. This permits the employer to organize an anti-union election campaign every time workers try to form a union.

In addition, employers are permitted to instigate petitions for a decertification vote. This was the beginning of the erosion of the rights of workers and their organizations to speak for themselves and to demand developments in the area of health and safety.

Successor rights were stripped from crown employees. This means that when the Harris gang wants to privatize public services, the workers will lose both their collective agreement and their bargaining rights whenever a department is sold. We know that over the last four years that's been just moving along lickety-split, and nobody seems to know when it's going to end.

Workers in the contract service sector, like building cleaners, lose successor rights and their jobs whenever a contract changes hands, pounding wages back to minimum wage levels. Already, the workers who clean the Tories' Queen's Park offices around this place have lost their jobs.

This draconian legislation, Bill 7, was introduced on October 4 and rammed through the Legislature on October 31 without a single day of hearings because they didn't want people out there to know what they're doing.

If the resolution that we're debating here this morning is passed and this government is serious about it and they move on it, the youth and the students of our province will be given the history of labour laws and labour developments in this province in a way that will help them understand who's their friend and who's not, and what we need to be doing in order to enhance and further develop protections for workers in the workplace. The first thing they need to do is to recognize and honour the role that has been played by organized labour in this province over a long number of years now.

To move on very quickly, people in this province know very clearly that one of the agencies or organizations that has been front and centre in protecting the rights of workers where health and safety is concerned, the Workers' Compensation Board. We, as government from 1990 to 1995, had initiated a royal commission to take a look at it because we knew that it needed some fixing and some working with in order to make it work better for everybody concerned, particularly for workers

and those who are injured. That was completely and totally derailed. One of the first things that this government did where it concerned workers in this province was to derail the royal commission and take that very important board that was set up to protect both industry and workers at a time when there were lawsuits lying left, right and centre because of all of the accidents and deaths that were happening out there, so that companies weren't put under by lawsuits that were successful and would completely bankrupt them, and that would protect workers so that they didn't have to go to court and pay out the big money that they inevitably had to in order to make their case.

Following the proposals to gut workers' compensation in the Jackson report, Bill 99 was introduced in November 1996. Bill 99 takes \$6 billion in benefits from injured workers and gives them to employers, allows employers to force injured workers back to work prematurely, removes the independence of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, gives workers' private medical records to employers, erodes inflation protection for WCB benefits, terminates the Occupational Disease Panel, and forces injured workers to get their accident claim forms from the employer.

Accident cover-ups will be massive. This returns Ontario to the days when the burden of proof is on the worker and the benefit of the doubt goes to the employer. It outlaws compensation for chronic stress and limits benefits from chronic pain.

I, with the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, am going to be supporting with my caucus this resolution this morning because it's time we took the cloak of secrecy off what this government is doing to workers across this province, particularly where it concerns their health and safety. The youth of this province need to know what health and safety is about. They need to know who the champions have been. They need to know who has gone to bat for them and they need to remember that if they don't pay attention and do something about it, what we have lost will be compounded and all of us will be the losers.

1120

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

I'm a little worried today. My daughter Natasha, who is 16, is going to take her driving test today. She's very much looking forward to obtaining her driver's licence. I and all Ontarians are concerned that as our children grow, progress in life and very enthusiastically enter the working world they are very safe. Our government wants to ensure that Ontario is the best place to live, work and raise our families.

It is my pleasure to rise and speak in response to Bill 10. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for his bill. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I would like to say that we welcome the private member's bill from the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North. However, I would like to

state from the outset that we will urge the House to vote against it, as most of its key objectives are already being met by our government.

Bill 10 provides all parties in the House a great opportunity to debate the important area of health and safety protection for young workers. Our government's goal is to make Ontario workplaces among the safest in the world. Bill 10 speaks of the need for greater co-operation between our partners in safety. More can always be done, we agree, but many would agree that in the past few years the province's occupational health and safety system has blossomed into a true partnership. Many agencies and organizations are working together to help achieve this goal and to reduce Ontario's injury rate by 30% between 1995 and 2000.

Health and safety is very important to us for two basic reasons: the human toll of death and injury, as well as the economic toll of lost productivity in the billions. No one can put a price on human life or injury, but we do know that the price tag in compensation costs and lost productivity to Ontario employers is in the billions annually. I agree.

We all agree that healthy workplaces are productive workplaces. They give Ontario a competitive edge over other jurisdictions in North America. Investors are looking to invest in places with excellent health and safety records. It is seen as a plus and an indication of a skilled, dedicated workplace culture. In Ontario we are fortunate. We have a good reputation in this area, and I believe our health and safety record has contributed to Ontario's economic boom, as relayed by the finance minister earlier this week.

The other half of this equation of course is the turnaround that has taken place at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. It is a huge success story. Tough changes were made in our first term. The board is no longer a drain on employers' pockets, nor a barrier to new investment. Its finances are in order. Its unfunded liability has fallen from \$11 billion when we took office to just under \$7 billion, and it has jettisoned the compensation mentality of years past in favour of a new prevention mandate.

This week the board announced its new premium schedule for the coming year. Average premiums have fallen 24% since 1996. The credit goes to improved management at the WSIB, as well as the board's new focus on injury prevention and return to work. About two thirds of the rate groups, which is 128,000 employers, will see reductions in their premiums next year. This is because our government's policies have reduced on-the-job injuries, and we have worked hard to get injured workers back to work in a safe and timely fashion.

By and large these are positive times for health and safety in Ontario. But there are still high-risk workplaces out there. Add young, inexperienced workers to those workplaces and you have a recipe for disaster. Hence our renewed emphasis on young worker health and safety.

Mr Speaker, we have a special obligation to reach out to young workers and those about to enter the workforce,

just like my daughter. They need timely education and information that will help prevent needless tragedies. Young people can be intimidated by the working world at first. Too often the instinct is to keep one's head down and do what one is told. Young people need to know that they can ask questions and even refuse work if they believe it is dangerous. Much is happening on this front. There are a number of initiatives under way that realize the key objectives of Bill 10, including:

The young worker awareness program, bringing health and safety messages to over 60,000 Ontario high school students each year, plus website and advertising campaigns. It is supported by funding of \$750,000 annually from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board;

Peterborough Safe Communities Coalition sponsored the passport program, which credits local students for health and safety training taken, a great novel idea, typical of what we need to capture kids' attention;

The Introduction of an occupational health and safety component to grade 9 curriculum, which began in September this year;

Expanding this health and safety education program to cover all secondary grade levels by the year 2002.

The last point is a big breakthrough. It was a key element of the ministry's prevention strategy. In conjunction with the young worker awareness program, students will be aware of the employer's obligations to protect their health and safety, what questions to ask, and they will learn the safe behaviour and the use of personal protective equipment.

A steering committee has been formed consisting of the Ministry of Labour, WSIB, most of the safe workplace associations, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety and other interested parties. It is developing resource materials to assist school boards and teachers at the local level.

The labour ministry's assistant deputy minister of operations is inviting key stakeholders to a meeting next month. They will discuss coordination of programs and further measures to raise awareness of young worker health and safety.

In general, young people will also benefit from recent advances in health and safety enforcement, education and prevention.

Using data supplied by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the Ministry of Labour is concentrating its enforcement resources on workers in high-risk workplaces.

Prevention programs and initiatives are being devised under the leadership and new mandate of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. These programs are then delivered on the ground by the safe workplace associations and other agencies.

By targeting bad actors and high-risk venues, we are reducing the risk for young people accepting jobs in these areas. Our government will do all in its power to see that young people working at their first job or who are about to enter the workforce are provided with information and

education that they need to deal with the hazards in their new environment.

Our government is already meeting the key objectives outlined in Bill 10. As such, I would urge the members to vote against the duplication and added bureaucracy proposed in Bill 10.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise in support of this private member's bill brought today by the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North. I would just suggest to the government that their initiative isn't good enough and they should be looking at an enhanced level. This is what Bill 10 does. It gives a direction, an approach, an opportunity for everyone in the province to get together and work so that we can realize what we all want to realize, and that's a safe workplace for our young workers.

The reality is still that 18,000 young workers in Ontario between the ages of 15 and 24 are going to be injured. Obviously that tells us—it certainly told the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North—that there is need for some legislation that will provide optimum opportunity to ensure there is a safe workplace.

1130

Certainly Rob Ellis, whose 18-year-old son Dave was killed on the second day of work in a bakery in order to get enough money to go to university, is supportive of this legislation. That's why he's worked tirelessly with all members in this House to try to establish some form of program in the schools of Ontario.

The member from Thunder Bay-Superior North has highlighted some experts. Let me tell you about another group of experts that this government should be relying on to ensure that a proper program is put in place. It's District 6 of the United Steelworkers of America from Sudbury. Four years ago, in response to the day of mourning for workers who are injured or killed in the workplace—and for the government members who don't know, that day is April 28—this district put together a safety awareness program for high schools. It started off very, very simply at five schools, affecting 300 students. It's now blossomed to 25 schools, affecting 3,000 students in Sudbury and North Bay. Two schools have adopted it as active curriculum, not passive curriculum.

District 6 includes Ontario and the Maritimes, and it's their hope that this program will spread across Canada in their area because they've announced that 60,000 workers across Canada between the ages of 18 and 24 were injured in the first three months of their employment. I would suggest to the parliamentary assistant and to the government that there is indeed much work to be done. The establishment of this council, which is the essence of this private member's bill, would ensure that proper programs, proper implementation, proper direction, proper and timely resources are put towards the program. Whatever any government member wants to say, that is not in place now.

I would like to commend Anne Rinneard and Al McDougall from District 6 for their excellent work in the Steelworkers' health and safety student awareness program in Sudbury, and of course commend the direc-

tion of District 6 and urge the government to use it as an example. Use what District 6 is doing in Sudbury and in North Bay as the example of what the member from Thunder Bay and Lake Superior is advocating today. It is not in place. It could be in place with minimum resources being used if in fact you accepted the private member's bill and the direction of the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North.

Let me read two very, very short stories: "When Jamal Banks got a summer job in a warehouse, he never thought about getting hurt. But the building he worked in had no safety guards, and Jamal fell 14 feet on to a concrete floor.

"Christy Spencer didn't worry about safety when she started to work after school in the fast-food restaurant—until she slipped on the greasy floor and broke her back.

"Christy and Jamal survived their accidents, but their injuries have changed their lives forever."

With this legislation, government members, we can change the lives of all people who are going into the workplace by educating them towards proper health and safety in the workplace. The member from Thunder Bay-Superior North should be congratulated. He is not asking too much. He is only asking for the safety of our students.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):

I'm pleased to join in the debate on private member's Bill 10. The key point with respect to the member from Superior North is set out in the preamble of his bill and I would just like to read that:

"All Ontarians must work co-operatively to positively address workplace health and safety issues for all Ontario workers, including our young people. Young people should enter the workforce with an awareness of their rights and responsibilities regarding workplace safety and occupational disease. Raising community awareness about workplace injury prevention measures and promoting health and safety is good for Ontarians, good for society, good for Ontario workers and good for business."

Who can argue against that? It certainly is a principle that everyone shares.

What I'd like to deal with here is to show you why the remainder of the bill is not necessary. The legislation that's being proposed is redundant. As the member has indicated, he's met with the minister. There are going to be government initiatives taken with respect to this issue. Quite frankly, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which has been in effect since 1979, sets up a procedure and the framework to deal with internal responsibility. There is a responsibility of all the workers and management and the company directors to deal with and promote health and safety.

The member from Sudbury is not incorrect when he says that much more work needs to be done—certainly it needs to be—but increasing the bureaucracy and taking a big-government approach to dealing with this issue is not going to answer the questions we have to deal with. What

we have to deal with is what the government is being proactive about.

The government is committed to reducing the number of young people injured on the job. As of September 1999, Ontario grade 9 classes have the occupational health and safety component, and by the year 2002 grades 9 to 12 will also have it. What that means is that the new four-year high school curriculum includes specific health and safety expectations in six courses: science, health and physical education, technological education, business studies, the arts, guidance and career education. So on the educational front the government has taken initiatives to make sure our young people understand what occupational health and safety is all about. Also, there is a young worker awareness program which brings the health and safety message to 60,000-plus Ontario high school students each year.

The focus of what we have to do is to make sure that once this education component is instilled in our young workers, when they go into a workplace it is set up properly through the joint responsibility system under the Occupational Health and Safety Act; that the framework is in place to make sure there is a priority put on not only young workers, but also that when workers enter a new workplace they understand their duties and responsibilities and that management and the other experienced workers within the workplace understand their duties with respect to dealing with health and safety within the workplace. It's a joint responsibility system, internal responsibility, and we have to make sure it works.

A number of government initiatives that are well on the way to realizing the bill's key objectives include:

—As I said, the young worker awareness program, which brings the health and safety message to over 60,000 Ontario high school students each year.

—A Web site and an advertising campaign.

—An introduction of the occupational health and safety component to grade 9 curriculum in September 1999.

—Expanding the health and safety education program to cover all secondary grade levels by the year 2002.

Also, the Peterborough Safe Community Coalition sponsored the passport program, which credits local students for health and safety training taken. My good friend Gary Stewart, the member from Peterborough, is certainly a true and strong supporter of that initiative in Peterborough.

The ministry has led a steering committee developing health and safety resource material to assist school boards and teachers at the local level. The assistant deputy minister of operations invited key stakeholders to a meeting as of January to discuss shared best practices, coordination of programs, and possible improvements to awareness, education and training in health and safety matters.

So the government has taken initiatives. We have to do as much as we possibly can to ensure that all workers, not only young workers, receive the proper education, the proper understanding, so they are not only competent in

terms of understanding their duties and responsibilities and familiar with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, but also that we can ensure that when workers go into a new workplace they're going to understand their requirements and can also be an active participant to make sure their duties are followed through; also, the duties and responsibilities on other workers, on foremen, on the upper management team, the company directors—that they all work together to make sure there's fairness and safety taken in terms of training our new workers.

1140

With the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which became law on October 1, 1979: We certainly have gone a long way and we have a longer way to go, because we have to make sure that the underlying principle and intention of the Occupational Health and Safety Act are the concept of joint or internal responsibility for health and safety in the workplace. This concept, which was recommended by the Ham royal commission, is something that we have to make sure actually works, and I think that's the message that is being put forth by the member from Superior North and the member for Sudbury, that we have to make sure that we not only provide the education but that it works in the workplace.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I want to commend my colleague the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North on bringing forward Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students. I also want to commend him for the kind of consultative work that I know my colleague did in bringing forward this bill, consultative work with people who have been affected by the tragedies that occur with workplace accidents, particularly with young people, and consultative work with people who are involved in understanding what needs to be done to prevent these tragic workplace accidents and deaths from occurring in the future. I can only wish that the government could follow this kind of model of consultation so that they would bring forward legislation which is as relevant to real problems as Bill 10, which is being brought forward today by my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North, and that addresses real problems in ways which can work effectively.

When my colleague first spoke to me about his intention to bring forward this bill, I thought it was probably a very good idea. We're all conscious of the tremendous number of accidents that occur in the workplace. One statistic I have in front of me that may have been used already today is that on an average day in Ontario at least one employer in the province is informing a family of a fatality; another three workers will have amputations; 70 will be permanently disabled; and 500 injuries will result in lost time—horrendous statistics. Clearly, workplace safety is something we need to do much more about.

I thought my colleague's idea of bringing workplace safety into the high school curriculum would be a way of shaping the attitudes of young people so that they would have a lifelong awareness and understanding of how to practise workplace safety. What I hadn't fully realized

until I'd had further discussions with my colleague was that this bill will do more than shape the attitudes of future adults in the workplace and prevent tragedies for adults in the workplace, but that there is an incredible number of young victims of workplace accidents. The statistics were shocking to me, and I think that warrants reading them once again in this place.

As many as 25% of Canadians between the ages of 15 and 18 are working on a part-time basis. According to the Ontario Farm Safety Association, which employs many of these young people, 119 children died in farm accidents between 1977 and 1993. According to the Industrial Accident Prevention Association—Ontario, workers between the ages of 15 and 25 account for an injury rate 35% higher than any other tax bracket. Tragically, in 1997 and 1998, 24 young Ontarians lost their lives in the workplace. In 1999, five young people have died on the job already. It's tragic that these young people are the victims of workplace accidents and death.

It's tragic that since 1995, there have been at least nine inquests conducted into such deaths, and my colleague has referred to the tragic death of 19-year-old Sean Kells. Sean Kells's father was quoted as saying: "Sean didn't know he was handling dangerous chemicals. He had received no training and he wasn't wearing proper protective equipment. His death was no accident—it was a killing," a killing because of the lack of enforcement of workplace health and safety regulations, a killing because of the lack of awareness on the part of young workers of the precautions that they need to take to ensure their safety in the workplace.

My colleague, in speaking to this bill, said that his bill was in large measure in honour of Sean Kells. Quite clearly, this bill is put forward in order to ensure that there are fewer reasons to mourn the deaths of young victims of workplace accidents.

I want to, again, recognize the importance of bringing this bill forward and of receiving support from all members of the Legislature today because, as my colleague has noted, there is no province-wide coordination of health and safety programs in our high school curriculum, and I say there's unlikely to be coordination as the government is going through a widespread review of high school curriculum. This is not likely to be a high priority.

There are models that could be readily adopted—as my colleague from Sudbury has indicated, a model developed by District 6 in Sudbury—so it wouldn't be an onerous task to provide a curriculum which could be readily introduced into the high school curriculum and would provide coordination of workplace education in our high schools.

I commend my colleague for bringing forward this bill. I fully support it and I urge all members of the Legislature to support it, recognizing the intent and value of its passage.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me join in with those who are paying tribute to the member for introducing this bill, and I join with that. Obviously

it's a matter that he cares about deeply and has taken the time to use one of the rare opportunities we get to raise issues in this place to bring attention to the issue of health and safety in the workplace, and in this particular instance a clearer focus on young people.

I'd like to begin my remarks with regard to this by referring to an article in one of the local weekly papers in my region. It's the Flamborough Review. The article is written by Arend Kersten and it begins with a quote: "I'm not a professional speaker, I'm just a dad. But I'm a proud dad." Those are the words of Robert Ellis, and he's speaking of the death of his son, David Ellis, who was just 18 years old and on the second day of his job he didn't come home. He died in that workplace.

I think we owe a lot to Mr Ellis, who was able to overcome this terrible personal tragedy and tried to bring something, if it's possible, positive out of it by going around and speaking at the schools. This article is referring to a speech he was giving to the Waterdown District High School and he says: "We are a close family and we have a close relationship with God ... but we miss David desperately."

Mr Kersten goes on to point out in his article that "David Ellis also demonstrated a real love for those less fortunate, helping to peel potatoes for hours at an inner-city mission and providing food to the hungry and homeless in Hamilton out of the back of a truck. 'David didn't speak a lot,' Robert Ellis said. "'He just put his love into action.'"

The article closes by saying, "With summer approaching, Robert Ellis pleaded with the students to educate themselves and speak with others about workplace safety so that the tragedy his family has experienced won't be repeated."

I also want to point out that local 1005, the United Steelworkers of America, much like the Steelworkers in the Thunder Bay area, have also taken it upon themselves to do the job that this government won't do, which is to educate the young people directly as to what their rights are and what the risks are for them when they go into the workplace. They do that at their own expense, their own time, their own initiative, and it's really well received by the students because it's information they didn't know. I don't imagine that there's one student who doesn't see himself or herself as a possible David Ellis or Sean Kells when hearing these stories.

I'm going to read from a letter that was sent less than two months ago to the new Minister of Labour from Wayne Samuelson, the newly re-elected president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. I only have a couple of minutes, so I'm only going to read it in part but it starts out:

"Dear Minister:

"It was with dismay that I read of the death of yet another young worker—a 16-year-old boy crushed to death on September 15 in a dough-making machine. On June 25, 1999, I wrote to you raising concerns regarding the ministry's role in stopping print and radio ads, which were part of a health and safety awareness campaign

directed at young workers. These ads were to include information about David Ellis, a young man who was killed inside a commercial dough-making machine. The ministry prevented this information from going public over concerns that it could have an impact on a future prosecution of the case. Now just a few days ago, Ivan Golyashov, a 16-year-old youth, was killed in a similar machine under similar circumstances.

"But this is not the first time that your ministry has stopped advertisements directed at informing young workers about health and safety in the workplace. In May of 1995, the former Workplace Health and Safety Agency launched an awareness campaign designed to educate young people about the dangers they face at work."

