



**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 15 October 2001

Lundi 15 octobre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Monday 15 October 2001

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Lundi 15 octobre 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): It is simply incredible that this government has refused to address the crisis in home care across the province. In my community, as in too many other communities, the crisis is building to intolerable levels.

Last week, the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital described the backup that's starting to build in the hospital because patients can't get support at home and so can't be discharged. Where's the sense of keeping someone in a hospital bed when the hospital is already full and when home care is less expensive than hospital care? Does this government think it's OK to let waiting lists for surgery get longer and longer while they ignore the fact that cuts to home care mean more time spent in a hospital bed?

We get constant calls from the families of seniors who are faced with having to go into nursing homes because they can't manage at home without help. Why is this government forcing seniors into nursing homes when they could stay in their own homes with a little more support?

We get many calls from individuals trying to manage at home on their own: people like Mrs M, who used to have nine hours of personal care but now only gets two hours and was upset because she just can't manage to care for herself. Does this government want Mrs M to spend the rest of her days in a chronic care bed?

In my community, some of the most distressed calls we receive, though, are from parents of children with special needs who can't get the physical care they need to be able to go to school. One of these families has a 21-year-old son who has cerebral palsy. Thanks to physiotherapy, speech therapy and support from the community care access centre, he made it to the last year of high school. But this year his support has been cut and he's back on a waiting list, along with hundreds of others who used to get help before this government cut the funding.

Cuts to home care make no financial sense, but, more than that, they are simply cruel. I say to the Mike Harris government, shame on you for making the most needful people in our communities suffer so much.

EVENTS IN DURHAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House to recognize the business communities of Orono, Newcastle and downtown Bowmanville. They again have exceeded all expectations in hosting outdoor fall festivals.

On Saturday, the annual Bowmanville Apple Festival and Craft Sale took place. Special attractions included huge tents filled with crafts on King Street. There was also a lumberjack competition, musical entertainment, there were displays by community groups, plenty of locally grown apples, fritters, apple treats and cider. Over 10,000 people attended.

I'd like to congratulate Ron Hooper, chair of the Bowmanville Business Improvement Area, along with board members Jamie Kennedy, Jim Schell, Brian Purdy, Lori Allin, Justin Barry, Edgar Lucas and Michael Sullivan. Congratulations also go to Garth Gilpin, the BIA general manager, who is retiring shortly, and indeed all the BIA members and volunteers.

The Newcastle and District Chamber of Commerce Fall Festival was Saturday, September 29. This was another outstanding example of the whole community getting together for a great family event. I'd like to congratulate and commend the chamber, the executives, specifically Terry and Jean Graham, and the membership and volunteers. One of the highlights was the Newcastle Lions' walkathon for funds in support of guide dogs.

I would also like to recognize the Orono BIA and its successful chili cookoff that took place on Saturday, September 22.

I'm proud to report that the Durham riding has a 200-year history of building strong communities. The fall festivals in Clarington and Port Perry are just a few examples that community spirit is alive and well in my riding.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): It is true, and this government wants to deny it, that the province is facing a crisis when it comes to home care. CCACs are forced to cut services, and this is becoming evident in my community.

In my riding, I want to point out the case of Mr Derango. He and his wife have been looking after his elderly mother for some time. Now Mr Derango is undergoing cancer treatment himself, if you can imagine. He is

turning 70 and has to look after his elderly mother. The fact is, he can no longer do that and has applied for home care. Sadly, he has been told that there isn't enough home care available, so he has been turned away.

Then there's the case of the Oddi family. A daughter-in-law who has a heart condition is looking after her father-in-law, who has Alzheimer's. She is also a senior and is forced to look after this elderly parent.

We have a state of crisis in this province when it comes to home care. We repeatedly have told this government that this is the case. We now have real people with real problems here. Can you imagine seniors in our province having to look after their elderly parents? That's the state of affairs we in Ontario find ourselves in, and it's completely unacceptable. It's a result of this government's lack of funding for home care.

ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARY WEEK

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): As a former head of the library board in the former city of Etobicoke, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to mark the opening and beginning of Ontario Public Library Week. This year's theme, "OPL: It's not just by the book any more," focuses on the information technology services offered by today's libraries. Public libraries are offering so much more than just books. Patrons visiting any one of the excellent facilities in Etobicoke North will notice that there is so much more in today's libraries, from books on tape and CDs to videos, DVDs, CD-ROMS, e-books, and of course the Internet.