1150

I want to stop there momentarily. I don't want to make a big deal of this and I won't to belabour it or take away from what the member is doing, but I feel it's important that it be on the record that in 1995 the Liberal Party did indeed run on a platform of disbanding the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, an action the government ultimately took, and to recognize that that agency had 50% representatives from workers on that board and that part of their mandate was to educate. So both the government and the Liberals were in favour of killing the very agency that carried out the mandate of the bill that's before us. That's the last I'll say on that in the context of my remarks about this bill.

"The campaign included public service announcements on radio and television, print advertisements and billboards. The campaign centred around Sean Kells, a 19-year-old youth who was killed in a workplace chemical explosion. This campaign was to include paid television advertisements. Unfortunately, an election"—by the way, that was all during the term of the NDP government—"was held in the middle of this campaign and a new government elected." That would be the Mike Harris government. "The Ministry of Labour directed that these paid television ads be cancelled just a day or two before they were to be aired.

"We will never know how many injuries or deaths could have been prevented if these training programs and advertising campaigns were permitted to continue as designed. Perhaps young Ivan would be alive today if his co-worker had been properly trained or even if last summer's campaign had been permitted to proceed as intended."

I think we need to recognize that every October 28, which is the International Day of Mourning, tens of thousands of workers all across Ontario, hundreds of thousands and literally millions around the world mourn and pay tribute to those who have died in the workplace and commit themselves to ensuring that rights and laws are put in place to protect the living.

The fact that Karl Crevar, who is the president of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups and a Hamilton resident, is here speaks to the importance all of us place on workplace health and safety. The only ones

who don't seem to get the message, unfortunately, are those who could do something about it and that would be the Harris government. I hope the backbenchers here will support this bill in the interests of all our children.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm very pleased to support my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North on a very clear and wise proposal that he has come up with. Having been the labour critic and sat through all the hearings on the passage of Bill 99, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, believe me, I'm more than well aware of the extent and the nature and the importance of health and safety in the workplace and the training that is required.

I also would like to point out, from the Ottawa and District Injured Workers Group, that on behalf of the executive, Doug Perrault sent in a supportive letter and I'm very pleased to be able to share with him my sentiments as well.

I'm told that over 25% of students—this is just high school students—are working part-time these days, some in more than one part-time job. This number is increasing all the time. Students work to help support their families and to support themselves, and of course they are vulnerable in the workplace because they're often keen and they do what's asked of them, and it's often their first experience and they also don't know their rights, understandably, including the right to say no to an unsafe workplace.

Because as part-time and seasonal workers they're often not properly trained on safety issues, and I think we all know that, and because as youth they often believe that they are invincible, certain things happen. Students also work under the table for the same reasons, where they have no protection.

Although I commend the government for having a young workers' awareness site on the Web, I'd like to point out that many students do not have access to computers or to the Web, especially those in many of our rural communities. Furthermore, are they likely to go to the Ministry of Labour in the first place as high school students? I would think probably not. That is why it's important to have a universal program in all high schools.

Every day 25 workers are injured on the job in Ontario, I'm told; over 8,000 injuries a year. Over the last three years, 25 young Ontarians have lost their lives and that has been cited already with some specific examples.

I'd like to share an experience of one of my staff who two nights ago dropped into a retail store on Yonge Street. Much of the stock was stored above reach but the perky seasonal sales staff were there to help. They are trained to fetch from up above or down below or in the basement stockroom. She asked to see an area rug and the part-time student willingly climbed up on a store ladder to fetch it for her. While on the ladder she was required to pull out rugs from beneath the one she wanted to see, while precariously balancing herself, with the other four rugs on her left arm, until she fetched the one she wanted. You can see how this is a situation of precariousness.

In casual conversation she learned that she's often required to do this, to use the ladder to get stock for other customers, because there isn't enough floor space to display all the merchandise. She further learned that she's a part-time student, aged 17. She has not had any workplace safety training, either at work or at school. It never occurred to her that balancing herself while balancing heavy stock could cause her to lose her balance and have a nasty fall.

I note that the minimum age for window cleaning in Ontario is 18 years of age, but this isn't true in many workplaces. There are lots of youngsters who are working in fast-food outlets, who are slicing deli meats, who are working with tools and devices that are potentially injurious to them.

I think the recommendation from my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North is a sound one. I think it would go a long way to being very supportive of helping young people in particular become aware of the cautions that are required in a workplace environment. Therefore, I will be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Thunder Bay-Superior North has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Gravelle: I want to thank all my colleagues in the House for responding to my private member's bill, particularly the members for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Sudbury, Ottawa Centre, Sault Ste Marie and Hamilton West, but if I may, I'd like to spend the bulk of the time I have left responding to the government members who spoke on this bill.

What I will say is that I certainly hope this is truly private members' hour, that the recommendations of the two members there are not simply government recommendations and policy being put forward.

I think what has become compellingly clear to those of us who worked so hard on putting this legislation together is that there are many programs out there across the province. Certainly the members for Hamilton West and Sudbury talked about the United Steelworkers and their involvement in the schools. The reason they are working so hard to get into the schools is because we do not have that coordinated policy across the province.

What we were able to identify in the work I did with Ross Singleton and Steve Mantis and the others in Thunder Bay's Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups was that we needed a coordinating body, which the health and safety educational council would truly be, to coordinate all the programs, to do an inventory of it to define which ones were working and to make recommendations as to what should be in the schools. We recognize that it's in the core curriculum of the high schools, but the problem is they don't know how to get it into the schools.

It's very frustrating to listen to the two government members who were speaking in opposition to this, because we know that what is needed is to continue to fight the battle, to find a way to continue to reduce or eliminate accidents and fatalities in the workplace. The health and safety educational council is one we worked on very carefully to see that it would work. We got

support from all those across the province who were involved in workplace safety. I think the government members should be very careful here because to not allow full province-wide implementation would be something they'd be very sorry for. I still ask the government members to support this legislation. It will help in our battle against workplace accidents and fatalities.

The Acting Speaker: The time for debating ballot item number 8 is now complete.

GREAT LAKES ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 SUR LA
PROTECTION ENVIRONNEMENTALE
DES GRANDS LACS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will move to ballot item number 7.

Mr Ouellette has moved second reading of Bill 15, An Act to regulate the discharge of ballast water in the Great Lakes. Shall the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I'd like to refer the bill to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a majority in favour of general government? Agreed.

STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY
PROGRAMS ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 SUR LES PROGRAMMES
DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ
POUR ÉTUDIANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Ballot item number 8.

Mr Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students. Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	DeFaria, Carl	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	O'Toole, John
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Levac, David	Ramsay, David
Cleary, John C.	Martel, Shelley	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Martin, Tony	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Mazzilli, Frank	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Clark, Brad	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 35; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare this motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to committee of the whole House.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Mr Speaker, can I have the bill referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy?

The Acting Speaker: Justice and social policy? Agreed.

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

The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CYRIL BOLLERS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Recently there has been a lot of talk about our youth, keeping our communities safe and taking action on youth crime. The connotation: Youth are bad.

Youth don't have exclusive rights to acts of violence or crime. In fact, in my visits to the schools on Fridays, which I have done for the last 14 years, I'm inspired really by the activities young people are engaged in to promote social responsibility.

Just two weeks ago I had the honour of meeting the 1999 YMCA Peace Medallion recipient, Cyril Bollers, a young person working hard to break the cycle of violence. Cyril Bollers, as an avid volunteer, karate instructor and dedicated fundraiser with the United Way campaign, recognized that youth can participate in the resolution of their own disputes as the key to answering the questions of violence and conflict in our city. He initiated a training program called Prevention Management of Aggressive Behaviour. The program uses interactive personal growth and development techniques that help young people manage uncontrollable behaviour without resorting to physical violence and aggression. Bollers's program is a great success.

I stand very proud of our young people in Ontario and I hope that our government and the members of Parliament will all recognize and salute those wonderful people of our province.

THORNWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): It is with pleasure that I rise today to recognize the efforts of teachers and students at Thornwood Public School in my riding of Mississauga East.

Thornwood Public School recently received \$2,000 from the Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Foundation to establish a green school program. This exceptional program gives students hands-on experience in planting seeds, labelling plants and caring for them as they grow in the school. Students are also learning about plant species and their environmental benefits.

Because teachers have volunteered to care for the plants over the summer, a new outdoor garden will be established at the school in the spring of the year 2000, using the plants the students have grown.

This is a wonderful project. The environment is the most precious commodity of our new millennium. I applaud the many people who have dedicated their time and energy to this project. Great work, students and teachers at Thornwood Public. Keep up the good work. Hands-on learning is as important a method of learning as any other method. On behalf of the parents and residents of Mississauga, I congratulate all of you for this excellent initiative.

PARENT AIDE PROGRAM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): As a result of ministry guidelines and directives, the Frontenac Children's Aid Society will be forced to fire nine members of their highly successful parent aide program, a program that has operated for over 15 years. These support workers are the individuals who work frontline with families in need. They work with the parents of children to give them the necessary life skills and assistance they require. They teach parenting skills and provide much-needed stability.

I have received numerous telephone calls, urgent pleas from parent aides, from teachers, from individuals who have benefited from the program.

We all know that the caseloads of CAS workers is so heavy they do not often have the time to give the personal care and teach prevention to individual families. Removing parent aides from the homes of these children at risk is jeopardizing their safety and chance for a positive life and healthy relationship with their family.

No blame should be attached to the CAS, for they are placed in the horrible position of choosing between different effective programming because of lack of funds.

Ministry officials themselves confirmed this morning at our public accounts committee hearings that CASs are struggling to keep up because of more services, more children at risk and new child protection reporting requirements.

I beg the Minister of Community and Social Services to increase the funding to CASs so that the parent aide programs in Kingston and elsewhere will continue for the

benefits of the children, their parents and all of us in society.

CAMBRIDGE HORNETS HOCKEY CLUB

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): It's my pleasure to stand in the House today to acknowledge the launch of a new sports team in Ontario. After a 12-year hiatus from Ontario hockey, sports fans will be pleased to hear that the Cambridge Hornets Hockey Club has been re-assembled.

The Cambridge Hornets began their season on October 1, 1999, playing against the Aylmer Hornets at Preston Memorial Auditorium. They've been playing to nearly sold-out crowds for the last eight weeks.

Area families and many in this Legislature will remember the Hornets as the former Allen Cup champions back in 1982.

This hockey club is steeped in Waterloo region tradition, dating back to their original debut in 1963 in the Galt Arena Gardens.

I would like to congratulate the many volunteers who have worked so hard to bring back senior A hockey to Cambridge.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and determination of my good friends president Jim MacDonald, Gord Chaplin, the players and the entire Cambridge Hornets executive. On behalf of Cambridge families and Hornets fans everywhere, we appreciate your efforts and we look forward to many successful seasons ahead.

1340

LANDFILL

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Day after day we're reminded in this House that when it comes to the environment in Ontario, those who want to destroy it have no better friend than the Minister of the Environment himself.

Tuesday night, I joined some 250 residents of the area who met in clear opposition to any expansion of the Richmond Township megadump site. The minister should be aware that there was determination in that room, determination to fight this proposed expansion, determination to do what their Minister of the Environment is unwilling to do, and that is to say no to big business, who are more concerned with profit than with the health and safety of my constituents.

Why should residents of my riding be expected to be a dumping ground for all those communities that are unable to take care of their own waste? Not only has the minister been silent on the issue, he has not provided one cent to the residents' group that wishes to conduct independent studies to determine the effect of this dump on their environment.

It's time for you as Minister of the Environment to put the interests and concerns of Ontario residents ahead of the financial interests of your business friends.

I travel through the Don Valley most evenings on my way home, and I marvel that a city the size of Toronto has been able to protect the Don Valley from being used as a dump site by the Americans. My constituents want the same protection against this proposed megadump.

The Minister of the Environment's silence and refusal to reply to letters on this issue clearly show that when it comes to environmental concerns in Ontario, big business has no better friend than Ontario's Minister of the Environment.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This morning Rosario Marchese and I were at two high-rise buildings: 103 and 105 West Lodge Avenue. Between these two buildings, owned by the same slumlord, there are 720 units, ranging from one-room bachelors to multi-bedroom apartments with families. The tenants there range from young people and young families to senior citizens.

What we saw was criminal. We saw one apartment in which the toilet was leaking waste water into the bathroom downstairs. A young mother and her two-month-old baby have had to endure that for two years. No response from the slumlord owner.

In another apartment, the stove had but one burner working. The elements in the oven don't work and the burners on top didn't work. As a result of a complaint to the landlord a month ago, the tenant and his family face eviction.

In another, the holes through the plaster and lathwork provide easy access for the hordes of cockroaches and rodents that invade this woman's kitchen on a daily basis.

But the biggest insult was that these tenants showed me rent-increase notices of 30 to 50%. These tenants, 720 families, are being forced into homelessness by this government's collaboration with greedy slumlords and this government's abandonment of any affordable housing policy.

NESTLÉ JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise today to bring your attention to a job-training success story in my riding.

The Nestlé Company in Trenton, employing slightly under 300 people, is well known for its chocolate, coffee and ice cream. It is also active in the food service industry. I, along with the mayor of Quinte West, His Worship Jack Arthur, toured the plant last week and was mightily impressed.

As Nestlé continues to improve its products and compete in the global marketplace, there emerges a need for a better-skilled workforce. The Ontario government has assisted Nestlé, enabling them to provide input and access to specialized food and beverage training from Loyalist College. Nestlé recently hired 10 people who were trained for one month in the Loyalist program.

The end result has been skilled graduates who are trained in health and safety, food safety and team building, who know how to work in the Nestlé environment. This qualified workforce contributes to increased productivity as well as an immediate \$10,000 saving in training costs. Savings are reinvested in the facility and its people, positioning this company for further and anticipated growth in mid-2000.

HÔTEL-DIEU GRACE HOSPITAL

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Yesterday the board of directors of Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor reported that their earlier deficit figure was off by about a million dollars, and our hospital is now forecasting a \$9-million deficit by the end of this fiscal year.

We have raised this issue repeatedly with the Minister of Health, not only with regard to Windsor hospitals but indeed hospitals throughout the province. What's more troubling is how the hospital intends to deal with the deficit. Let me quote a senior official at the hospital regarding the cost of surgical supplies such as pace-makers and spinal implants:

"We are asking that there be a closer review of spending at the departmental level. For example, if a doctor has a choice between two devices for a patient, with one device more expensive, both the patient's needs and the hospital's ability to pay should be considered."

What that means is that patients in these hospitals—and these devices must be paid for out of the hospital's operating accounts—will not get the highest quality of care available. I would predict that, with these continued deficits, the problem will worsen. It's a shame the minister won't respond to these issues.

DALTON MCGUINTY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I would like to speak today about leadership.

The Ontario Liberal Party has been without an effective leader for so long they forget what true leadership really is. So, in an effort to keep his own job, it is painfully obvious that Dalton McGuinty has launched a smear campaign against the only truly effective leader he knows, Mike Harris.

I have newspaper articles from across the province, written after the Liberals held their own recent mini-leadership convention in Ottawa.

From central Ontario, in the Welland Tribune: "Ever hear of the gang that couldn't shoot straight? Welcome to the Ontario Liberal Party and their so-called leader, Dalton McGuinty. McGuinty may be a good, decent man, but a leader he's not."

From eastern Ontario, in the Kingston Whig-Standard: "Some people dream of winning the lottery—Dalton McGuinty dreams of scandal and political devastation striking the Conservatives to send him to power."

In the Toronto Sun: "It doesn't matter if the Tories are actually arrogant and corrupt—the Liberals will just keep

repeating that mantra in the hopes of fooling the electorate.”

From this so-called leader's own hometown, in the Ottawa Citizen: “McGuinty's problem is the same one he had in the election. He is a leader without compelling ideas of his own. As such, he's left with nothing but cheap attacks on the government voters choose.”

Mr McGuinty, I too believe that you are a good and decent man, but you are not a leader. Stop the mindless attacks and start coming up with some specific and workable ideas. Nobody in this House believes your cries of arrogance and corruption, and now it's obvious the rest of Ontario doesn't believe them either.

MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 1998-99.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Mr Kennedy from the standing committee on estimates, reported the following resolution:

“Resolved: That supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000:

“Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Ministry administration, \$29,025,400; local government—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ON SCHOOL BUSES ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999

SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS DANS LES AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES

Mr Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en vue de protéger les enfants lorsqu'ils sont dans des autobus scolaires.

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

The member, for a short explanation.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): This bill addresses a long-standing need to protect Ontario school children. It would provide a conviction mechanism for a vehicle that illegally passes a school bus with its red warning lights flashing.

1350

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move motions with regard to the standing committee on general government for the purpose of selecting an Environmental Commissioner; and the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of selecting an Ombudsman. I seek unanimous consent to move this motion without notice.

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

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the standing committee on general government, for the purpose of selecting an Environmental Commissioner, and the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, for the purpose of selecting an Ombudsman, may at the call of the Chair sit outside their regularly scheduled meeting times between Monday, December 6, 1999, and Thursday, December 16, 1999.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VISITEURS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Monsieur le Président, aujourd'hui j'ai l'honneur de présenter deux étudiants de ma circonscription qui ont participé à notre programme éducatif qui a débuté en 1995. Ces deux étudiants de l'école Le Pavillon la Croisée d'Embrun du Conseil des écoles catholiques de l'est ontarien sont Myriam Perras et Jonathan Boulerice, et ils ont obtenu la meilleure note d'un examen concernant le processus de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Une fois de plus, je remercie ces élèves pour leur effort.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It's not a point of order, but I'm sure all the members join in welcoming the two fine students.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I believe I have unanimous consent for a representative for each party to speak five minutes on the International Day of Disabled Persons.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous agreement? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Johns: Tomorrow, December 3, is the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons. This important event provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon issues that affect all of us. It provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon the progress that has been made in communities across the province and to reflect upon our shared goals of a barrier-free Ontario.

I believe that all members of the House share my goals for an Ontario where opportunities are available to all members of society. We share a goal of an Ontario where all of us have the opportunity to be productive members of our community, to share in the benefits of a growing economy and to participate in the social and cultural life of our province.

Tomorrow we will mark the achievements of Ontarians with disabilities and the achievements of persons with disabilities in every part of the globe. Their achievements are many. Through personal endeavour, men, women and young people with disabilities have overcome tremendous barriers and remind us what the world potentially really means. They have championed change and made advances that have benefited all of us and they have inspired us through acts of generosity, public spirit and athletic achievement.

As a government and as members of this House, we have a responsibility to build on their achievements. We are moving forward, and there is a great deal more that needs to be done. This government has announced more than \$500 million in initiatives that promote accessibility and create new opportunities. We have enhanced community living and independent living opportunities for people of all ages. We have made enhancements to education that are assisting students with disabilities from preschool right through a transition to post-secondary education. We've also created a new income support and employment program that better meets the needs of people with disabilities. We introduced a range of health initiatives designed to improve care, provide earlier interventions and improve outcomes following serious injuries.

New initiatives are improving accessibility by supporting building and motor vehicle modifications. We are fostering new partnerships and strategic alliances between business and the not-for-profit and broader public sectors. And we have introduced tax measures to assist people with disabilities and offset costs to employers of accommodating employees with disabilities.

I'm very proud that this government was the first in Canada and the only government in the history of Ontario to commit to disability legislation. Just last week in the House we once again renewed that commitment. We look forward to working together with all members of the Legislature and with all of those who share our responsibility for making Ontario more accessible and creating opportunities for all members of our society.

I am sure that all members of the House will join me in celebrating United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Tomorrow the United Nations recognizes the International Day of Disabled Persons. It is a day that is intended to further the integration of persons with disabilities into society.

I'm very proud to add my voice to those praising the accomplishments of persons with disabilities; 1999 has been a banner year for many persons with disabilities. This includes the successful athletes at the Ontario Special Olympics and Paraplegic Games and persons with disabilities who have achieved the greatest heights in law, medicine, academics and administration. It also includes the person with a mental handicap who succeeds in getting their first job. It includes the elderly man with fading vision who learns Braille to keep alive his love of reading. It includes every Ontarian with a disability who has looked at a barrier and overcome it.

There is a long way to go, though, Madam Minister, to achieve the goal of a barrier-free Ontario. There is much more that can be done, and the members of this Legislature can help achieve that goal.

Two years from now, when this Legislature again marks this important occasion, we will have hopefully enacted a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Such legislation will go much further towards the goal of integrating persons with disabilities into society. The model legislation from the United States has been universally praised for opening doors for Americans with disabilities, both figuratively and literally. Now it is our turn.

In addition, we must encourage new supportive housing initiatives that are accessible, affordable and plentiful. We must enhance the funding to the special services at home program for those families who are caring for their children with disabilities.

Tomorrow, I would ask my fellow members of the Legislature to consider what each of us can do to address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in our ridings. If a constituent in a wheelchair came to visit your office, would they be able to enter the door? If one of us was to hire a person with a disability on our staff, as my seatmate has done, would the Legislature offer the necessary services to integrate that person into Queen's Park? If a person with limited sight wanted to receive one of our householders, would they be able to get one in Braille or large print?

Much more, too, needs to be done to improve the accessibility to this building. Over \$300,000 was spent this past summer on this very Legislature, but it was cosmetic in nature. It did nothing to improve access for persons with disabilities to become part of and to watch the decision-making process of this province.

It is a constant learning process to identify and remove the steep obstacles to employment, education, transportation and housing that persons with disabilities face, but it

is well worth it to integrate a million and a half of our friends, constituents and, yes, voters.

In conclusion, I would like to recognize the accomplishments of countless organizations helping those with disabilities. If I were to start naming all those wonderful groups and people by name, we would be here until next year's International Day of Disabled Persons. However, they should each receive our support and best wishes, from the front-line service providers to those committed lobbyists and advocates who struggle on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Members of the Legislature, let us mark this day and use it as a day to turn the page on the past injustice we have done to persons with disabilities. Let's turn that page. Let's look towards the future, to doing everything we can to remove those barriers to persons with disabilities.

1400

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Tomorrow is the International Day of Disabled Persons. I'm pleased to speak to this very important day on behalf of the NDP caucus.

First, I want to acknowledge the tremendous work done by people with disabilities in this province, and right now especially by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act committee, in bringing their concerns to the front of the public consciousness. Their drive, determination and hard work is an example to us all.

On this very important day, I want to share with the members of this Legislature what real people with disabilities face in Ontario right now. I want to give some insight into why we need a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act on the books and enforced right now. You see, real people with disabilities live in a province full of barriers.

Offices for government services have rooms and hallways that do not have enough room for a person using a wheelchair or a scooter.

Limited availability of Braille and other alternate formats for print information creates barriers for people who are blind or have visual impairments or other print disabilities.

People often encounter doors too heavy to handle.

Traffic lights do not allow sufficient time for people who walk slowly or who use crutches or wheelchairs to cross the street.

Landlords are often not aware of how to interact appropriately with visually impaired tenants or others with print disabilities.

Many of our school playgrounds and other school buildings are inaccessible to children with disabilities.

Many people with disabilities are not eligible for use of paratransit systems.

The list does go on and on. Has this government made it easier or harder for persons with disabilities to cope with this province so full of barriers? If you are a single mom with a child with a disability and you are on welfare, you have lost over 20% of your income thanks to this government. Did your disabled child lose 20% of

his or her need for three meals a day? I don't think so. You have fewer hospitals to go to for medical treatment. You have fewer Human Rights Commission offices to go to if you want to complain about the barriers you face.

The Ontario disability support program is in a state of chaos. You don't have any legislation that protects your rights and provides you with equal opportunity because this government got rid of the NDP's Employment Equity Act, replaced it with nothing, told people to go to the Human Rights Commission and now they've cut that once again. You don't have the transportation accessibility programs the NDP government put in place. They're gone as well.

You have a new minister responsible for people with disabilities every couple of years to make promises and then deliver nothing. To top it off, you have a government that supports a resolution to move forward, once again, with a new Ontarians with Disabilities Act and then the next day starts to make excuses about time frames. This from a government that can turn around record numbers of pieces of legislation overnight, as we see daily in this House. The fact is, this government has continued to treat persons with disabilities like second-class citizens.

Tomorrow is a very important day. We have an opportunity today to ask the government once again to move forward on this important legislation. I hope they will, for once, do more than pay lip service to the 1.5 million Ontarians with disabilities and give their issues the priority they deserve.

Polls show that the citizens of Ontario support moving forward with a new Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and I'm disappointed that on this important day the minister didn't take the opportunity to stand and give us some information and news about where they are in the process of moving forward on this important act. I had hoped she would do that today.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I raise a point of order which may involve at some point some significant debate, but I would first like to refer it to you for your very serious consideration. It's a matter which has come before the Legislature in the past and it has to do both with the presentation of omnibus bills and the presentation of bills without sufficient notice.

I'm not going to engage in lengthy debate this afternoon, but I want to just make reference to two precedents in other legislative bodies that I think serve as precedents for your consideration of this issue.

One is a statement that was raised by the Speaker of the House of Commons in 1982 in relationship to omnibus bills. He said:

"When another omnibus bill is proposed to the House, it should be scrutinized at first reading when all honourable members would be given an opportunity to express their views and the Chair could express its view as to

whether the bill goes too far or is acceptable from a procedural point of view.”

You will be aware, Mr Speaker, that this morning we learned that Bill 23 is to be presented for first reading debate in the House this afternoon. We did not learn that until this morning. Bill 23, although a relatively small bill, constitutes an omnibus bill in that it relates to three very different pieces of legislation and addresses two very substantively different issues. Therefore, it constitutes an omnibus bill.

The second issue I'd like to raise is to quote from Beauchesne when he says:

“The principles of Canadian parliamentary law are:

“To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence of tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner; to enable every member to express opinions within limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time; to give abundant opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken upon sudden impulse.”

Mr Speaker, I would like you to consider what has become something of a practice in this House of presenting both omnibus bills which address more than one piece of legislation within the bill, and even more importantly, substantively different issues within the same bill, and secondly, the presentation of that kind of bill essentially without notice.

This bill, Bill 23, was tabled in the House only two days ago, was printed only yesterday and called for first reading this morning. Already I've had letters from two professional associations that have become aware that the bill may relate to their professions, but they haven't even had an opportunity to see the bill, let alone provide any input to first reading of the bill.

I will leave it at that. I know the issue came before the House when Bill 26 was presented, the original sweeping omnibus bill. I know the ruling of Speaker McLean at the time was not to consider a division of the bill, but I believe there are serious points of order that need to be considered in this Legislature and, as a new Speaker, I would ask you to consider these issues very seriously and report to the House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for raising the point of order. We'll get through question period and then I will have a ruling on that.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Very briefly, simply as a bit of a longer-time observer of bills coming before this House, I wish to express a similar concern about the piece of legislation that the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan has brought to your attention.

What is increasingly happening with bills—this is not necessarily a problem of individuals but of the whole House—is that bills become either supportable or not supportable based on how many hostages they have inside them; that is, there may be something that's entirely different within a bill, and a bill that would normally be supportable and might get through the House

very quickly doesn't get through the House quickly and becomes a matter of rancour because there are additional components to it.

The point of order that we deal with is, how different are those points? The bill to which Mrs McLeod has made reference, if I look at an instance, is one which I could support very much in terms of the right to sue cigarette-making companies, tobacco companies. Yet another component which gives tremendous powers to the Minister of Health with regard to local hospitals—I can't support that. You can see that these are diametrically opposed pieces of legislation contained within one, and I certainly want to commend the member for Fort William for raising it and endorse that particular position.

1410

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to give second and third reading to parts I and II of Bill 23 right now. Those are the parts of the bill that deal with the government's ability to sue tobacco companies. I know how important that is to the government, and I would hope we're prepared to give it second and third reading right now, parts I and II of Bill 23. Agreed?

The Speaker: Just so you know, the member would need to have a motion to sever parts I and II and then be able to proceed.

Mr Duncan: I am seeking unanimous consent to present a motion that would sever parts I and II of Bill 23 and then we would give second and third reading to them right now.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? All in favour? I'm afraid I heard a no.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the current Minister of Municipal Affairs. Minister, you held a press conference this morning at 10 o'clock and at that time you trotted on down to the city of Toronto and suggested to them, in what can only be the most arrogant of ways, that they should have 54 hours to decide how they're going to govern the city of Toronto, a \$6-billion organization. You trotted down there this morning and said, “Saturday, at 5 o'clock, that's how much time you have to decide how you are going to govern yourselves.”

Minister, please tell the House that that is either incompetent or that is sheer arrogance. You cannot possibly be serious about allowing a city the size of Toronto, a \$6-billion organization, 54 hours to decide how they will govern themselves, a city of 2.2 million people.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd be

happy to correct the record, because the characterization of the honourable member is incorrect. What I said this morning, and I'd be happy to repeat it for the benefit of members of this House, is simply that we are giving the city of Toronto, and indeed any citizens in Toronto, an opportunity to help us draft the bill. I do have a deadline, the deadline internally is Saturday at 5 o'clock, so that we can draft a bill in clear conscience for this House to debate. I'm sure if you were in government you wouldn't give them that opportunity to help draft a bill before it's even presented to the Legislature.

Of course, after the bill is presented, Mayor Lastman, all the city councillors and all the citizens of Toronto have the first reading of the bill, they have the second reading of the bill, they have the third reading of the bill to offer their advice as well. Internally, I have to have a deadline; externally, they have all of those opportunities, which are more opportunities than you'd every give them, I'm quite sure.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Take a seat. Order. Was the minister finished?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mrs Pupatello: We want to know where my friend Tony went. Where is Minister Tony Clement? All we have is a shell of a man left. This is the same man that used to stand on the street corner and talk about direct democracy, talk about power to the people, give the people a chance to have their say. This is the same Tony. We want to know, where did Tony go? Where is that man you've got the gall to trot down to the city of Toronto and say 54 hours for a \$6-billion organization governing 2.2 million people in that city? This is the man who thumped on about direct democracy, and now you've got the nerve to walk on down to the city of Toronto in that manner? All we want to know is, where did the real Tony Clement go?

Hon Mr Clement: I find it a bit rich for the honourable member, who filibustered me personally for six months—when I wanted direct democracy, she was against it, or at least her leader was; perhaps she was directed by her leader, I don't know.

This has been an issue of public debate in Toronto for the last two and a half years. We are offering—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I cannot hear the answer from the minister. I would tell all the members—member for Windsor West, please come to order.

Hon Mr Clement: We are offering the citizens of Toronto, city council and Mayor Lastman an opportunity to affect the bill before it is even introduced. Upon its introduction they have the first reading, they have the second reading, they have the third reading to be involved in public consultation.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Order, please.

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member talks about mandates. Another thing that we're proud of on

this side of the House is the mandate from the people of Toronto and the people of Ontario to stand up for the taxpayer, to ensure the taxpayer gets a break, to ensure there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability from the politicians. That's the mandate we got and that's the mandate we are proud of.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Minister, in the last election most of your members ran on the mandate that the megacity was working so well. I just want to straighten out the record on that.

As a citizen of Toronto, a person who served on Metro council and York council, I really find it repugnant the way you're treating the people of Toronto. I know you have contempt for local officials; we know that. But you are saying to the people of Toronto, "You have until sundown on Saturday to decide how your city is governed." I think that's a total affront to the people of Toronto, in light of the fact that just last week we buried Mayor Lamport, who would be in here going off the deep end if he were to hear what you're doing.

How can you stand there and say you're going to have input from the citizens of Toronto, you're going to have input from council, within this deadline you've put to them? I find that an abuse of power, an abuse of the people of Toronto. I'm telling you on behalf of my constituents, you have no right to do that. You and your government had better stop doing it, because we are citizens, we are taxpayers—

The Speaker: The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Clement: I want to quote from Mayor Lastman yesterday on radio. Mayor Lastman said, "If they want to cut it to 44 and they want us to cut to 44"—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. We will not continue if I cannot hear the question. The clock will go down for the entire hour if I am not able to hear the minister. I'm warning everyone, please come to order so I can hear the answers.

Hon Mr Clement: Let me quote from Mayor Lastman: "We've got to do what's best for these people, the citizens of the city of Toronto. If they want to cut it to 44 and they want us to cut it to 44, we'll do it, but let us do it."

We are giving the city of Toronto, the mayor of Toronto, the council of Toronto, the opportunity to have input even before the legislation is introduced. Then they get additional input on first, second and third reading, as is the parliamentary practice in this democracy in the province of Ontario. We are giving them ample opportunity. It's more opportunity than they would give, I'm sure, but we are proud of the opportunity to give the citizens of Toronto their say to have lower taxes and a more accountable government.

1420

AGRICULTURAL OFFICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In 1888, that ministry was created here in Ontario to help farmers produce the most productive industry in North America. A large part of that was field offices found across Ontario to help farmers do just that. Today we have a \$6-billion industry, the ag industry. It's the second-largest industry in Ontario, and Ontario's agriculture industry is at the top across the nation.

My question for the minister is this: Where in your Blueprint that you ran on did you suggest to farmers that you would be closing over 40 offices, which was announced by your ministry today? Having been in your riding not that long ago, and understanding that farmers were yelling at you from the back of the room, you broke your promise to farmers. Where in the document that you ran on in the last campaign does it say you're closing over 40 field offices?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I can assure you that our government is committed to the second-largest industry in this province, which generates some 640,000 jobs in our economy.

In the six months that I've been consulting with the members of the agri-food sector, they told me that the ministry needed to be more focused on the things that the industry needed. We no longer could do things the same way they had been done. We had to refocus.

I want to point out that the issue is that we have a commitment to the agriculture and food sector that is second to none. In fact, in this past year the budget for that ministry has gone up some \$40 million. That is our commitment. But we are also obligated to look at the most cost-effective and efficient ways to deliver those services that the farmers are wanting and need. We are proposing to do that by realigning the services as we presently provide them, and we'll provide better and higher-quality services in the areas the farmers and the food sector have told us they want them delivered.

Mrs Pupatello: Those field offices are staffed with technical support. There are specialists in those field offices that farmers have come to rely on. When that 500-pound pig is sick in the county of Essex, are you expecting they're going to drag that pig up the 401 all the way to Ridgeway to get the kind of support they used to get right there at home?

I'm suggesting to this minister that you are not listening to the farmers of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Take your seat. Stop the clock. Member for St Catharines, come to order, please. The member for Windsor West.

Mrs Pupatello: Minister, I would suggest that every single member in this House understands the importance of agriculture, certainly on this side of the House.

Let me tell this minister that the farmers in his own riding spoke to me. Those farmers said to me that you broke your promise to them. That was before the announcement of the closure of those offices. I want to see how you're going to rationalize to them that the specialists aren't available, that the techno support is gone. How are they going to call a 1-800 number when they're on a farm from morning till night during their season? I want to know exactly what you're going to tell the people who already told this minister themselves at a town hall meeting that you broke your promise to them.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I wish I could agree with the member opposite that everyone in this House understands agriculture and the farmers' problems, but it's obvious from that question that the member opposite has absolutely no idea. I can assure the member that a farmer with a sick hog in Essex county does not take it to the local ag office to see that that hog needs to be looked after. They call their local veterinarian, and the veterinarians, very capable people, look after that hog.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Member for Kingston and the Islands, please come to order. Member for Windsor West, please come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Hardeman: Again I thank you, Mr Speaker.

I do want to assure the member that the realignment of the ministry services will indeed put more expert advice at the disposal of our farmers. So when they call with a problem, they will be able to have it answered because we have the experts on staff to do that. We no longer can be providing the services as they have been provided for 100 years, as the member mentioned. We must provide it in a new and streamlined way. As farming has changed, so the ministry must change.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Minister, you have betrayed the farmers of Ontario. Last spring you promised more support for farmers. Today you are closing all the ag offices in southwestern Ontario. The minister's memo to staff today said it's his job to steer, not row. Well, if you're not prepared to row, get out of the boat and let in somebody who knows how to do it.

Be warned, Minister: You will be remembered by the farmers of Ontario as the Minister of Agriculture who destroyed that ministry. Will you do the right thing and scrap your decision to close these offices in southwestern Ontario now?

Hon Mr Hardeman: Mr Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. This is the last warning for the member for Windsor West, and I would ask the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to come to order as well.

Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Mr Hardeman: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just want to reassure the member opposite that the farmers we have spoken to, the farmers in my riding and the farmers in his riding, which I had the opportunity to visit just a number of weeks ago, have told us in no uncertain terms that they have set priorities as to what they want from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. There are four main areas.

They want strong safety net programs. We can assure the members opposite that they will be not only maintained but will be enhanced to meet those farmers' needs.

"We want environmental stewardship and research and technology transfer." That will be increased.

"We want to expand and diversify the agri-food industry locally and abroad." We are putting the people and programs in place that will do that.

Thank you very much for the question. We look forward to a very successful and efficient Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Mrs Pupatello: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'll be registering the necessary paperwork for a late show with that minister on that question.

The Speaker: I thank the member. She should put it with the table.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Trinity-Spadina is ready for a question.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): A question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: Minister, I was there this morning at your press conference so I know how you characterized it, and I know that you said what you want is the views of the city of Toronto with respect to your desire to chop them down. You said "By the way, it will be either 22 or 44; it can't be any more than that." You want these views by sundown Saturday. It's quite clear. I would add that this deadline, executed by dictatorial decree, is made worse by the fact that sundown tomorrow is the beginning of Hanukkah. The mayor would normally say when he's confronted by such things, "These guys are nuts." I agree with Mayor Lastman's normal characterization of the way I view your deadline: It's nuts, Minister.

In view of this holiday that comes Friday at sundown, are you going to reconsider your deadline to give them proper time to deal with this issue?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the opportunity to clarify once again that this is an internal deadline. We'd be happy to take the mayor's or any other members of council's or any other citizen of Toronto's views on this matter on first reading, on second reading, on third reading. But I have an obligation to present bills in this House on behalf of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and in order to do so I want to get the views as

soon as possible to give them that extra opportunity that, incidentally, your government hardly ever accorded anyone in your entire term: the opportunity to have their say even before we introduce the legislation.

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But I want to tell the honourable member—he was there at the conference, no doubt about that—we have had call after call, communication after communication to my office from the taxpayers of Toronto, who want action, who want justice, who want a better city council for themselves and for the city of Toronto, and we have to oblige them.

Mr Marchese: When you were asked how many people called, you said, "I don't know." You come here and say, "We got calls and we got calls," anonymous, of course, people calling. The only person you called, your only source, is M. Doug Holyday, the city councillor. Anybody who follows city council even a little bit knows that Doug Holyday is so persuasive at council that he usually gets one vote—his own. That's all he gets. Yet you say you're listening to city council. You say that your overnight partnership is meaningful. That's what you said, that you want to do this in partnership with the city. It's a one-night partnership with Mayor Mel and the city of Toronto.

What kind of partnership is it when one side says, "We're putting a gun to your head and you've got to agree with us by sundown on Saturday or else"? Is this your idea of partnership, Minister?

Hon Mr Clement: I mentioned Councillor Holyday. Councillor Jakobek has been outspoken on this issue. There's a councillor named David Miller, by the way, who ran for the NDP in the York South by-election. Do you know David Miller? I know David Miller. He beat me in an election. I thank my lucky stars he did, because I get to serve the people of Ontario. David Miller thinks it's a good idea. If it's good enough for one of the NDP caucus on city council, why isn't it good enough for the honourable member? Certainly, it is not only them. Mayor Lastman again, for the record, "If they want to cut it to 44 and they want to cut us to 44, we'll do it, but let us do it." The mayor is going to get his wish.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Minister, once again your government is showing complete contempt for the people of the city of Toronto and for democracy in this city. You said you wanted a partnership with this city, yet you're giving them just two days to respond to your plan that you've set in stone already. You're forcing municipal politicians once again to spend endless time on your hare-brained schemes instead of things like homelessness, child care and public transit, for example. They'll all be running around looking for a seat to run in, instead of criticizing Queen's Park.