As part of Ontario Public Library Week's celebrations, libraries across Etobicoke North will be holding special programs. Some libraries will hold sessions designed to instruct patrons on how to tour the virtual reference library. As well, Web designers will hold workshops for children on introductory Web design skills. Local libraries will hold workshops for students on how to effectively utilize homework help sites. In many libraries, patrons will be asked to mark on a map the locations they send e-mail to, with the expectation that the entire globe will be covered.

Ontario's PL system has harnessed the power of information technology through the implementation of technology-based services. The local library has become an indispensable service for the benefit of all Ontario citizens.

1340

SITE OF EARLY PARLIAMENT

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I'm very pleased to inform Ontario parliamentarians that the first Parliament site, dating back to 1813, has been found. It exists in my riding, and over the past several months I've had opportunities to be on the site of the archaeological dig building on the work of great people like Jane Beecroft and Peggy Kurtin, who have worked so long on the matter of historical preservation.

Archaeologists were on site—Frank Dieterman and Ronald Williamson—who have produced this book, *Government on Fire*, a copy of which I'll be providing to the relevant minister.

Rollo Myers and a group called Citizens for the Old Town have championed doing an appropriate excavation of this site, and we've found important artifacts which clearly date this to the War of 1812 and to the burning at the hands of the Americans. But this site requires action on the part of the Ontario government to find the resources within to make sure the historical interpretation of this site is made possible for the long term for all the citizens of Ontario.

Currently, this archaeological treasure lies beneath a parking lot held in private hands. So we ask the government to do the right thing, which is to invoke part VI of the Ontario Heritage Act to expropriate these lands and for the very first time use these very strong powers to preserve this very important site for the future of Ontario, for all Ontarians to be able to go back and see where Ontario's first Parliament lies.

ST MARY'S MANOR

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to bring to the Minister of Labour's attention something that's happening in the community of Timmins that has the potential for being quite serious. We have a private nursing home called St Mary's Manor in Timmins that resides at the old Timmins and District Hospital, and in that particular residence there are some 67 seniors who make their home at St Mary's Manor.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees organized a bargaining unit some three years ago and have been trying for three years to negotiate a contract with their employer. For three years the employer has stalled and has found all kinds of excuses not to come to the bargaining table, everything from firing his lawyers to saying people are sick or the weather doesn't allow him to travel.

The thing is getting quite serious at this point. As of the last meeting that the union had with the employer, which was some two weeks ago, at the end of the meeting the employer told the union that he didn't want to go and bargain a collective agreement, didn't feel that he had any responsibility under Ontario labour relations law and that he would fire the employees of St Mary's Manor, all 19 of them, by the end of this month, putting the residents at risk of not having staff to be able to operate that residence.

I'm calling on the Minister of Labour to intervene directly to make sure the employer understands that he has a responsibility, in order to find a solution so that the residents can go to sleep tonight with confidence that they're going to continue in their home where they are now with the current staff. The employees are not being unreasonable. Paying a nurse \$10 an hour, by today's standards, is by no means an exorbitant amount of money, and we ask the minister to intervene.

CHILD HEALTH NETWORK

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On Tuesday, October 9, I had the honour of attending the official launch of the new electronic information exchange linking Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital to the Hospital for Sick Children and other hospitals that provide children's health services.

The electronic child health network, eCHN, was developed by the Hospital for Sick Children, IBM Canada, Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, St Joseph's Health Centre, Rouge Valley Health System, St Elizabeth Health Care and 12 pediatricians associated with these particular hospitals. The eCHN promotes the sharing of resources and knowledge to reduce costs and create efficiencies. The three components of eCHN include your child's health, a Web site of health information for children and parents; PROFOR, an electronic room for health care professionals' continuing education; and HiNet, a health information system.

According to Dr Alan Hudak, an Orillia pediatrician, "Using HiNet, I can keep track of my patients being cared for both at Soldiers' and the Hospital for Sick Children. I can see their latest lab results, medical images, notes from other treating physicians and more." He goes on to say, "Parents will find HiNet more helpful for keeping their child's health information in one secure place."