Your two-day partnership is nothing but a one-night stand, and I think we know who's getting screwed here. Is this your idea of a partnership, Mr Minister?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, the characterization is inaccurate. We are asking citizens of Toronto, councillors

in Toronto, the mayor of Toronto to get me their views before we craft the legislation. Then, after the legislation is introduced, if they still want to have their say, they have first, second and third reading. That's our parliamentary practice and tradition, of which we are particularly proud. So the honourable member has got it completely wrong. She talks about the citizenry. Who is speaking for the taxpayer? Who is looking out for the taxpayer?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Minister take his seat. I can't hear when the members are shouting across. I can't hear the answer. I need to hear the answer from the minister. Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: Again, somebody has to look out for the taxpayer here. We are hearing about the need throughout the entire province of Ontario to deliver better services with more accountability, more transparency, doing better for less, giving the taxpayer a break. It's obvious the honourable member isn't sticking up for the taxpayer. I don't know which interest she is sticking up for, but we on this side of the House know which side we're on: on the side of the taxpayer, on the side of the—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. New question, the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: He's a funny guy, this minister.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got another question, to the Minister of Education. Students in Ontario will be receiving this booklet, each and every one across Ontario. It's flashy. I've got to tell you, under normal circumstances, if we had a whole lot of money in education, if you hadn't cut it down to the bone, it wouldn't be so bad. But the students of Canterbury High School are outraged by this. They feel it's a slap in the face to spend \$2.5 million on this booklet while their arts program is being cut.

The picture of Mike Harris doesn't bother me. OK, Mike, where are you? Oh, here you are, Mike. It doesn't bother me that he's there, but it's \$2.5 million, and for me frankly it doesn't make any sense. When we don't have money for essentials, you people find money, \$2.5 million, to fund this kind of program, for a luxury like this, to have the Premier's face on this and also the minister. Is this your priority?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): If the honourable member does read the book, he will see that there are some excellent examples of work by students. I certainly agree with my honourable colleagues that that work needed to be shared with people across the province, and students are certainly benefiting from it. As a matter of fact, we're getting calls for more copies of these books because they'd like more copies of these books.

I would also like to remind—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member for Kingston and the Islands, please come to order.

Member for Essex, please come to order. Minister of Education.

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I said, we're getting requests from schools for more copies of this particular book because they find it very good.

What I would also like to say to the honourable member is that we are spending \$323 million for additional textbook support out there for those schools. Teachers are telling me that they are seeing new textbooks—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, please take a seat.

Member for Kingston and the Islands, this is his last warning.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Government members, order, please.

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I said, \$323 million more out there for textbooks I think is a considerable investment in front-line classroom services and certainly shows the commitment we have to ensuring that our excellent teachers have excellent support.

Mr Marchese: What we have is a high school system and an elementary school system that is being underfunded severely. We have libraries that are underfunded. We're losing our specialty teachers, our special education teachers, our music teachers, and there are cuts to ESL. Schools are selling out to the corporations to get money. We have no money to deal with the resource materials that deal with violence prevention in the schools, yet this minister says, "We're getting requests for more of these books because people love them."

Where are your priorities, Minister? Some \$2.5 million, for this. It's a luxury to have Mike Harris's picture on the front page here, but it's not a luxury for students of Canterbury High School, who are losing their arts program. It's not a luxury for most students to see this book as they're seeing cuts in their high school system. Minister, look at me. Minister, look here. Where are your priorities?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The only "selling out" that happened in this province was when the honourable member's party, when they were government, sold out the taxpayers and the schoolchildren in this province.

When teachers were asking for more supports in classrooms, they were letting school boards build buildings with tinkling fountains and great wonderful supports in them.

We have put \$585 million more into the classroom to help support our teachers; \$323 million for textbooks, because we believe that that's an important support. We are going to continue to spend more in the classroom, where it's going to help our excellent teachers do an excellent job to produce excellent students. That's what the parents of this province want.

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POLICE OFFICERS

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Today I have a question for the Solicitor General.

Toronto is enduring an epidemic of drug-related murders. No fewer than six murders have taken place in my riding since my election six months ago tomorrow. These murders are being committed with guns, and on streets and in parks where children play.

There are only six drug officers active in two downtown police divisions, home to more than 200,000 people. On Monday in committee, Staff Sergeant Ken Kinsman of the Toronto Police Service acknowledged that there are fewer—not more but fewer—police on the streets of Toronto than there were when your government took office in 1995.

What efforts is your government making to reverse the trend towards fewer police on the streets of our capital city?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I appreciate the question from the member. Clearly, our government feels it's very important to get front-line police officers on the streets. That's really why we've embarked upon a program, I think a very successful one, of investing around \$150 million to get 1,000 net brand-new police officers on the streets of this province. These—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Where are they?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I've been asked, "Where are they?" By the end of the year we expect to have over 700 of these officers into the communities. We feel it's very important. That's our commitment to getting more police officers on the street.

I would hope that the various municipalities who fund municipal police services in the province have the same priorities to make sure that we crack down on crime. Certainly we think it's important. That's why we're investing the money. I hope the municipalities do as well.

Mr Smitherman: If this were a hockey game I might compliment you on that deflection, but it's not. It is a matter of life and death. You used the word "successful" but didn't deal with the heart of the matter, which is that there are fewer, not more but fewer, police on the streets of the city of Toronto.

Interjection.

Mr Smitherman: Perhaps not in Etobicoke, which the member from Etobicoke is barking about, but in downtown Toronto that's certainly the issue.

Let's review the facts: There are fewer police protecting the people I represent than there were when your government came to office. Don't take my word for it; listen to Staff Sergeant Kinsman. The police know it, my community certainly knows it and now you know it. I ask you again, what are you doing to put more police on the streets of Toronto?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Let me respond to that in two ways. First of all I'll talk about the police force, which we have direct responsibility for, and we have direct responsibility for funding more police officers on the street. That's the OPP.

Since 1995, there has been a net increase in the number of OPP officers. Having said that, that indicates

how important this is to us to get more police officers on the street. We can only try, through a program, to get more front-line police officers there to show the municipalities, which fund their municipal police services, what we believe the priorities are. It's important to us because we have increased the number of OPP officers.

We have also added 1,000 net brand-new front-line police officers to the streets of this province. They are there.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

An editorial appeared in today's Toronto Sun, and I want to quote from it. It said: "We favour the province's plan to reduce the size of council to 44 members, plus the mayor, from the present 57, plus Mel." They mean, obviously, Mayor Lastman. "In our view, 44 politicians are still better than 57."

A recent survey conducted by the city of Toronto of 20 major North American cities shows that none has more councillors than Toronto. There's a belief by some, and as you mentioned today, by some on city council, that city council is too large and unwieldy.

In today's Toronto Star, Craig Bromell, the president of the Toronto Police Association said, "We're very much interested in the downsizing (of city council) and we think it should be done and it should be done as soon as possible so that it's in place for the next election."

I want to know what the financial impetus is for realigning Toronto city council and how this exercise will benefit Toronto taxpayers.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. This is the topic that is on the minds of Torontonians as they seek to have better governance for themselves and a better break for the taxpayers.

As I said this morning, in 1997, as a temporary transitional measure we went to a 57-councillors-and-a-mayor model for the 1997 election. But it was indicated at the time to city council that they should take the next couple of years to refine their numbers and to come back with a proposal. Unfortunately, Toronto city council was unable to come back with a proposal so that we could take action before this and bring council down to a manageable size.

Let me put this into a context. Toronto currently has 42,000 people per councillor, less than Mississauga, less than Edmonton, less than Vancouver, less than New York, less than Chicago and 10 other cities in the survey. Only five cities have fewer people per councillor than Toronto.

This province has led by example. It's time that the Toronto taxpayers receive the same fairness from our government.

Mr Newman: Three years ago, when Bill 103 was brought before this House, the bill that amalgamated the former city of Toronto with Scarborough, North York, East York, York, Etobicoke and the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, where seven municipalities became one, the original plan was to have the city of Toronto governed by 44 councillors plus one mayor.

In light of your announcement today, Minister, what kind of end result can the citizens of the city of Toronto expect to come out of this?

Hon Mr Clement: We're still looking at a variety of options. Both 22 and 44 have been discussed and we consider both of them viable options, but we wanted to get some input from the mayor and the council. We would like to get that as soon as possible so we can include it in the legislation.

I want to say to this House that the city has come a long way through the amalgamation process. There have been cumulative salary and benefits savings, about \$85 million for 1999, and they're projected to be about \$104 million for next year. The non-salary benefits are about \$36 million, and \$46 million for 2000. So I could say without fear of contradiction that amalgamation savings to date have totalled nearly \$121 million for this year and could reach about \$150 million next year.

It's obvious that amalgamation has been a great benefit. We want to take the next step to ensure that the city of Toronto council can act in a clear way and in an accountable way to benefit the citizens of Toronto, to deliver the best services at the least possible cost. That's what we owe the taxpayers in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for York South.

Applause.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): Thank you. I didn't know I had so many fans in this place.

I want to go back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs on this matter of reducing the city of Toronto council size. Try and help me out here, Minister. I want to understand this. You're saying to a city of 2.5 million people that they have until sundown on Saturday to make up their minds. What you're suggesting here, if I'm not mistaken, is that you're going to allow them some input.

My question to you is this, Minister: What process do you have in place to allow the good citizens of this city to have their say and to have some input into your plan?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me clarify: If they want to have a say while we're in the midst of drafting the legislation, which incidentally is something that this government has taken to heart—previous governments did not do this—I have to have a deadline because I have to in good conscience present a bill to this House at the earliest available opportunity. But there will be other opportunities as the bill goes through first, second and third readings. I don't think I need to educate the honourable member, who has more experience than I do about—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Will the minister take his seat. Order.

Hon Mr Clement: —the parliamentary procedures that this House has adopted. But certainly each and every one of the 22 ridings in Toronto has an MPP who has a constituency office. I encourage them to talk to their MPPs. It's very important that people such as yourselves and such as our MPPs, such as the NDP MPPs hear from the taxpayers about how important it is to deliver better for less, to always look for the ways to ensure that the taxpayer gets a break. I'm sure your office will receive some calls and I'd be happy to receive that information as well.

Mr Cordiano: Let's get this straight. You're saying that you want people to have some input, and between now and sundown on Saturday you're going to provide magically for some input. I did not hear a process outlined as to how they would have their say. In fact, you're suggesting that you're going to draft the bill, but you want their input. So which is it? Do you want their input into drafting the bill, or do you have a bill and you're not going to have any input? What's the process?

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We're simply asking, what is it you plan to allow the good people of this city, 2.5 million people, to have some say in how this is going to unfold? We have not heard that. Between now and Saturday sunset you have not outlined how they're going to have their input. Can you please do that for us?

Hon Mr Clement: I'd be happy to comment on that. I don't think it's rocket science here. People are going to be in their constituency office tomorrow, yes? It's Friday; the House isn't sitting; I'm sure you'll be in your constituency offices. I know our members have offices with staff as well as themselves being available. There is an opportunity for citizens, the good hard-working taxpayers of Toronto to have their say, and that's very important as well, even before we get the bill introduced.

We're giving them that opportunity. There's an opportunity after the bill is introduced. It's called first reading. There's an opportunity during debate on second reading. There's an opportunity for debate during third reading. All of those opportunities exist and we welcome the input because that is what is so important about this process.

I want to say, for the record, that the calls coming into my office, the faxes coming into my office and the e-mails say Torontonians want a break, they want a city council that works and they want to get a break as taxpayers. That's what we're committed to. That's what this government is always looking for.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Minister responsible for Children. Yesterday Campaign 2000 released its Ontario Report Card on Child Poverty. In this report they make a series of recommendations about how the Ontario government could improve its record on child poverty. Minister, is the government acting on these recommendations?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford for this important question. As a matter of fact, I had the opportunity to meet last week with the members of Campaign 2000 and I'm happy to tell this member and the members of the Legislature that, yes, our government has already acted on a number of the recommendations that are contained in their report card, which they released yesterday.

The first recommendation, which is very important to all of us, and it is important enough to Campaign 2000 to make it their first recommendation, is that we should establish an early years program across this province.

Mr Speaker, I know that you are aware that this is something that in fact is happening as we sit in this House today, so I'm very proud of that.

The other part that I think the House would be interested to know is that Laurel Rothman, the executive director of Campaign 2000, when I met with them, said, "We were very happy with it and you should be proud—Ontario certainly took a leadership role."

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

Mr Tascona: Minister, could you please outline other initiatives our government has taken since it assumed office in 1995 to assist low and middle income families across the province.

Hon Mrs Marland: I think it has been said a number of times in this House by a number of ministers that we're concerned about all families and all children and all forms of poverty in this province, including child poverty.

We believe that the best way of helping these children and improving their lives is to help their parents get a job, and that's why we're very happy that we have 615,000 net new jobs in this province since we became the government. We happen to be a government that doesn't believe in just writing a welfare check and saying: "Go away for a month. Don't bother us." We believe in being proactive in the lives of these children and these families in this province: the very fact that we have 451,000 fewer people on welfare, which by the way includes—I'm sure the Liberal members will want to know this—190,000 fewer children in families dependent on welfare.

We're very proud of our proactive programs and we're happy—

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

PARAMEDICS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question would have been for the Minister of Health today, but since she's not here, it's for the Acting Premier and Chair of Management Board. I just want him to know that it's not about the lottery corporation or the Roberta Bondar Building, but it is about another community in northern Ontario that's on the cusp of a health care crisis. We have the ambulance paramedics in Thunder Bay threatening to

go on strike tomorrow morning if an agreement that all the parties except the province signed off on six weeks ago, that seems to have everybody happy—50% of the cost of that agreement would come from the community of Thunder Bay; the other 50% has to be paid for by the province. At this particular time the province, even though they've known about it—we've had conversations with the minister herself—have not come to the table to say they will play the part they need to play to make sure this crisis doesn't happen.

Minister, will you today tell us that you will put an end to this possible occurrence tomorrow morning by coming to the table and giving your 50% to this agreement that everybody else agrees to?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I believe the Minister of Labour wants to answer this question.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Right now they're in a dispute about the employer situation and who they work for. What happened was both parties referred their positions to the Ministry of Labour, asking for a ruling on exactly who is in fact the employer. The Ministry of Labour has taken those, obviously vetted them and sent them to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for a decision. Basically the position of the government, which is fair and reasonable in my opinion, is we need a decision from the Ontario Labour Relations Board to determine the actual employer before we can move forward on any designations or decisions with respect to costs, settlements, who pay for the settlements and how they pay for the settlements. It's not a case that anyone is holding this issue up or in fact delaying it at all; it's simply a case where we need a definition of exactly who the employees are employed by, and until we get that it's very difficult for us to move forward.

Mr Martin: Minister, this is not a labour issue; this is a health care issue. The community of Thunder Bay is going to be at risk tomorrow if these ambulance paramedics are not at work, if they're on strike. You have in your hands the ability to come to the table and say that you will resolve this so they can continue to do their work, and then perhaps discuss these other issues that you've put on the table here today.

It's very clear that the group they negotiated with was Superior North Emergency Medical Services. The cost of the agreement is going to be picked up by the municipality to a level of 50%. The province only has to kick in the other 50%. The employers, the employees and the community of Thunder Bay are in agreement here. The only piece missing is the province. Will you divert a health care emergency in Thunder Bay tomorrow by coming to the table and saying that you will put your 50% on the table?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First off let me tell you this: We said very directly to the parties that there can be no strike until it's determined who they work for. If they're under HLDA they can't strike; if it's under the Labour Relations Act they can strike. So be very understanding of this: If they do go on strike—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Listen, if they go out, it's not a proper strike. We've also done this: If they do go out on strike illegally, there's a contingency plan in place to provide ambulance services for the area.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Tony, I'm trying to get across to you that we have a contingency plan in place should there be any illegal strike. We have covered every possible angle. We're not delaying. The simple fact is there's a problem here. They don't know who the employer is. Under the hospital act they can't strike; under the Labour Relations Act they can strike. They asked the Ministry of Labour to solve the issue. We took the submission, sent it to the Ontario Labour Relations Board and in fact I called the parties this morning to try to talk with them. We couldn't be any more involved and do more to avert this situation, other than having this unhelpful intervention.

1500

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today I have reintroduced an act to protect Ontario children who ride school buses. It has been more than four years since I first introduced my bill—four years of intensive lobbying, gaining support from local, provincial and national organizations that advocate vehicle liability, four years waiting for the Harris government to introduce a meaningful deterrent to protect our children from reckless drivers who pass school buses illegally.

I have delivered over 30,000 petitions to this government in support of this bill. I'm proud to have the Marcuzzi family and the Loxton family here in the gallery today. They have lived the nightmare of losing their daughters and sisters because of irresponsible drivers who refuse to obey the law. They understand the need for vehicle liability and are here to fight for it. They know this government has its priorities all wrong.

Tell them, Minister, why won't you pass this bill?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to congratulate the work of my colleague the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex and his dedication to this issue. It is indeed a tremendously important issue. The safety of our children is a priority, I believe, of everybody in this House.

We have taken action. We've cracked down on people who illegally pass school buses. We've doubled the fine for the first offence to a maximum of \$2,000; for a subsequent offence to a maximum of \$4,000. Of course, those people who do this irresponsible act face potential imprisonment, as well as six demerit points. It is illegal to pass a school bus and it can be reported to the police.

With respect specifically to your bill—and I understand the passion you have for it and I have great sympathy for it—unfortunately your bill does not target the aggressive driving, it does not give demerit points,

and it isn't appropriate to give policing powers to bus drivers.

Mr Hoy: Minister, I suggest you reread the bill, because it provides a conviction mechanism and it does target drivers.

You say you don't want to give police powers to school bus drivers. This is absolute hogwash. School bus drivers already have the power to identify lawbreakers if they could only see their faces. But this is the problem; most often they cannot. It tears them apart to watch helplessly, as they must all too frequently, when somebody ignores the flashing red light.

Tell Ontario school bus drivers why you won't give the law the teeth to apprehend lawbreakers who threaten the lives of 810,000 children each and every day on our school buses.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I don't think anybody can imagine anything worse than losing a child to an irresponsible driver. It is a very serious matter, and I do agree with my colleagues from across the floor that we have to continually address this whole question of road safety.

This is why tonight there will be the first meeting of the advisory panel that I put together on road safety. We're bringing together the 20 main road user groups to advise on potential changes to the Highway Traffic Act.

We take safety very seriously. We have acted in the last four years, and I'm pleased to state that our roads in Ontario are the fourth-safest in North America. That being said, it doesn't matter if it's one child or one person who is killed, that's one too many.

We want to work with you to make our roads safer, to make sure we can address this. We just don't feel this bill is the right approach.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the right ministry, the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, and it is with regard to this wonderful publication, the Millennium memento.

I believe that encouraging our students to read, write and dream about their future is a good thing. I know the contributions of our young people are to be cherished and treasured. Student excellence should be shown and is evident in this publication.

But some of my constituents have said that this journal is not the best use of taxpayers' funds. Some people want to turn the good things into bad so they can further their own agendas. I find this type of conduct disappointing.

Minister, would you outline for the members of this Legislature the background and the cost of My Ontario memento journal? Does this come from the education budget?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for Peterborough for his question. I know he's deeply concerned about this issue.

Let me tell you first off that this money did not come from the education ministry, it came from the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. What we asked the students of Ontario to do, and we asked all students all across the province, was to write and talk about how the province was going to look in the year 2020. We wanted kids to write stories, draw pictures and even write songs so that we could take their imagination and use it and enjoy the wonderful things they had to say. Let me tell you that this publication cost the taxpayers of Ontario less than \$1 for each child in the province.

Mr Stewart: Indeed, this is a wonderful and an excellent initiative. I don't know why anyone would raise any concerns about it. After all, the costs you outlined are quite modest.

This sounds like an excellent resource for educators across this province. However, I have heard that some educators are trying to turn this into a political issue by refusing to distribute the book and some are even throwing them away. Once again, the hopes and the dreams of young Ontarians are being eroded by a few militant individuals in the name of self-interest.

Minister, can you explain to the members of this Legislature and my constituents why these books are being distributed to our schools. How do you respond to the questions about the partisan nature of this attack?

Hon Mrs Johns: I can't help but express my disappointment with the comments that are being made in eastern Ontario. For a very modest investment by the taxpayers of Ontario, they're making hay of a document that was prepared and written by our children.

Let's just think for a minute. The change from this millennium to the next millennium is a very important event for all of us, and it's going to be a very important event for our children. This memento helps children to record those events. There are blank pieces of paper for them to record the things that happen to them during the year. This is a document that they can keep for years and years and tell their children about what they did in the year 2000.

In the front of the book I'm going to work with my young children and we're going to write down what we did on New Year's Eve, who they spent this great evening with, the kinds of things that happened to them in the year 2000. It's really—

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

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. You would be aware that in the community of Elliot Lake we are three physicians short and we are looking at having our emergency room at St Joseph's General Hospital closed to the 14,000 people in Elliot Lake come January.