I congratulate the stakeholders and Minister Clement for his ministry's \$11.5-million commitment to this very valuable program.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): The Week of the Child will be celebrated across Canada from October 16 to 23. It is a time to highlight the commitment of our society to ensure that the basic needs of children are met.

In Ontario, parents work very hard to provide their children with these necessities with the help of many people in their communities. Child care workers and teachers work tirelessly to ensure that the children entrusted to their care receive the attention and support that children need to develop to their fullest potential. People from virtually every profession—health care, police, firefighters, bus drivers, just to name a few—are dedicated to ensuring that our children receive the care and protection they deserve.

However, there is always more to be done. In Ontario the fastest-growing demographic among the homeless is families with children. Over 40% of the people who use food banks are children. There are over 2,000 children in this province waiting to be adopted. The Harris government has passed legislation that may extend the work-week for families to 60 hours.

Our children are our most precious resource. The Week of the Child is an opportunity to focus on the promise in the face of every child. It is time to thank

child care workers, teachers and those who work to keep children safe. It is also a time for all of us to commit to invest the resources that will assist those children in Ontario who so desperately need our help.

REENA FOUNDATION

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): It is my pleasure this afternoon to speak about the Reena Foundation that is located in my beautiful riding of Thornhill.

This morning, Reena Elder Home and Battle Centre was toured by the Minister of Community and Social Services, John Baird.

Reena is a non-profit social service agency dedicated to integrating individuals who have a developmental disability into the mainstream of society. Reena was established in 1973 by parents of children with developmental disabilities as a practical alternative to institutions. Reena strives to create an environment that respects and promotes dignity, individuality, independence and freedom of choice within a framework of Jewish culture and values.

I've had the privilege and pleasure of visiting Reena on a number of occasions and meeting their wonderful workers and clients. Reena now provides services to almost a thousand people who have a developmental disability and their families. Visiting this facility and seeing how they have improved the lives of so many clients is truly a heartwarming experience.

I congratulate all the volunteers and staff at Reena for the work they do for the community of Thornhill and for all the families of Ontario.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On Thursday, October 4, the member for Northumberland raised a point of order during private members' public business concerning a motion moved by the member for Windsor West. The Deputy Speaker, who was in the chair at that time, recessed the House briefly to consider the point and returned to the House and delivered a ruling in which, in the interests of fairness to the House and to the member for Windsor West, he permitted the motion in question to proceed. I concur with the position taken by the Deputy Speaker that day, and agree it was a reasonable step which permitted the House to continue under the circumstances.

The Deputy Speaker also committed that the Speaker would return to the House to clarify the standing orders concerning preambles and recitals in motions, and that is what I intend to do now.

The issue was perhaps best addressed by Speaker Stockwell in April 1999 when he wrote to all members of the House in advance of the beginning of the third session of the 36th Parliament. In his letter of April 19, and a subsequent statement to the House on April 26, Speaker Stockwell expressed concern about the growing tendency for motions to appear on the Orders and Notices

paper which contained lengthy recitals and preambles. Speaker Stockwell drew members' attention to the standing orders relevant to this issue and advised members that from then on he would be applying them diligently and would remove out-of-order notices of motion from the Orders and Notices paper.

Speaker Stockwell was correct, I believe, when he stated, "Ensuring motions are not self-contained debates that precede the main debate they purport to raise is, in my view, in the interests of all members and will make the best use of the time of the House."

Speaker Stockwell's point was that a motion should indicate some succinct, specific opinion that the House agrees to, or some specific action the House agrees should be taken. A motion should not include the arguments as to why an opinion should be adopted, or why a certain action should be taken; those arguments belong in the debate on the motion itself, when members have the opportunity to persuade their colleagues either to accept or reject the proposition. A simple, argument-free proposal before the House gives the House the best chance to clearly decide, and maximizes the chance that the proposal, being uncluttered by extraneous and possibly irrelevant argument, will find acceptance among a large number of members.

Since Deputy Speaker Brown invited these on October 4, I have received written submissions on this matter from the House leaders of all three parties and I would like to thank each of them for providing me with their advice. All three are supportive of the Speaker providing a clear statement on the admissibility of notices of motion, and are desirous of seeing this policy consistently applied. The submissions of the two opposition House leaders quote sections of the parliamentary authorities, Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice and Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, which confirm that preambles and recitals should not be contained in motions.