I note that you seem quite prepared to allow your Minister of Health to pay northern doctors less money to

look after emergency rooms than you do southern doctors. Minister, could you explain to my constituents in Elliot Lake why you are prepared to pay less money to northern emergency room physicians than they get paid in southern Ontario?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for the question. Indeed, it was a pleasure being in Elliot Lake not too long ago, where I had a chance to talk to the member and the mayor and members of council and the seniors in the community about their concerns with respect to development in northern Ontario. I also had a chance to talk to them about health care in northern Ontario.

I remain committed to working with the Minister of Health to improve access to health care services throughout the province, including, importantly for me, northern Ontario. The work that's been done so far in attracting 115 specialists to northern Ontario and in terms of funding to keep northern and rural emergency rooms open with the sessional fee has been successful; and through the northern Ontario heritage fund, funding for the Northern Academic Health Sciences Network, which is linking major hospitals with about 30 other locations; and recently, as I mentioned in the House yesterday, announcing about \$5 million in funds to help out with primary care in northern Ontario. These are the things on which I continue to work with the Minister of Health and through my ministry to improve access to health care for people in Elliot Lake and throughout northern Ontario.

1510

Mr Brown: Well, that was the non-answer of non-answers. I asked a very direct question to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The question was quite simple: Why are you discriminating against northern physicians in emergency rooms at the expense of patients in northern Ontario? Why do we have one-third fewer specialists in northern Ontario than are necessary according to the Minister of Health's own records?

We in northern Ontario expect first-class access to hospital emergency rooms. We expect access to physicians. Your Minister of Health has given us total failure in alleviating these problems. We have communities against communities. We have fee schedules that differ from southern Ontario to northern Ontario.

Minister, you need to be advocating for the people in the north. That's why we send a minister to the cabinet table every Wednesday morning. We want you there to advocate for the patients in northern Ontario, making sure that our emergency rooms are open and that our physicians are compensated comparably to physicians in southern Ontario. Why do you support a two-tiered payment schedule?

Hon Mr Hudak: I guess it is true that we are discounting fees to physicians practising in overserviced areas to encourage them to move to underserviced areas like Elliot Lake. But I'm positive. Let's be clear. With respect to emergency room support, 78 different emergency rooms have been kept open because of the action of

this government to help fund on a sessional fee, including 40 in northern Ontario.

Recently my ministry funded Think North, an innovative program by northerners for northerners to help bring doctors to northern Ontario, with a CD-ROM and Web site. I think the member is talking about an APP program. I'm pleased to say that a second set of the alternative payment program for emergency rooms is coming forth. It could help emergency rooms, I hope, in northern Ontario.

That's my role at the cabinet table that I take very seriously. I'm very proud as well of my work on the rural and northern health care framework which is dedicating resources to help alleviate the long-standing problem of physician supply. We talk about 115 more specialists in northern Ontario, the 40 emergency rooms in northern Ontario kept open. It's a proud record to continue to build upon with the Minister of Health and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: To follow up on a point of order raised by the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan relating to Bill 23, I think the member was questioning whether that bill was in order relevant to the omnibus nature of the bill.

We wanted to provide you with some information for your consideration. Clearly omnibus bills are not new to this House. Precedents show—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Klees: That's right. Omnibus bills have been submitted by parties in this House for many years. I'd like to refer you to Beauchesne, section 626 on page 192. "Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill, there should be a theme of relevancy amongst the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill."

Where a bill adheres to this requirement, no Speaker in our parliamentary tradition has ruled such a bill out of order. The measures contained within Bill 23 certainly fit within the umbrella of the long title, which reads as follows: An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system."

As I said before, omnibus bills are not new in this House and regularly have been found to be procedurally acceptable where they have conformed to this theme of relevancy in their long titles as laid out in Beauchesne.

Rulings by Speakers of this Legislature and precedents in the federal House of Commons support the practice of using one bill to demand one decision on a number of quite different and related subjects.

The content of the bill before us, Bill 23, provides for the restructuring of services and the recouping of health care costs to provide for reinvestments within the context

of the limited availability of funding for health services. Both of these are important in ensuring the support and management of the health care system in our province, as stated in the long title of Bill 23.

The scope of the legislation dealt with in this motion is similar to many previous omnibus bills introduced by this government and previous governments, and certainly the former NDP government. In fact, the NDP's Bill 175 and Bills 26, 152 and 25 of the last Parliament were all omnibus bills of a similar scope to the bill before us today, and they, I remind you, were deemed acceptable and in order.

Points of order raised when the NDP's Bill 175 was called for second reading expressed doubt whether the contents of that bill demonstrated a theme of relevancy. At that time it was noted that the matters covered by that bill ranged from automated land registry to offices allowing alcoholic beverages to be sold in provincial parks. Now surely there's a wide range of themes that that particular bill dealt with.

The NDP's Bill 75 was subsequently found to be in order by Speaker Warner and it was eventually carried in this House. The bill before us today is much smaller in scope, as well as in diversity, than was Bill 175.

We believe the precedents are clear. Bills are in order as long as there is a theme of relevancy among the contents of the bill. In this case, the umbrella of the long title demonstrates the coherence among the proposed bill's contents.

I submit, therefore, that the contents of Bill 23 fall within the umbrella of its long title and the bill should be found in order.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for his contribution.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You will be aware that this bill deals with two very distinct items. One deals with giving the ministry the right to commence lawsuits against third parties to recover costs associated with payments by OHIP. What that means, and what we know that is about, is the question of being able to sue tobacco companies. The second part of the bill, as we understand it, deals with the minister's ability to continue to issue directives, as was done by the Health Services Restructuring Commission—two very distinct and separate functions, albeit under different pieces of legislation, under the same ministry.

Again, the opposition is quite prepared—and the government voted against giving second and third reading to those parts of the bill that deal with the question of lawsuits against tobacco companies, number one. You refused to allow it to come to a vote today.

The opposition is opposed to part III of the bill. What the government is doing, Mr Speaker, in our view, is contradicting Beauchesne; that is, forcing us to vote aye or nay on two different, very distinct items, and therefore taking away our rights as members.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to look at this. We have offered to give second and third reading to the part of the bill that we support. The government has

continually talked about time limitations and difficulties getting all their legislation through. The opposition is quite prepared to allow second and third reading today and is supportive of parts I and II of this bill. The problem is that the government is putting these bills together in a way that makes it difficult for members of this House to express their points of view, but more importantly, to vote on matters that are very distinct and different with respect to matters of significance. That, in our view, is not at all the way we ought to be conducting affairs in this House.

The Speaker: I thank the member.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Briefly, further to the point of order, Mr Speaker: You'll appreciate the fact that when I raised the point of order earlier, it's somewhat customary to continue the debate on the point of order as opposed to resuming the debate after question period, so I had shared some of my reference points with the Hansard reporter. Since the government whip has reintroduced this debate, there is another reference point which I would like to share with the Speaker before you make a ruling on this.

1520

I believe, going from memory, that it's a reference to a decision that was made in the British House of Commons where there is, I think the phrase is, a "potential embarrassment" to members of the House because they will be forced by the nature of an omnibus bill—if they were to vote in accordance with their support or lack of support, they could be put in a position where they would be voting yea to one part of the bill and nay to another part of the bill.

As you will appreciate, when the bill is being placed without being divided, we don't have the opportunity to vote yea to some parts of the bill and nay to other parts of the bill. The decision in the British House of Commons was to have the Chair allow for a division of the bill in order not to embarrass the members by being required to vote only one way because the bill had not been divided.

In order to provide you with those references, I would be quite happy if you chose to withhold your opinion this afternoon. We will not, I understand, be calling for the vote on second reading this afternoon. There would be ample opportunity for you to review this issue, which we believe is a serious issue that's going to arise not just on this bill but on any bill in which there is, by the nature of it being an omnibus bill, a situation in which we may well wish to vote differently on different parts of the bill.

I think I have to rephrase "parts of the bill." That's the difficulty with an omnibus bill. It looks as though we're concerned about parts of the bill, and normally you'd get an opportunity to say yea or nay to parts of a bill—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Where?

Mrs McLeod: —when you're in committee. I realize that you're not aware of that, Mr O'Toole, because we've had so little opportunity to vote on parts of bills in committee recently, but that's standard practice. We have, in fact, had some opportunity to do that. But in this case we're talking about an entire bill that deals with two very

different issues. It's not component parts of a same bill, even though it's being presented as a single bill.

I would hope that you'd have an opportunity to look at these precedents before ruling, Mr Speaker, and that before the second reading of the bill is placed, you would have an ability to decide whether this should be divided so that we could have an opportunity to vote separately on parts I and II—which we contend are a separate bill—and part III of Bill 23.

The Speaker: I thank the member for her comments. On the same point of order, the member for Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Two points, if I might, on behalf of my caucus with regard to this issue.

The first one is just a reminder to my friend the House leader of the official opposition that when he makes reference to the opposition, he is including us. He is quite within his rights to speak to the position of the official opposition, but any question of speaking for the third party, we can do that for that ourselves. I'm sure that he will conduct himself more appropriately in the future when referencing who he represents on this side of the House.

Secondly, I would also concur with the concern. I don't know how much latitude you may have in this regard, but if possible I would ask you to consider what has happened as a cumulative effect with this government over the time that we've seen the Mike Harris government in power, in terms of how much of a lesser role this House plays, how much less time there is in committee, the use of time allocation motions on virtually everything. It is now considered somehow to be obstructionist on the part of the opposition to suggest to the government that something is not going to be passed in the span of one sitting day, that somehow we're slowing things down.

The government now has changed the rules to the point where they can ram through a piece of legislation, from the time it's introduced to the time that it's given royal assent, within a matter of days, and there is absolutely nothing that we can do about that under these rules. I do agree with my colleagues in the official opposition, given that environment, that at the very least we need you to preserve our right to show where we have dissent as apart from where we have agreement.

If at all possible, I would ask you to take a look at where we have been, as a Legislature, in terms of serving the democratic needs of the people of Ontario and where we find ourselves today, almost five years hence, in terms of the relevance of true democracy in the province of Ontario. This is a point where you can return to us those rights and privileges that we still have, the few that we may still have as members of this place, albeit not part of the governing party.

With that, Speaker, I would ask you to consider the NDP's submission on this point of order also.

The Speaker: I thank the member very much. Chief government whip.

Hon Mr Klees: On the same point of order, I just want to comment on the fact that there's some suggestion that this is an obtrusive bill. I would suggest to you that if this is obtrusive—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Klees: The fact of the matter is that this is probably the most unobtrusive bill that has been before this House that I remember, and certainly any of the precedents that I've referred to in my arguments previously. This bill deals with one matter that is simply an extension of powers that were there previously, simply extending them to the minister to complete a job that needs to be done. So this is nothing new. It's simply a matter of extending a time frame. The other matter deals with the same ministry and is certainly not a consequential issue.

I would also suggest that in the matter of dividing and not being able to vote for one part of a bill but being in favour of another, again, I don't know of another piece of legislation that I've seen in this House where a member couldn't say, "I agree with this; I have some problems with part B." That simply is the reality of legislation. It may not suit every member's needs at every time. If we go down that track, I really think that it misses the point.

Again, I submit to you that this bill conforms with the principles as set out in Beauchesne. We trust that you will find it in order for those reasons.

The Speaker: Thank you. I will be ruling on this today in the event that it is called by the government. We will go to petitions, and I hope to get back before orders of the day on that.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Mr Speaker, it is duly stamped.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north

which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I affix my signature in full accord with these concerns.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition signed by over 1,400 people in the Scarborough area, to be followed next week by an additional 3,000 signatures that have come in over the past 24 hours. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

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

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I am pleased to sign this petition on behalf of myself.

1530

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a number of petitions signed by people in places like Walford, and many from Hornepayne.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern

Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

“Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

“Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities.”

I am proud to affix my signature to this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition signed, “Bring Back Haldimand-Norfolk Counties”:

“Whereas we, the undersigned, do not want a region-wide, single-tier supercity; and

“Whereas we support the two county model representing two single-tier cities (one each for Haldimand and Norfolk); and

“Whereas we believe this model will give us a government that is closer to the voters, providing the greatest degree of ‘accountability’ by our elected representatives; greatly reduce the number of politicians; greatly reduce taxes through the elimination of multiple administrations, services that are repeated six and seven times; and produce further cost savings through adjusted service delivery methods; and

“Whereas the tax revenue of the Nanticoke Industrial Centre is to be divided equitably (based on population) between each of the two new counties;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to bring back Norfolk and Haldimand counties.”

I affix my signature to this.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, as a permitted preamble to reading this petition, if I may commend the member for Scarborough Centre, Marilyn

Mushinski, for taking the lead and championing this cause to make sure that justice and victims are respected in Ontario, and with your permission petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a ‘deal with the devil’ with Karla Homolka, resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

“Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

“Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

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

“That the government of Ontario will:

“Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

“Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

“Fight the federal government’s plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets;

“Ensure that the Ontario government’s sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible.”

I am pleased to support and sign this petition myself on behalf of the people of the riding of Durham.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have more petitions concerning the northern health travel grant.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

“Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to: acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern Ontario travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I'm pleased to sign this along with many residents of the northwestern part of my constituency, including the fine community of Manitowadge.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition forwarded to me my Cathy Walker, director of health and safety for the Canadian Auto Workers union on behalf of their thousands of members.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances (carcinogens); and

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens; and

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances at work; and

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

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

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I add my name to those of these petitioners.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It was a petition that was brought forward by the member for Scarborough Centre, and I want to congratulate her on bringing that petition forward.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a 'deal with the devil' with Karla Homolka, resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and the sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets;

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I've signed my name to this worthwhile petition.

1540

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): A further petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Sarnia is witnessing many women developing mesothelioma and asbestosis as a result of the asbestos brought home on their husbands' work clothing; and

"Whereas similar cases are occurring in other areas of the province;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to allow compensation for family members who develop occupational illness as a result of workplace toxins inadvertently brought home."

I add my name to those of these petitioners also.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition titled Clear the Drivers Test Backlog, and it's signed by a number of young people, mainly high school students, from the Port Dover-Simcoe-Turkey Point-Vittoria area. It reads:

"Whereas the backlog for final road tests is unacceptable; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation is not able to get rid of the backlog, and most of the new examiners have been based in Toronto; and

“Whereas young and elderly people are often intimidated by the driver’s test examiner and the finality of the test; and

“Whereas the driving tests have become very expensive and amounts to little more than a money grab by the government;

“We, the undersigned, petition to the government of Ontario to continue to revamp the driver’s test system and implement a better system to get these tests done in a timely manner that is less expensive.”

I support these young people and hereby sign this petition.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the great member of Scarborough Centre dealing with the Karla Homolka issue.

“Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a ‘deal with the devil’ with Karla Homolka, resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

“Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

“Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

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

“That the government of Ontario will:

“Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

“Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

“Fight the federal government’s plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario’s streets;

“Ensure that the Ontario government’s sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible.”

I affix my name to this great petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Orders of the day.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Speaker, order G23.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): G23, second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system.

The Acting Speaker: I’m going to recess the House for 15 minutes while the Speaker considers the point of order on this bill.

The House recessed from 1544 to 1610.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): First of all, I want to thank all the members for their participation.

As you know, in recent years bills which have amended more than the three statutes being amended in Bill 23 have been found to be in order. Indeed, many bills have amended numerous statutes across a number of different ministries.

The test of the orderliness of such bills is that it contains a shared theme of relevancy. In the case of Bill 23 I find that it does.

I would note that there have been numerous omnibus bills that have been found in order by previous Speakers, who considered them to be acceptably consistent with parliamentary practice.

As a result of my review of Bill 23, I will be guided by that which I have alluded to. So I therefore find Bill 23 in order.

I would, however, like to say in that determining this as Speaker, I have found that omnibus bills cause me great concern. I take what the member for Hamilton West has said very seriously. The opportunities for members in this place to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation should be respected and evolving practice over the last few years has tended to work against that. In my ruling, I say very clearly that I find this bill to be in order.

The other part was given by the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. I would like to address the member’s concerns regarding the lack of notice of consideration of the bill.

The member will know that our standing orders do not require any member to give notice to the House of their intention to introduce a bill, whether a private member’s bill or whether a government bill. All members become aware of the bill at the same time when it is introduced. When it is printed, all members receive it at the same time. Bill 23 has certainly not deviated on these accounts, and I now properly find this before the House. Therefore, if the bill is to be debated today, as the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan has asserted, I find no procedural difficulty in doing that.

But again I say, and I take with great respect what the member for Hamilton West has said, that the opportunity for members in this place to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation should be respected. Evolving practice over the last several years has tended certainly to work against that.

That is my ruling. I want to thank all of the members for their help and their participation here today.

The member for Scarborough Southwest has the floor.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND LONG-TERM CARE
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr Newman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l'application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I'd like to advise the House that I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with the members from Willowdale, London-Fanshawe and Brampton Centre.

I'm pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to speak to second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system.

In particular, I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about the responsibility of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care under the extended section 6 of the Public Hospitals Act proposed on November 30, 1999. Under the proposed amendment, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care would maintain responsibility for the completion of hospital restructuring in the following 22 Ontario communities that have received directions from the Health Services Restructuring Commission. I'd just like to take a moment to go through those communities.

Those communities would be Brant county, Brockville, Essex, the five counties in the Cornwall area, the GTA/905 area, the Haliburton-Kawartha-Pine Ridge area, Hamilton, Hastings-Prince Edward, Kent, Kingston, Lambton, London, Niagara, North Bay, Ottawa-Carleton, Pembroke, the Sault—Mr Speaker, I know you would be interested in hearing that the Sault is included in this—Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Waterloo and West Perry Sound.

This responsibility entails the minister extending time lines to assist hospitals to finish restructuring projects such as building new hospitals, opening new hospital wings and cardiac and cancer centres, and delivering improved services to their communities.

It goes without saying that we remain unshakeable in our continuing commitment to the principles of the Canada Health Act, which is based on universal access to publicly funded health care. This very positive amendment I speak of should be viewed as integral to the focus our government is assuming in our second term of office;

that is, the sustaining of the health system with special emphasis on improving the health of Ontarians.

The thrust of the extension is practical and straightforward: To provide flexibility and support to hospitals as they move forward to better meet the needs of their growing, aging and changing communities. The proposed change also includes a requirement for a review of the minister's responsibility in January 2005.

As you know, for the past four years our government has been carrying out the most ambitious reform and modernization of a provincial health care system ever undertaken in all of our country. To realize that objective, we took office in 1995 with the determination and the vision to change the health system to serve the people of Ontario far into the next century.

We all realize that the prerequisite of a strong health system is a strong and growing economy in which new jobs are created quite literally on a daily basis. So over the past four years we have worked hard to cut taxes—we've cut taxes a total of 99 times—we've reduced red tape and we've done what we could to support the private sector in creating new growth and job opportunities. In fact, since the throne speech of September 1995 over 640,000 net new jobs have been created in our province.

As a result of all those changes our economy is now the strongest of any province in Canada. It is in fact the strongest of all the G7 nations. Our goal, quite simply, is to see that it remains the strongest in order to protect our capacity to support entities that Ontarians cherish, particularly high-quality education and health services.

Health system change was essential because previous governments had put off what was so badly needed in our province. For instance, over 10,000 beds—that's the equivalent of 35 medium-sized hospitals in our province—had been removed from the hospital system by 1995, yet no effort had been made to reduce the redundant overhead and administrative costs.

To the members on the opposite side today, you had the opportunity to make the system better but you chose to do nothing, and we have improved the health care system in our province.

We, however, had the courage to start the restructuring of Ontario's health system in order to ensure its very survival. Change—focused, clearly defined change based on a plan and driven by a vision—was badly needed. We have that vision. It's a vision of a quality integrated health services system where performance can be assessed and in which health providers are accountable for the resources they use and the outcomes they achieve.

The first step is securing our health budget here in Ontario while increasing spending to meet the increasing service needs of a growing and aging population. In response to this year's federal budget, Premier Harris renewed his commitment to spend each and every dollar received back from the federal government on health care.

Let's be very clear. While our government has continued to pour more dollars into the province's health care system since forming the government in 1995, the

federal government was busy slashing transfer payments for health care services to the provinces, and particularly to Ontario. But now they've come around and they've restored almost \$900 million. That's a first step. We've seen some action on their part, but it's only a first step. Despite this funding transfer, today the federal government only contributes 11%, or 11 cents out of every dollar that is spent in this province on health care. Our government, I'm proud to say, in spite of this has succeeded in increasing Ontario's health care funding to \$20.6 billion, and that is by far the highest in provincial history in Ontario. And we're not done.

1620

During June's provincial election, Premier Harris committed to further increasing health care spending by a guaranteed 20% over the next four years. This will mean nearly \$4 billion a year more in health care in Ontario by the year 2003-04. In fact, we've already been experiencing positive results from the decisions of this government.

The increased dollars are rapidly accelerating the pace of health care, allowing us to proceed with such priorities as hiring more nurses in our hospitals. We've allotted funding of \$480 million to support the increased role of nurses in Ontario, and we're adding some 10,000 nurses to the health care system over the next two years.

Furthermore, the number of day surgeries has increased, new drugs have been developed, new technology, and we are continuing to see the expansion of dialysis units across the province. There are approximately 25 new communities that now have these services available.

We presently have 56 new up-to-date emergency rooms being built or planned. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I've had the opportunity to be at the opening of some of these facilities and one in particular that I recall was the new emergency department in Windsor. I listened to some members opposite from Windsor the other day talking about health care, and they didn't once mention the brand new emergency department that they have in their own community. They talk about doom and gloom. I don't know what it is with the Liberal Party, but doom and gloom seems to be their mantra over there. If they haven't been to the new emergency department in Windsor, I'd really encourage them to go.

The work of the Health Services Restructuring Commission took place within the context of this dramatically changing health care system. As you may recall, the Health Services Restructuring Commission had issued more than 1,200 legally binding directions to 119 of the 203 public hospital corporations in the 22 communities across Ontario that I mentioned earlier.

Recently, Minister Witmer announced added flexibility for Ontario hospitals as they restructure and build improved health care facilities. This was a direct response to recommendations from the Ontario Hospital Association and its members, to help ensure their ability to effectively implement the HSRC directives.

The minister will maintain responsibility under section 6 of the Public Hospitals Act. Without the proposed change, the minister's responsibility would end on March 1, 2000, unfortunately before most hospitals will complete their restructuring projects. As noted earlier, the minister's responsibility will be reviewed in 2005.

I think it's important to note that so far our government has invested more than \$1.2 billion in hospital restructuring, and most recently the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care committed to providing an additional \$2 billion, for a total investment of \$3.2 billion. This money will assist hospitals with such restructuring costs as severances, labour adjustment and retraining, capital redevelopment, communication, legal fees, consulting and so on.

In addition, our overall investments and improvements to the health system mean that hospitals will be better able to provide newer equipment for faster diagnoses and better treatments.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission finished its essential work of issuing directions last March. Hospitals in the 22 communities that I mentioned at the beginning of my comments are now putting into place the expanded and improved health care services they planned in collaboration with the commission. All they need is a little time, and we intend to give them that.

In the words of David MacKinnon, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Hospital Association, "The minister needs to retain the authority to revise HSRC directions in order to reflect patient care needs over time, new technology, opportunities to use new technology and other factors affecting patient care in communities across Ontario." Many other prominent members of Ontario's health care system strongly support this initiative as well.

Let me quote at this moment Ron Bodrug, who is the president and chief executive of the Scarborough Hospital, which was recently created from the amalgamation of Scarborough General Hospital and the Salvation Army Scarborough Grace Hospital. Mr Bodrug says, "I am requesting that the Ministry of Health take the necessary steps to ensure the appropriate study, monitoring, review and necessary changes to the commission's directives and recommendations."

Dan Carriere, president and CEO of the York County Hospital said: "The Ministry of Health and government of Ontario have taken bold steps to improve health care provincially through the restructuring and decentralization of services. The retention of Bill 26 would enhance your ability to complete these important initiatives and provide additional financial support to hospitals through appropriate redistribution of savings secured through restructuring."

David Levine, the president and CEO of the Ottawa Hospital said, "Our ability to move rapidly during a time of merger has been recognized as the single most important factor in a successful merger." He goes on to state, "It is essential that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has the power to make changes that are necessary to allow hospitals to keep moving, finding new

ways to offer efficient, rapid, quality care to our patients.”

These comments clearly indicate the level of support this proposal enjoys among managers of our health care system. Brian C. Lemon, the CEO of the Lakebridge Health Corp was cautionary: “I am concerned that without your ability to make revisions to these legally binding directions, we may not be able to take full advantage of any opportunity to make revisions that further enhance and improve Ontario’s hospital system.”

I would like to take a moment just to elaborate a little on the specifics of the proposed amendment at this time.

Over the past four years, the experts on the Health Services Restructuring Commission have worked with hospitals, district health councils, other health care providers and patients, to make recommendations on the tough decisions needed to improve and sustain our hospital system.

Already we’ve turned the corner on restructuring and we’re seeing the results of more than \$1 billion invested in more modern, more efficient hospitals. We’re beginning to see the realization of solutions to problems that other governments had refused to face for at least a decade. We have made the tough decisions and we’re starting to see the improvements today in our health care system in Ontario.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission sought the advice of health care experts throughout the province, and the advice that came back was about tough decisions. I’m proud to say that we’ve made the tough decisions, and it’s time to put them behind us and to look forward. The Health Services Restructuring Commission, as I mentioned, has finished the bulk of its work.

Our government’s work now is to renew and sustain one of the world’s great health care systems by working hand in hand with efficient, up-to-date hospitals ready to tackle the 21st century.

As I’ve already mentioned, consistent with our campaign commitment, our government is actually increasing health care spending by 20% over the next four years to \$22.7 billion, and that would be more than any government of any political stripe has ever spent on health care in this province.

I just want to take a moment at this time to review some of the health care reinvestments that have occurred here in Toronto, because I come from a riding within the city of Toronto, the riding of Scarborough Southwest. Members opposite have gone throughout the city of Toronto alleging that our government has somehow taken \$99 million from the health care system in Toronto since 1995. I want to say that they are wrong. I want to cite some examples of reinvestments our government has made here in Toronto.

Priority programs, an extra \$145.5 million; there is \$1.5 million for pediatric oncology; growth funding, \$3.9 million; the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, \$7.3 million; preschool speech and language, \$4 million; hospital restructuring reimbursement, \$94.7 million; emergency room funding, \$28.5 million; transition fund-

ing, \$34.2 million; increases to base hospital budgets, \$21.5 million; Y2K readiness, \$97.5 million; mental health, \$27.1 million; Ontario drug benefit spending increase, \$56.2 million; physician OHIP payments increase, \$121 million; nursing funding, \$41 million; emergency room capital expansion, \$14.9 million; one-time working pressures funding, \$9.1 million; neonatal funding, \$10 million; the 60-hour stay for new mothers, over \$9 million there.

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If you look at the figures and take the time to do the research, you see that health spending in Toronto has actually increased by over \$993 million since 1995. That’s almost \$1 billion more. In addition to that almost \$1-billion increase in health care funding here in Toronto, there have 5,837 new long-term-care beds that will be added in Toronto. Existing long-term-care beds that have been refurbished: 1,600. We’ve seen two new dialysis services offered in my community of Scarborough. Four new MRI machines have been allocated to Toronto in addition to the seven that are already there. We are putting our money where our mouth is with respect to health care.

We are also reinvesting in frontline patient care, from the distribution of physicians throughout the province to the creation of long-term-care facilities. Each and every dollar saved from health services reform has been reinvested into priority patient care areas.

To date the level of this reinvestment has topped \$1.5 billion. This includes \$326 million in expanding priority programs such as cardiac care, cancer and dialysis. As I already mentioned, approximately 25 new communities now have dialysis services available right in their home communities. Thirty-six MRIs will be up and running by the year’s end. That’s up from the 12 when we took office in 1995. We’ve seen a 45% increase in cardiac surgeries. And of course, the quality of cancer care has increased.

Upon receiving the cancer care task force report, Minister Witmer announced \$15.5 million in new annual funding to significantly reduce waiting lists and waiting times for Ontario cancer patients. Hospitals have asked us in turn to ensure that they have flexibility to safely and effectively complete their restructuring. The proposed extended timeline leaves that responsibility with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, while allowing hospitals the latitude to complete their restructuring plans.

As well, we have another \$2 billion in capital funding yet to be allocated. We have yet to determine where and when that additional funding will best benefit the hospitals, medical staff and population of Ontario.

Ontarians need reassurance that hospitals are able to set reasonable timelines for the start and finish of their restructuring projects. At the same time, we must be sure that our health system, including hospitals, are able to continue providing the best possible care to patients during restructuring. The proposed change gives us the flexibility to fulfill these necessities.

Our responsibility for restructuring needs extending because of the sheer magnitude and complexity of the task at hand. We're talking about four years of hard thinking and planning by experts spanning the entire breadth and depth of the health system, more than 100 hospitals in 22 communities, more than 1,200 separate directions—many of them complex and time consuming—and \$3.2 billion in unprecedented commitment.

It is my hope as I address you today on Bill 23 that we will work together towards this vision of health services in Ontario, that together we will address the challenges of the 21st century, and that together we will ensure that hospitals implement their plans and continue to meet the needs of our population at every stage of their lives.

Hospitals across Ontario have proven exemplary in assisting with restructuring and helping to modernize the health system. I want everyone here to know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and I, as her parliamentary assistant, personally admire and respect the way they've adapted to the dramatic changes of the past decade.

Hospitals continue to amaze us with the remarkable progress they've made in both absorbing and leading the changes, changes in medical knowledge, in clinical services and in treatment.

We've travelled to the communities and we've visited the hospitals. We've always seen hospitals aiming at the highest quality care and delivering the highest quality services. We've seen examples of the dedication and commitment of compassionate caregivers throughout Ontario, be they health professionals, support staff or CEOs or volunteers.

They all get my vote of thanks and that of Premier Harris and of Minister Witmer, and I trust they get yours as well. For indeed, they deserve it. We appreciate the efforts of those who have worked so hard and given so much of themselves during this difficult period of restructuring. We value them and the great distance that they've come.

With this extended timeline, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care can continue to work into the early years of the 21st century with hospitals across the province. More importantly, this extension affords the chance for our government to provide communities across Ontario access to the best and most technologically advanced health care system in the world.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Before the member for Willowdale begins, pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Windsor West has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The paper has been filed, so this matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): It's an honour to rise today to address this chamber on this very important piece of legislation.

When our government came to office in 1995, we inherited a health care system that was in desperate need of change. There should be no doubt about that. Just as

clearly, it should be acknowledged that this restructuring process has not been an easy one, but it has been a necessary one. The health care system in this province remains and must remain a publicly funded, universally accessible system that meets the needs of what is a growing and aging population.

The technology and the advances that we've seen over the last number of years are wonderful. The people of this great province are enjoying better health as a result of those advances, as well as the hard work and dedication of those individuals who work day in and day out in our hospitals, but let's be clear that there are costs associated with that.

It's all too easy in this province to lose sight of the fact that those men and women and the medications and the technology all cost money. It's our obligation as a government to ensure that there are sufficient funds available for that essential service. Fortunately, because of the boom in the Ontario economy, we have increased tax revenue which will allow us as Ontarians to be sure that there will be sufficient resources available.

But this restructuring process is not over yet, and that's the purpose of the legislation that has been tabled and is in front of you today. It is legislation that will allow for the process to be completed. It is most important that it is completed and is completed in a reasoned manner.

As you are aware, I represent an urban riding, the riding of Willowdale. The primary health care facility within our riding is the North York General Hospital. That hospital offers a wide range of clinical services and nine general programs, the first being adult mental health. It has an emergency service centre, family and community medicine, genetics, long-term care, maternal-newborn services, medical services, paediatrics and surgical services. I should say that anyone who drives by the North York General Hospital or has for most of the past year will note the existence of very large cranes—I'm not talking about birds; I'm talking about building cranes—because the expansion that is underway at that facility is unprecedented.

In fact, just this past week, we have another good-news announcement about investment in health care in Willowdale at the North York General. The phenomenal redevelopment that's going on there will double the size of the emergency room and essentially increase the size of the hospital itself twofold. I want to specifically mention that Minister Witmer was there, as I said, within the past week or so to announce that the North York General Hospital will be receiving \$41 million—that's \$41 million—of additional funding to assist the hospital with its \$66-million expansion of the Leslie Avenue site.

I want to pause to take note of the fine work that Mr MacKenzie and many others associated with the North York General Hospital have done in order to fundraise, in order to ensure that the remaining dollars are and will be available to complete this very necessary expansion.

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It's important, too, to remember that the North York General doesn't only operate at the one site. It also

involves the Branson site. It is true that the Branson hospital, as it was five or six years ago, doesn't exist. But it does exist as a renewed health facility, as a revitalized health facility, a facility that has state-of-the-art ophthalmology equipment going in there, a facility that has urgent care, after-hours-care equipment and clinics and a facility that will continue to offer the residents of North York, Willowdale, York Centre and the adjacent communities top-notch care.

What have we gained by reason of this necessary restructuring? We've gained the expansion dollars that I've mentioned that are going into the facility at the Leslie Street site, but we've also gained increased equipment. We have one or possibly two MRI machines that will be added to the North York General Hospital. One of them may in fact be at the Branson site. Mr MacKenzie, the president, is currently involved in a process to consider where the second MRI will be placed. It's hoped that one will be an open MRI, one will be a closed MRI. But these are obviously very expensive and very important pieces of equipment that simply didn't exist before and do now by reason of the fact that the funds are being directed to where they are necessary.

Before I leave the good-news stories about investment in health care in the riding of Willowdale, I want to talk about what's gone on at the St John's Rehabilitation Hospital, which is just on the border of our riding—actually, it's well within the riding, I should say. It has seen a similar introduction of cranes into its facility. The redevelopment there is quite phenomenal, totalling almost \$2 million. The number of patients, the number of clients who will be served at this facility, as compared to where we were five or six years ago, is very impressive and again an expansion program that is unprecedented for that facility or almost any facility. St Bernard's Hospital is the facility that is just outside of the riding of Willowdale and it too has seen an almost \$300,000 increase in funding over the last short while, as has the Bloorview site of the North York General Hospital.

I want to acknowledge that there have been cuts in health care, and the cuts in health care funding that I refer to are those that have been administered by the federal government. It's most unfortunate that the federal government felt it was appropriate to cut \$2.8 billion in transfer payments from Ontario alone, without regard to the consequences of that. As a citizen of this province, as a citizen of this country, I find it abhorrent that the federal government and its representatives stand and crow about how they have a surplus. I know how it is that they have a surplus. They have a surplus because they have cut back on transfer payments for essential services such as health care to the people of Ontario. It's not just the people of Ontario who have experienced this dastardly setback; it's the people of Canada.

As proof of that, Mr Speaker, I'd ask you and those in the gallery and those watching on their television sets to consider what is going on in other provinces of this great country. Whether it be British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland—the list goes on and

on—each and every one of those provinces has experienced severe problems with their health care system. Often those problems have materialized in the form or have gained public attention in the form of doctors' strikes, nurses' strikes, disruption of services by non-medical health care personnel, but in every province across this country there is a crisis of sorts in health care.

The one constant factor is our federal government, the Liberals in Ottawa and their refusal to continue to fund health care as they have done historically. They have cut back \$2.8 billion and they were kind enough to restore \$900 million. I guess we're to applaud that, but I'm offended. I'm offended that they continue to think it is all right for them to abandon the health care institutions and the patients of this province and of every province across this country.

I don't want to dwell on the federal government, but I would be remiss if I didn't add this one fact, and if you remember nothing else from my address today, I hope you'll remember this: In 1969, 30 years ago, the federal government paid 50 cents of every health care dollar spent in this province. Today, 30 short years later, the federal government pays 11 cents of every dollar. I think that is absolutely offensive, and the people of this province and of this country would agree with me. That is why I appreciate having the opportunity of emphasizing that point today, because until the federal government acknowledges its responsibility, its historical responsibility in this regard, all of Canada will continue to experience the sorts of problems that members opposite raise and talk about each and every day in this Legislature.

I want to go back to the bill directly and acknowledge that it is not a panacea. This is not going to fix every problem with health care, but it is a step in the right direction, a step down a road that we embarked upon three short years ago with the restructuring commission and a necessary step. I don't have much time left; some of my colleagues wish to speak to this matter as well, but I want to talk about the recovery aspect of this bill. As you well know, Mr Speaker, by reason of the fact that you were asked to rule on the different aspects of this health care legislation today, there are other parts of the bill beyond simply the restructuring aspect. We are asking this Legislature to provide us with the authority to pursue wrongdoers for health care costs incurred as a result of their negligence or criminal activity. I'll give you one example, if this legislation is passed, of how that enhanced power would work.

If you consider a corporate citizen or an individual in this province who—and I won't call it negligence because it's far beyond negligence—disposes of toxic waste in a public waterway in this province, if you consider the consequences that flow from that, very direct consequences, severe consequences, and consider that it may adversely affect the health of the citizens who live within the vicinity of that waterway—also, let's remember that we have a universal health care system, as we should, that will respond and will assist those

individuals who have been injured by reason of that negligent or criminal activity—we as taxpayers will pay for that as part of the OHIP system, and that's all well and good. But ultimately this bill, if passed, will allow OHIP to recover those funds from the wrongdoer.

Under the current system, one I have some familiarity with, the only mechanism that is in place for that sort of recovery would be by way of a subrogated action essentially piggybacked on top of that of an individual or group of plaintiffs who choose to institute formal legal proceedings and incur the costs associated with that: the costs associated with the retention of a lawyer, the costs associated with the purchase of discovery transcripts and the costs associated with setting the matter down for trial; it is only if an individual or a group of individuals have the wherewithal and the inclination to pursue that litigation against the wrongdoing corporation or individual. Where will there be an opportunity for the province to collect funds they paid out to an injured victim?

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This legislation, if passed, will provide a far more sensible and a far more streamlined mechanism by which we will be able to recover from that wrongdoer. We will not have to wait for an individual or group of individuals to institute legal proceedings. OHIP will be able to directly pursue the wrongdoer to recover money for all the hard-working citizens in this province, to recover money that will go back into the health care system and assist all of us when we need those services. So I'm very pleased that we have that additional aspect of this proposed legislation in front of us today, and I'm very optimistic about the consequences that will flow when and if it is passed.

Before I leave that topic, though, let me be very clear: This alternative and more direct way of OHIP recovering funds will not—and I want to emphasize will not—in any way, in any shape, in any form interfere with the rights of the victim that exist today. The victim—or victims if they are a group—will still have the opportunity to institute legal proceedings and to go after the wrongdoer for their general damages, be they non-pecuniary general damages or pecuniary damages or special damages or any sort that the court deems appropriate. That opportunity, that avenue, will remain.

If anything, the victim's rights and opportunities will be enhanced, because along with their individual lawsuit against the wrongdoer, be it an individual or a corporation, along with the individual victim's lawsuit, they will also be alongside the lawsuit that would be sponsored by OHIP, which is clearly an entity with some significant resources. So the wrongdoer, the tortfeasor or the criminal who is being pursued, would then be in a position of not attempting to wait out or to outspend the victim, because the resources of the government would be on their side in many instances.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to emphasize that this legislation, if passed and enacted, will only serve to enhance the rights of citizens within this province. I'm very hopeful that this legislation will be passed, and will

be passed in a timely fashion, so we can complete the job we have started, so we can pursue the wrongdoers in the manner that I have described and that the legislation sets out rather clearly.

I'm hopeful because I know everyone in this assembly ultimately wants the same thing. They ultimately want there to be a health care system that is responsible and responsive and that is properly funded. I'm hopeful they will assist us in making what are necessary decisions. Let me emphasize in my conclusion, as I said at the outset, that these are necessary and difficult decisions, and I invite the members opposite to take a good, hard look at where we are at and to assist the people of Ontario with this final stage of the restructuring that is so necessary.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Restructuring hospitals is a necessary part of our government's vision for health care in Ontario. It's all about putting patients first.

It will affect 22 communities: Brant county, Essex county, Hamilton-Wentworth, Kent county, Lambton county, Niagara, Waterloo, Toronto, the greater Toronto area, Haliburton, Ottawa-Carleton, Pembroke, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Leeds-Grenville, Kingston, Prince Edward-Hastings, Cornwall, Nipissing, Sault Ste Marie, West Parry Sound, and of course my community in London.

The reason this restructuring is so necessary: In 1995 we had a government, a province, that was essentially bankrupt, with an almost \$12-billion deficit. In all fairness, the Liberals of 1990 or prior to that started, and the NDP when they took power were faced with some difficult decisions. The largest difficulty they were faced with was a federal Liberal government that reduced transfer payments to the province of Ontario. Therefore, the NDP, with the recession, through no fault of their own other than high taxes, were left with not managing health care, not managing hospitals.

That's an interesting point about management. What we've seen from the federal Liberal government, as we heard from the member from Willowdale, is that we're not sure where the priorities are. As we've heard from Ontarians, health care is an important priority. You hear that not only in Ontario but in every province in Canada. If it's such a priority to our citizens, why would the federal government today only be paying 11 cents on every dollar of health care? Yes, they will tell us they had difficulties and they needed to balance budgets, and perhaps that was the case at one point, but now that the budget is balanced and we are into a surplus, what do we hear from Jean Chrétien? Not to restore funding for health care; we don't hear that. We hear "new spending," "new programs."

To the citizens in my riding of London-Fanshawe, whose median household income is approximately \$40,000, health care is an important issue. They want it to be accessible, they want it to be closer to home and they want it properly funded by both levels of government. As we heard from the member from Willowdale, when this agreement was first struck with the federal

government in 1969, it was a true partnership, where the federal government contributed 50%, or 50 cents on every dollar, for health care. When you have a partnership between different governments, an even and equal sharing of costs—that was the intention, and that's what went on for years until the slashing started from the federal Liberals.

In 1995, Premier Harris had to make some very difficult but necessary decisions. Health care has changed. We're doing procedures today that were not done 30 years ago. Those procedures cost money. They're very expensive procedures. We see people with some illnesses who are able to survive because of the quality of health care and the way it has changed.

In our riding, I want to say that the London Health Sciences Centre is a leading hospital in Ontario but also worldwide. Premier Harris was at the London Health Sciences Centre in October. They used the first computerized robot that allowed for non-invasive heart surgery, and they conducted a successful surgery using this robot. Certainly on my community's behalf, the Ivey family contributed to that robot and they are to be thanked. That is where health care is going.

In the summer I had the opportunity, on behalf of the government, to go to Windsor, where the ground was being broken for one of the new cancer care centres. As we've heard, Windsor has benefited enormously. Their hospitals have improved. But continually, what do we hear from the members from Windsor? Doom and gloom. Do you know why they are receiving the benefit today in Windsor? It's because of a strong economy. How did that economy become strong? By cutting taxes. By cutting taxes, we not only created in excess of 600,000 net new jobs but increased government revenue. By increasing government revenue, we were able to invest in health care, in education, in the priority things that we all care about.

While we're on the issue of priorities, all governments need to prioritize where their spending is going to go. All governments cannot do all things. At some point you have to decide what is important to the people you represent. We continually hear that health care is important. That's why in our platform we've not only increased funding by 20% for health care; we've made it our number one priority, in contrast to the federal government. We'll see where their priorities are: gun control, supposedly.

1700

Handguns in this country have been registered since the 1930s; always have been and will continue to be registered. Now what they've done is spent \$200 million to register long guns, shotguns. The odd person who has a shotgun for hunting purposes, a farmer who may have a shotgun—to get these registered, the federal government so far, to date, has spent \$200 million. That's possibly a good idea, but is it a priority? Again, with the 102 federal Liberal members in Ontario, I urge our citizens to contact them and see what is a real priority to our federal Liberal friends.

On top of that, another priority the federal government came up with—and this was quite an interesting one. Anne McLellan announced \$200,000 to educate the public on vehicle theft. Interesting: \$200,000 on advertising. We know that car thieves steal cars. People go home at night, park their vehicles in their laneways, and someone comes along, forcibly enters the car, hot-wires it, drives off and so on. So now Anne McLellan is going to, I don't know, mail out or somehow send out \$200,000 worth of literature to the public to say—what? I don't know. "Don't park your vehicle in your laneway"? Anyway, that's the type of priority they have. Obviously the priorities are not right.

What the health restructuring has done, just a few things: three new cardiac care centres; the opening of five new cancer care centres in Mississauga, Oshawa, Kitchener, St Catharines and Sault Ste Marie; 56 new up-to-date emergency rooms; and tripling the number of MRIs in the province.

We're committed to bringing the highest quality of health care available into our communities, Mr Speaker. I thank you very much, and I'll be sharing my time with the member from Brampton.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It's my pleasure to speak on behalf of this bill. Rather than taking the macro approach perhaps that my colleagues have, I'm going to try to zero in a bit more specifically and give an example of what the HSRC, the Health Services Restructuring Commission, did in our area and how things are working out. I thought that sort of local perspective would help show that things really are working.

In addressing the health care issue in this province, it was a bit like turning the Titanic around in a shallow harbour. I think we all understood that we have this massive ministry worth somewhere in the neighbourhood of—well, when we came into office in 1995, it was about a \$16-billion or \$17-billion budget, and now of course it is just over the \$20-billion mark with the investments that were badly needed into the system. But that being said, like previous governments of all stripes, it was too easy for us to throw funds into the system when it was needing them. We also wanted to find efficiencies. We knew there was fat in the system where money was not being directed as quickly and directly as it should have been towards patient care.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): So the Premier hand-delivered it.

Mr Spina: Smitherman, someday you'll learn, when you're here long enough.

We had many overserviced and underserviced areas in this province, and one of the things we had was a situation where we had overserviced areas like the big boondoggle in downtown Toronto with 44 hospitals. That was the most unbelievable situation we had ever seen in this province, and yet we had communities across the rest of this province where we were severely underserviced, particularly some of our rural and northern communities. What we had to do was find a way to redirect those funds.

On a local basis, in Brampton we had a hospital that worked very hard to make sure that it maximized its use of government dollars. Peel Memorial Hospital, as it was known, was a very efficient organization basically not only underserved with staff and not able to cope with the growth of population that we experienced in Brampton and in Peel in general, but also having to cope with an outdated medical facility that needed refurbishing and expansion.

Under the Health Services Restructuring Commission, some good recommendations came forward. They recognized that this hospital needed some infusion of dollars in order to be able to expand and renovate and to cope with the growth of patients and of the population in our area.

I'm glad to say that we are at least headed in that direction. We're not there yet. We're not going to be able to solve all of the problems of the world in one year, in one month, in a week. I think we probably have already seen that we've not been able to resolve all of the issues within even one mandate of government. We're pleased that we are able to come back for a second term to be able to follow through with the recommendations of the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

One example is that the HSRC recommended that Peel be amalgamated with Etobicoke General and Georgetown hospitals to create what originally was called the Northwestern GTA Hospital Corp. This has since been named after one of the not so recognized outside of the medical community heroes of medicine, who is a Canadian and who has made his mark on an international basis around the world for the progressive methods and progressive way of delivering health care services: Sir William Osler. We're proud to recognize that our Northwestern GTA Hospital Corp is now the Sir William Osler Health Corp. Yet we were able to retain the tradition of the Brampton Memorial campus, which was a tribute to our fallen heroes in the two great wars that we fought.

There has been a substantial amount of reinvestment as a result of some of the savings that were realized. I think, and I stand to be corrected, we had something like 22 vice-presidents under the three hospitals in Etobicoke, Brampton and Georgetown. With the amalgamation to the Sir William Osler Health Corp, we now have, I believe, six vice-presidents. At an average salary of around \$125,000 apiece, we can see immediately that 16 fewer people at \$125,000 a year realizes savings of a little under \$2 million a year in salary alone. This is good savings, because now these hospitals are able to redeploy those salaries into hiring staff, into hiring nurses and interns and diagnostic technicians and so forth, to be able to deliver the services that we need for our patients.

1710

Traditionally, over 40% of our patient load has left Peel, both Mississauga and Brampton, to go to Toronto in order to get specialized services. The Liberals and NDP present this distorted picture of Ontario's health system, and that's not the complete picture of health spending in this province, because in Peel we have found that we have been able to repatriate some of those patients who

travelled from Peel to Toronto for services: priority programs, \$17 million; cardiac operating funding, \$7 million; Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, \$1.9 million; a pre-school speech and language program, \$1.7 million; growth funding, \$30 million—this was the largest single shot of growth funding that our facilities in Peel received, between the Osler, the Credit Valley Hospital and the Trillium Health Centre, in well over 10 years. Why? We don't know, but sometimes you wonder whether it was politically driven, why we did not get our fair share of funding. We're still not there but at least we're coming a long way towards it.

We had \$6.6 billion to help reimburse for the hospital restructuring, Y2K readiness, mental health, drug benefits spending increases, physician OHIP payments increases, nursing funding, emergency room capital expansion, cancer capital expansion, 60-hour-stay funding. These are all programs where we as the Harris government, under Minister Elizabeth Witmer, have made conscientious decisions to be able to show that health spending in Peel has increased by over \$247 million since 1995.

In addition to that, there are things like long-term-care beds and capital equipment like MRI units, cardiac centres, cancer centres, new dialysis satellite units at Peel in Brampton, and so on.

Clearly this empowers the government to carry forward the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommendations, particularly those that have a very positive advantage to the communities we live in. We know there are other communities that are still in the process of working it through, and I think if we continue to work co-operatively between the government, the ministry and the local MPPs of whatever stripe, then hopefully we will be in a position to say that we have turned this big ship called health care around and now we'll begin pointing it in the right direction so that all of us in our province can experience the benefits of a good health care system.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On lead speeches? I had not thought that there were questions and comments on the lead speeches, but I'm happy, in advance of doing a leadoff speech, to enter into questions and comments on the comments that have already been made by the government party.

Maybe to single out one of an hour's worth of comments, I'll go back to something which the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health said, which is that "we're putting our money where our mouth is." This may not be something that I'll actually get to in my own leadoff speech, so I'll focus on that now, because I have some very real questions about whether this government indeed puts its money where its mouth is when it comes to health care.

For example, I remember the Premier of the province saying that he was going to put every penny that he received from the federal government in the transfer of \$945 million directly into health care spending, creating

the impression among the Ontario public that they would indeed see almost \$1 billion in new health care spending on the part of this government.

The Minister of Finance, in his budget and then in his first-quarter financial statement, I believe, reiterated the fact that this government was actually going to increase health care spending by \$1.6 billion.

I want to look just at the operating side because, quite honestly, I've tried to make any numbers I can find in the government's budget add up to \$1.6 billion in increased funds between operating and capital. I can't find \$1.6 billion. I'll leave that to the Minister of Finance. What I know for sure is that the operating budget, which is going from \$18.925 billion to \$20.173 billion, is actually missing \$926 million of what the Minister of Finance called one-time funds, but funds which indeed were being spent on health care, or presumably were being spent on health care, and were allocated to health care in the last budget. If that \$926 million in so-called one-time funding had been left in the budget, and then we'd look to what happened to the operating budget, we'd see that it had only gone up by some \$322 million, not even making full use of the \$945 million that the Premier assured us was going to go into new health care spending. You could do a lot for the \$600-million difference.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): When you listen to the government members talk about Bill 23, if you're sitting at home watching in your living room, you'd swear that this was somehow good news that the mandate of the Health Services Restructuring Commission is going to be extended vis-à-vis the powers being given to the minister.

I would ask any of the government members who feel so good about this and proud to come on into Hamilton and talk to us about the Health Services Restructuring Commission. Talk to Hamiltonians about how much sense it makes to be shutting down the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital. Talk to them about how much sense it makes to have the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp running an almost \$40-million shortfall because of funding cuts to hospitals that this government has made. On the HPH alone we have an entire community standing unified, saying it makes absolutely no sense to shut down the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital, given the fact that recently they won one of the most prestigious international awards that you could possibly receive because of the quality of the service that is provided.

Yet it was the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation, and this is interesting because the courts had ruled that the commission did not have the power to order psychiatric hospitals closed. The best they could do was make recommendations to the minister. The minister has decided she is going to follow those recommendations. So from those of us who are viewing this from the outlook of Hamilton, the idea that we would extend the power of the Health Services Restructuring Commission to the minister is something we've already experienced and, quite frankly, it stinks.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to offer a couple of comments in the time available on this important bill.

It's very clear to people that the need for restructuring the health care was a priority. It was a priority that was recognized by our government back in 1995, recognizing that the previous government was only prepared to close beds and not deal with the kinds of structural problems that existed throughout this province, ones that were based on a history of the creation of hospitals that were falling behind in being able to have the technology, the kinds of resources that are necessary as we go into the next century. That has been the motive behind the restructuring that health care has taken in this province. It's recognizing the fact that we needed to put resources into those hospitals and being able to provide people with the kind of help and the level of health care that's necessary: MRIs, being able to increase the number of dialysis machines, those are clearly investments that were necessary, where we had to be able to take those health care dollars and put them into those priority areas.

I'm very proud of the commitment we made to restructuring in this province despite the fact that we have not until this last year been supported by the federal government. That support, while obviously welcome, still only represents 11 cents on the dollar.

1720

Mr Smitherman: I listened with interest to the speeches by the members of the government, and I was very shocked to see that finally they've taken responsibility for the Health Services Restructuring Commission as their baby. So often in this House we've heard the minister who announced it say, "We've shuffled this off to this arm's-length body and we have nothing to do with that process." So finally they've embraced it.

In my own riding the health services restructuring has ordered the closure of four hospitals. The Wellesley Central Hospital was ordered closed. Because it was full? No. Because they said it was empty. But in fact the beds are still full of sick people. We've got ambulances in the city of Toronto, as the district health council report of a few days ago indicated, that cannot find a place to take sick patients, not just because emergency rooms are overtaxed, but because the beds are full. The \$22-million deficit of St Michael's Hospital was such a problem that they have threatened to close the Wellesley Central Hospital early, and yet the capital investments have not yet been made so as to allow those services to be incorporated in the Bond Street site of St Michael's Hospital.

Who will take care of the thousands and thousands of people who require services in the emergency ward of Wellesley Central Hospital? Where will the patients who currently fill the psychiatric beds at the Wellesley Central Hospital be discharged to? On to the streets of Toronto, where already we see too many people who have been deinstitutionalized by government? I think that government members ought to take a very close look at that.

The last thing I'll say is that I've heard members from the 905 part of the city talk about the need to support the kind of growth that has occurred. But let's be clear about one thing: My own riding is going through explosive population growth as well. Condominium developments—11 in Yorkville alone are presently on the books. This is one very small portion of my riding. The government needs to have planning which acknowledges that people means the need for better infrastructure.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Newman: I'm pleased to rise in response to the comments today and to thank the members for their comments. I specifically want to address the comments made by the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. She was the leader of the Liberal Party when they made a promise in 1995 to only spend \$17 billion on health care. When our government took office, this province was spending \$17.4 billion on health care. Each and every year that we've been in office since 1995 we've actually increased the amount of health care dollars spent in this province. At the same time, the federal government was cutting transfers to all provinces in Canada and they hit Ontario rather hard. As I mentioned here today, we've actually had an opportunity to see the money go back into the system.

Interjection.

Mr Newman: The member for Essex knows full well. He was there when—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Essex isn't in his seat, I believe.

Mr Newman: What I was talking about was not fictional, was not imaginary, because the member for Essex himself was there when I opened the new emergency department in Windsor this past summer. So he knows in his own community that these reinvestments are being made. The opposition doesn't want to talk about it. I give him credit for being there and acknowledging that it has happened. Other members just would not be there when that was announced.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Was he there?

Mr Newman: He indeed was there.

Our government has made a commitment to increase health care spending by 20% over the next four years. We're currently spending \$20.6 billion. That 20% increase, the campaign commitment from our Blueprint, would actually see \$4 billion more each and every year in health care by the year 2003-04. We're seeing increases in the health care spending across the province. It could only be a Liberal who could actually see an increase in health care spending and call it a cut.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs McLeod: I don't think I will take a lot of time at the outset of my remarks on Bill 23 to discuss the process by which Bill 23 was called for second reading debate this afternoon. We did spend some time earlier on it, and you have made some rulings on the points of order we raised earlier. However, I do want to make note of the

fact that I'm fully aware that bills can be introduced without notice, and typically are introduced without notice. My greater concern was that this bill was called for second reading debate with virtually no notice. I realize there's nothing in the orders that actually prohibit that, so I respect the ruling that you've made.

But it is a matter of practice for governments—I've actually been around long enough; I hate to think about having been around any place long enough to have to remember something that seems like it was part of a distant past. But I remember when we used to have a calendar from the week before that would tell us what we were to be debating in this place the following week. That meant that members could come into the House prepared, having done their homework, having given due consideration to the piece of legislation which was going to be debated. I actually thought that added to our capacity to bring due deliberation to important public business, which I believe that this Legislature carries out.

I will consistently raise my concerns with what I recognize is a change in practice by introducing bills for debate without prior notice. In fact, I suppose I should consider myself lucky that I knew at 11 o'clock this morning that this bill would be called this afternoon. I can remember some situations in the last mandate of this government where we didn't know during question period what we would be debating 15 minutes later. Nevertheless, I feel that there has been a serious deterioration of parliamentary process in this Legislature over recent years and I am going to continue to remember what good parliamentary process was like.

Mr Speaker, I appreciated as well your ruling on the question of being able to divide what we consider to be an omnibus bill. I recognize that this was sort of a mini-omnibus bill because there are really only two separate issues, although three acts are amended by the bill, but really just two separate and distinct issues that the bill is dealing with. It's still an omnibus act. Although the government whip, and you agreed with him, made the stretch to say that the title of the bill provides a theme of relevancy, obviously then you could have a gigantic omnibus bill that deals with every statute that is administered by the Minister of Health in order for the Minister of Health to have legislation that relates to the ability to support and manage the health care system. One of the things this government has been very adept at in its public relations spin is learning how to give names to bills which allow them not only to spin the public about what they're doing but also allow them to bring in many varied bills and measures under a single topic and refer to it as a theme of relevancy.

I will not accept that the title of a bill is providing a theme of relevancy. I believe it's the contents of the bill that have to be addressed in determining relevancy. But I take heart from the ruling you brought in earlier which indicated your belief that there had to be a theme of relevancy in order to determine whether different measures could be part of the same bill. I look forward to future decisions on your part, Mr Speaker, as to when

that theme of relevancy has been violated by the contents of the bill. I personally believe it has been violated in this instance.

I respect your ruling on this occasion. I wish you wouldn't have future occasions to have to consider it, but I hope on future occasions you will apply that standard in a very thoughtful and considered way.

I move to the bill and there are three parts to the bill, two very separate issues. I'm going to address part I and part II of the bill fairly briefly. Part I and part II of the bill amend the Health Insurance Act and the Long-Term Care Act and, as other members have noted this afternoon, provide the government with power to launch its own actions in recovery of costs where there is deemed to be negligence affecting the health of Ontarians.

We're supportive of this part of the bill although we have some concerns about the details. We think the bill has been put together in a somewhat hurried fashion and that there are some very key details missing. For example, we've already had letters today from the association of physiotherapists, who recognize the fact that they could be impacted by the terms of the bill. The bill is very specific in protecting against suits against physicians, against hospitals and against hospital laboratories. But when it comes to any other health care professional, it simply says protection "against such other persons or entities as may be prescribed in such circumstances as may be prescribed."

I had to read that three times to know whether that provided any protection to anybody. So I can appreciate the concern of the physiotherapists' association of Ontario and the podiatrists' association, who have already contacted us, even though they'd only known for some half hour that the bill was going to be called for debate. They contacted us to say, "We're concerned about whether this bill provides due protection for us."

I trust that before this bill receives its very speedy final reading, the Minister of Health will address these concerns and make it absolutely clear that the intent of this bill is not to put the government in the position of launching suits against health care professionals, that there are other procedures, other bodies that deal with questions of negligence or neglect on the part of health care professionals. She's not amending the Health Care Professions Act and therefore she can provide some assurance to groups that may be concerned about the breadth of part I and part II of this bill and the lack of specificity in protecting other health care professionals, not just physicians and hospitals and laboratories.

1730

Having said that, and I've almost addressed the entire part I and part II of the bill, I do want to note a certain irony, a certain surprise that this bill, when it was introduced without notice, gave rise to. The British Columbia government took an initiative much along these lines. I remember when it came forward. They introduced legislation in British Columbia that would allow them to order tobacco companies to help pay for costs associated with treating illnesses caused by smoking, and of course,

that's the intent of this bill. It really is, I believe, focused on the ability of governments to sue tobacco companies for the health effects and the health-related costs of smoking.

I remember when that BC initiative was introduced, we in our caucus and our leader very strongly supported that direction in British Columbia, and argued that Ontario should follow the BC lead, but that was not the view of the Premier at that time. The Premier, somewhat under pressure, as I recall announced—the first reaction of the government was to say that they weren't going to take any action in this regard at all. Some time later the Premier said that they would also seek damages from the tobacco industry, but they were going to take a somewhat different route from British Columbia. Rather than sue Canadian tobacco companies, they were going to seek status to sue American tobacco companies. We quite frankly saw that as simply being a stall, a way for the Premier to say, oh yes, he was concerned about the health effects of smoking, but in fact to relieve himself of actually having a responsibility to take any action.

We are surprised, but pleasantly so, that the government would see fit to bring in this legislation. We wonder, if it could be done so simply—let me see, today is Thursday, they introduced it on Tuesday and potentially could have it passed by Monday if that's the decision of the government—why did the government take so long to do it and what is their real commitment to dealing with tobacco-caused health effects and costs?

I feel as though I'm not giving due concern to part I and part II of the bill, but I trust, maybe falsely, that those who have expressed concern with that one part of the bill, which seems very unclear, will have their concerns addressed by the Minister of Health before this bill is finally called for third reading.

I want to turn to part III of the bill. Part III is the part that amends the Public Hospitals Act. This is where this bill really becomes the son of or daughter of or grandchild of Bill 26. Bill 26, as I'm sure you will recall, was the most sweeping piece of omnibus legislation that this Legislature has certainly ever seen. We've seen omnibus bills since, as you quite correctly noted in your judgment earlier today, but I hope we will never again see a piece of legislation that covers as much as Bill 26 did.

I'm going to take time to remind people of just how broad an omnibus bill this was, because this bill amended the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, it amended the Corporations Tax Act, it amended the Income Tax Act, it amended the Capital Investment Plan Act, and the Highway Traffic Act relating to toll highways. That was when the government brought in more powers to levy tolls.

It created the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and you can be assured I will be coming back to the Health Services Restructuring Commission before my speaking time has elapsed.

It brought in amendments to the Ministry of Health Act, it brought in amendments to the Public Hospitals

Act, it brought in amendments to the Private Hospitals Act, and amendments to the Independent Health Facilities Act. It brought in amendments to the Ontario Drug Benefit Act, the Prescription Drug Cost Regulation Act, the Regulated Health Professions Act. It brought in amendments to the Health Insurance Act and the Health Care Accessibility Act.

If there's time, I hope to be able to address some of the sweeping measures affecting health care, since health care seems to be our theme of relevancy in this bill. I hope I'll be able to address some of the sweeping changes to health care that these various acts that were amended under Bill 26 brought in.

Bill 26 amended the Physicians Services Delivery Management Act. Then it went on to amendments to the Pay Equity Act; amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; amendments to the Public Service Pension Act and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union Pension Act; amendments to the Municipal Act. This is where the head tax was originally proposed. I wonder if anybody remembers that Mike Harris the Taxfighter was planning to allow municipalities to introduce a head tax or poll tax, as it was known in the ill-fated measure of Margaret Thatcher in Britain.

Amendments to the Municipal Act and various other statutes related to municipalities, conservation authorities and transportation; amendments to certain acts administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources; amendments to the Mining Act; amendments to the Ministry of Correctional Services Act; and amendments to various statutes with regard to interest arbitration—as somebody who is facing the potential for a strike and walkout in an area of very great concern to my community, I know that one of the very real problems Bill 26 created was in having government-appointed arbitrators who have destroyed much faith in the public arbitration process.

I read that into the record not because it's immediately relevant to the act that is to be amended today, although Bill 26 most certainly is relevant because the purpose of the amendment to the Public Hospitals Act is to extend the powers given to the minister under the amendments to the Public Hospitals Act in Bill 26. But I did want to raise the other acts that were amended by Bill 26 to remind you, Mr Speaker, that there is no way in the world that you could find a theme of relevancy linking the acts that were addressed under Bill 26, other than, I guess, that it was an act to achieve fiscal savings.

That of course brings me directly to what this act, Bill 26, did in terms of amending the Public Hospitals Act, because it's the extension of the powers that were granted under the Public Hospitals Act under Bill 26 that we are talking about extending to 2005 in this bill before us today.

Under Bill 26 the Minister of Health was given unilateral power to close or amalgamate hospitals, and beyond that the minister and the government were given exemption from any liability for the impact on the health

of Ontarians for decisions that were made in the closure or amalgamation of hospitals. So the minister took unto himself total power to micromanage the hospitals of this province in every detail, because that's how sweeping the powers are under Bill 26 for the minister to be able to manage hospitals. This government took total power unto themselves and they absolved themselves of any ability to be held accountable in a court of law for decisions that were made under this bill.

There is this week one exception to that, and that was the decision that came down from the court in regard to the closure of Montfort Hospital, in which the court said there is another act which supercedes this act and the minister's liability from any action, and that is the act that guarantees francophone rights to service in this province.

But apart from that welcome limitation that we saw this week by the court, this government absolved itself of any legal responsibility for the decisions it could make with these broad, sweeping powers it had given to itself.

The bill also created the hospital restructuring commission. I want to recognize, in passing, that the hospital restructuring commission, which could take unto itself or be given by the minister any of the powers the minister now had under Bill 26, was also exempt under this Bill 26 from any legal liability for the impact of any decisions that were made.

There were other powers that were given to the government under Bill 26, and I want to note those.

The government was given the power to decide how many physicians performing what specialties would gain admitting privileges to which hospitals. That's actually section 14 of Bill 26. It is not proposed to extend those powers because those powers are not sunsetted, they're not revoked at March 2000, as the powers to close hospitals are.

The government was also given the power to reduce, suspend, withhold or terminate funding to a hospital if it is considered to be in the public interest to do so, considerably broadening the responsibility of the Minister of Health to look first and foremost at the quality of care being provided to patients in the hospitals.

The practice in the past, and under the old Public Hospitals Act before it was amended originally by Bill 26, gave the Minister of Health considerable power to go in and have an investigation of a hospital, and indeed to take over the operation of a hospital, to make orders regarding that hospital if there was concern about the quality of care or the management of care in the hospital. Bill 26 said that wasn't enough. It actually gave tremendously broad powers to the minister by saying that the minister could step in and take total control of a hospital whenever it was deemed to be in the public interest, which was undefined, to do so.

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Further on in Bill 26 it was made quite clear that in addition to concern for quality of care, management of care, access to care in our hospitals, the minister would be able to go in and take control of our hospitals and

issue orders and directives to hospitals in order to basically deal with the need to cut costs. The financial interests of the government under Bill 26 for the first time became equal to the quality of care and the management of care and the access to care that up until Bill 26 the government and the Ministry of Health had been primarily responsible for and accountable for, which is why Bill 26 also gave the Minister of Health the power to take over the operation of a hospital by appointing a hospital supervisor who would have all the powers of the hospital board.

Those powers are under sections 7 and 8 of Bill 26, and those powers are not being removed by the bill that is before us today. So the minister will continue to be directed under the amendments to the Public Hospitals Act that were brought in under Bill 26, to be as concerned with the cost-cutting financial resources of government when it comes to hospital care as she is to be concerned about the quality of care, and she will continue to be licensed to send in a supervisor without any investigation and take over the operation of a hospital when she considers it to be in the public interest to do so.

I wanted to make it clear what powers were given to the minister in relationship to hospitals and the Public Hospitals Act under Bill 26 because that's very much central to a decision of this Legislature as to whether a bill extending specific powers under section 6 of the bill, to have the power to close or amalgamate hospitals, is continued beyond the sunset clause of March 2000 which was built into Bill 26. The proposal is that since they haven't been able to complete the work, and will not have completed the work of restructuring the hospital system by March 2000, the minister should have an extension of those powers to close or amalgamate hospitals extended well into the year 2005.

In addition to reminding people of why we're dealing with the powers of the minister to close hospitals, I want to remind people that this omnibus bill was one which was brought in with considerable frustration on the part of the opposition in relationship to process. Because I have a lot I want to say about hospital restructuring, I'm not going to dwell on that extensively other than to remind members, many of whom were not here, that that bill was introduced without notice while members of the opposition were in an economic statement lock-up. The intention of the government was to pass it within two weeks, without any public hearings at all. It took the efforts of one of my colleagues to sit overnight in the Legislature in order to force the government to have at least two weeks of hearings on this extremely comprehensive bill. So you will appreciate why we continue to be extremely sensitive about the nature of omnibus bills and the process by which we consider them, particularly when they relate back to Bill 26.

I want to make one other point about the change in the powers that were granted to the Minister of Health through the Bill 26 amendments to the Public Hospitals Act. I have a Sack, Goldblatt, Mitchell opinion that was rendered on the impact of Bill 26 which notes that under

the old Public Hospitals Act, before it was amended with these new powers given to the Minister of Health, the courts had ruled that the minister could not act for fiscal or budgetary reasons alone or without regard to the effect on patient care in deciding to close or amalgamate public hospitals. I want to stress that, because our contention is that the minister's powers to close hospitals, to micromanage hospitals, as were given to the Minister of Health under the amendments in Bill 26, should not be extended. Under the old Public Hospitals Act, without those powers resident in the Ministry of Health, there were processes by which the minister could exercise accountability in relationship to ensuring that quality of care was the primary consideration in looking at the operation of hospitals and the involvement of the Minister of Health in overseeing the operation of hospitals.

It's amazing how the time flies, so I know I am going to have to return to this subject on Monday. I do want to lead into what will be the balance of Monday's discussion, about what has followed from the Bill 26 amendments to the Public Hospitals Act, because of course what followed was the establishment of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. This hospital restructuring commission was supposedly sent out to find efficiencies by closing or amalgamating hospitals, by restructuring hospitals. But it really was an after-the-fact kind of establishment of an efficiency-finding process, because the bottom line was that in one of its first actions as a government, the Mike Harris government decided to cut \$800-million-plus from the budgets of hospitals. It was only after the cuts were made that the hospital restructuring commission was put in place to go and figure out how they could find some efficiencies that would allow the hospital budgets to realize those \$800 million in cuts. I think it's important that we keep that in mind.

The parliamentary assistant earlier referred to the fact that when the hospital restructuring commission started out there were some 10,000 empty beds in the province but nobody had gone and closed a hospital before. Just once and for all I would like to remind people that the 10,000 beds that were supposedly closed weren't closed; they weren't empty because there wasn't a need for them. They were closed, they were empty, because the government went out and cut money from the hospital budgets. When you take \$800 million out of the hospital budget, there's only one place the hospital can cut. That's to shut down beds, reducing access to patients, which is why we have hospital lineups today.

So don't talk to me about the 10,000 closed beds and the failure to close hospitals around the closed beds, because the fact was that nobody, including the hospital restructuring commission in its subsequent work, actually looked at whether there was a need to reopen those beds by putting the resources back into the hospital system. If the hospital restructuring commission had started out with a mandate to actually look at what the hospital health care needs were in each of the communities across

this province they visited—I think they cite 22 communities—then maybe we would have had a restructured hospital system that people in those 22 communities recognized as having improved access to health care in their communities. That in fact is not what has been the result of the hospital restructuring commission's work, because that was not the focus of the exercise, to actually examine what would work to provide better health care in each of those communities.

I also want to recognize that something else happened when the hospital restructuring commission was set up. The hospital restructuring commission, under Bill 26, was not automatically given the powers that the government gave itself under Bill 26. Bill 26 did allow the government to transfer its now sweeping powers to micromanage our hospitals to the hospital restructuring commission. It did that under a regulation that was passed I believe in 1996. It was regulation 87/96, which said the hospital restructuring commission, established under section 8 of the Ministry of Health Act, "may issue directions under section 6 of the act or under subsection 9(10) of the act in the place of the minister." They set up a commission which had the power to make binding directives on our hospitals across this province and that ministers, both Minister Wilson, who established this regulation, and subsequently Minister Witmer, said took all power out of the hands of the elected officials in government to change the directions of a non-elected commission. I would submit to you that never before has a government so totally tried to absolve itself of responsibility for planning for the health care of the people of this province.

I want to recognize the fact that that regulation was withdrawn, coincidentally enough, just before the last election, when I think the government was finding itself somewhat uncomfortable with the kinds of directives that had been made by the hospital restructuring commission and which were now binding on the government itself. So at the end of April 1999, very close to an election call, there was regulation 273/99, which revoked regulation 87/96 and effectively took the powers that had been given to the commission back unto the Minister of Health.

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In the few minutes left of our Thursday afternoon debate, let me just recognize what the commission's work has led to. It has led to some 45 hospitals being ordered to close; 33 public hospitals, six private hospitals and six psychiatric hospitals have been ordered to close. They have issued 1,200 directives to 119 of 203 hospitals in 22 communities across this province. They are actually physically closing 33 hospitals, amalgamating 45 hospitals into 13 and closing down 29 hospital sites. The task that the commission undertook was to do all of this in four years' time. No wonder they couldn't complete their work, and they haven't. This was massive change right across the entire province.

How did they go about deciding what decisions would be appropriate in communities? How could they make

that many decisions, 1,200 directives, in the time the commission was operative? It became a somewhat simplified exercise, and I say that in respect of the restructuring commission. They were given an impossible task: "Go out and find \$800 million worth of efficiencies in order to justify this government's cuts, do it in a short space of time and make sure that nobody has any recourse to challenge what you're doing." So what could they do? They had to take some pretty arbitrary formulas and they had to impose those arbitrary formulas each place they went. Regardless of the community needs, regardless of differences from region to region, the same arbitrary cookie-cutter formulas were applied from place to place across the province.

No wonder communities across this province are saying: "Wait a minute. This doesn't work for our community. This is going to reduce access to health care, it's going to lower the quality of care that we can get in our communities." No wonder people aren't buying the hospital restructuring commission's defence that they're actually improving health care as a result of this exercise.

Communities are saying it won't work, and because communities are saying it won't work, they're putting up some resistance. That's one of the reasons why the Minister of Health now is asking for an extension of the sweeping powers to close and amalgamate hospitals that were given to her under Bill 26, why she needs that extension until the year 2005. My goodness, the original task was to be completed in four years, and the current minister now says: "We couldn't do it in four years. We need five more years to bring closure to this exercise of hospital closings and amalgamations."

One of the other reasons why the task could not be completed within the sunset period is that it seems the hospital commission wasn't able to find the operating savings that were going to make up for the \$800 million in cuts. This creates a bit of a problem for the government. The auditor in his report two weeks ago noted the fact that hospitals had not been able to achieve the savings that the hospital restructuring commission had assumed they could make. He noted, furthermore, that for some reason the operating funds weren't flowing to the hospitals along with the restructuring directives being implemented, and this has created some very significant problems as some hospitals that aren't to be closed have accepted new responsibilities and aren't getting the funds to carry out those responsibilities. It's a problem.

The hospital commission, originally sent out to find some \$800 million in cuts, as it completed its task has actually changed its sense of what its job was and said that they expected its decisions and recommendations will be an added cost to government, because effective restructuring requires reinvestment. In their final report, they actually suggested that the reinvestment would be about \$100 million more than any savings they had identified. So no wonder there's a problem for the government.

The government has a budget plan to take \$100 million out of hospitals. Hospitals are already running

deficits of at least a couple of hundred million dollars. They've got about \$2.2 billion, I believe, in accumulated deficits. So no wonder the government has a problem, when its own commission that was sent out to find savings comes back and says: "There's actually an added cost. You have to reinvest more, at least \$100 million more than we can find in savings." Add to that the fact that they haven't been able to find the actual savings, as the auditor tells us, and it creates a dilemma for the government, which is one of the reasons why the operating funds are not following the restructuring directives and why so few of those directives have actually been implemented at this point in time.

There were also unrealistic expectations that were set out by the hospital restructuring commission, unrealistic expectations in terms of how quickly you go about closing a hospital.

I'm not going to get into a full chapter and verse of what happened after the restructuring commission left my community of Thunder Bay, but I can tell you we were the first community to be visited. The commission had ordered that three of five hospitals in my community be closed, including the chronic care hospital, which has indeed now closed. I believe it's one of four hospitals that have actually closed since the restructuring commission undertook its work. It also ordered the psychiatric hospital to be closed. Its orders were finalized in October. It ordered that the chronic care hospital and the psychiatric hospital would be closed as of the end of March of the next year. Orders that came down in October were disruptive to the lives of the people who were patients in those hospitals, in both the chronic hospital and the psychiatric hospital. These were patients who were there for long-term care in most instances. These orders were incredibly disruptive to the lives of these patients. All of the disruption it caused with having to collapse a hospital and its organization and deal with the staff, the transfer of staff and decisions about where the services are going to be provided and where the money's going to come from, and all of that was supposed to be done for two hospitals by the end of March of the next year, a matter of months.

The chronic hospital has closed. It closed approximately in the right time frame. You will know that the Minister of Health has had to acknowledge that as the hospital restructuring commission set out to close six of 10 psychiatric hospitals in this province, it could not possibly be done as quickly as the restructuring commission was mandating. It's one of the reasons that you can't find the savings they were supposed to find. The Minister of Health quite rightly has said, "No psychiatric hospital bed will be closed until the care for psychiatric patients is available in the community."

We've seen very little progress in providing care for psychiatric patients in the communities, so there is a long way to go before those six psychiatric hospitals will close. I trust the commitment will be kept, that when it comes to the closure of psychiatric hospitals, no psychiatric bed will be closed until the services that psychiatric patients need are fully available in our communities. That

was another reason why the directives of the hospital restructuring commission have been implemented in very small degrees and why the Minister of Health now needs an extension of the power to close hospitals.

I will touch on one of the other reasons why the hospital restructuring directives have run a bit afoul of being achieved in the four-year time frame. One of those is because there seems to be a problem with the decisions they made about beds and about how many hospital beds should actually be left open. You will remember that last spring, again just before election time, there were considerable concerns about long waiting lines in emergency rooms. The Minister of Health put some Band-Aid money into emergency rooms. I think she said it was to be used to add beds at peak times to deal with crises. I'm not sure how the hospitals anticipate the peak times and know how to add the staff to open the beds to deal with a crisis until the crisis has actually arrived. Indeed, that has proved to be a problem, because we still have clogged emergency rooms despite the Minister of Health's announcement in July that she had fixed the emergency room problem once and for all. The fact that we haven't fixed the emergency room problem once and for all is the reason we get calls to say, "Did you know that there are 35 people on stretchers in the emergency room hallways of a Mississauga hospital?"

But that's perhaps a discussion for another day, because the hospital restructuring commission did identify a reason for the emergency room problems. They said the problem we have in emergency rooms is that there are no beds to admit people to when they come into emergency and have to be admitted. They said the reason there are no beds to admit people to is because people who need chronic care are in acute care hospital beds, and we all nodded and said, "That makes sense." We all knew from our home hospitals that was occurring. That seems like, dare I say, a wise observation on the part of the hospital restructuring commission.

It was a little bit puzzling then to look at the subsequent recommendations of the hospital restructuring commission, knowing that there were chronic care patients who were blocking acute care beds and causing problems in the emergency. They then went out and shut down chronic care hospitals. Their directives would involve, from this point on, the closure of some 3,500 chronic care hospital beds.

That does create a bit of a problem, because if you're shutting down chronic care hospital beds—and these aren't empty beds. These beds are all full; there are waits for admission to chronic care hospitals. So if you've got waits for admission to chronic care hospitals, you want to move chronic care patients out of acute care hospitals into chronic care hospitals and you shut down 3,500 chronic care beds, how are you going to move people into them?

The hospital restructuring commission had an answer for that. The answer was they would move people out of chronic care hospitals and into long-term-care facilities. I remember saying—and I'll end on this note since it is 6 o'clock—to the hospital commissioners when they

were in my community of Thunder Bay, "What about the people on waiting lists to get into long-term-care facilities?" They said, "They probably don't belong on the waiting list."

On that note, Mr Speaker, I will adjourn the debate, if that's the proper motion, and I'll—

The Speaker: Point of order.

Mrs McLeod: A point of order? All right, and we'll resume the debate on Monday.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, I see the Premier has joined us. I'd like to seek unanimous consent to bring a motion to revert to question period.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I heard a no.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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