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Therefore, having carefully considered the House leaders' written submissions and Speaker Stockwell's 1999 statement, I want to reinforce his direction on this matter and indicate my intention to pursue an identical policy. I have asked the Clerk to draw to my attention any notices of motion that may appear to be in conflict with my interpretation of the standing orders and, if they are, I will direct that they be removed from the Orders and Notices paper.

In that regard, I want to indicate that I am directing that private member's notice of motion number 2, standing in the name Mr Dunlop, private member's notice of motion number 3, standing in the name of Mr Bryant, private member's notice of motion number 6, standing in the name of Mr Parsons, and private member's notice of motion number 15, standing in the name of Mr Galt, be removed from the Orders and Notices paper today.

I want to point out that this action, as contrasted with the situation involving Mrs Papatello's motion last week,

has no immediate detrimental impact on either Mr Dunlop, Mr Bryant or Mr Galt, since neither member has an imminent spot on the order of precedence for private members' public business. As a result, they can easily substitute an in-order version of their existing motions without affecting any preparations they or other members might have done in anticipation of an approaching debate, and I encourage those members to do so. In the case of Mr Parsons, his private members' public business ballot item will be considered this Thursday, but he has already designated Bill 54 as his item, so the removal of his notice of motion does not impact his ballot item.

I want to thank the member for Northumberland for raising this issue, as it has given the Speaker the opportunity to clarify and provide direction in an area that has been confusing to very many members.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, if I may: I want to thank you, and we respect the ruling. I also want to thank you for giving the opposition caucuses an opportunity to respond rather than having the matter dealt with promptly, thereby preventing us from responding. I do want to thank as well the table clerks, who have in the past been very helpful, for their direction, I'm confident, to all of the caucuses here in screening these things and in ensuring that they comply, as they will in the future, with the order of the Speaker today.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If I may, I just rise to thank you for your ruling and thank you very much for going into the detail that you did. It's certainly very much appreciated.

MONIQUE GRENIER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would also at this time like to draw to your attention the presence at the table of a guest of the Clerk's office who will be with us this week. Monique Grenier is a clerk assistant/journals clerk with the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and is visiting the Ontario Legislature this week on a professional development exchange.

Please join me in welcoming Ms Grenier to the Ontario Legislature.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

QUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA QUALITÉ DANS LES SALLES DE CLASSE

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to promote quality in the classroom /
Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir la qualité dans les salles de classe.

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

The minister for a short statement.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): At ministers' statements, Speaker.

MOTIONS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I have a fairly lengthy motion. There has been extensive discussion between the House leaders of all three parties, and I believe we have the agreement of all parties to move motions relating to committee business—that's general government—to have the question put without further debate or amendment on the motion relating to the mandate of the Legislative Assembly committee, and to appoint a presiding officer.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Are you asking for unanimous consent?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Yes, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I move that the standing committee on general government be authorized to meet on the evening of November 5, 2001, at Queen's Park to consider Bill 77, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of Adoption Disclosure.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I move that the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to inquire into and, within 12 months of this referral, report on parliamentary reforms that will improve democracy and enhance accountability;

That this review take place in two phases:

(i) reforms that would expand the use of technology in the House and its committees; and

(ii) reforms that would enhance the role of private members;

That, in addition to its regular schedule, the committee shall have the authority to meet concurrently with the House and during any adjournments of the House;

That the committee be encouraged to employ a staff person or persons, reporting to the committee through the Chair, to be dedicated to the review;

That the committee shall have the power to hear witnesses, commission reports relevant to the terms of reference, employ staff and adjourn from place to place in North America and abroad as the committee may deem advisable, subject to normal budget approval;

That, if upon completion of the report or reports, the House is not sitting, the committee shall have authority to release any reports by depositing a copy of them with the Clerk of the Assembly, and, upon resumption of the sittings of the House, the Chair of the committee shall present such reports to the House in accordance with the standing orders.

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

APPOINTMENT OF HOUSE OFFICERS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 26, 2000, David Christopherson, member for the electoral district of Hamilton West, be appointed First Deputy Chair of committee of the whole House, effective immediately; and

That for the period from October 29, 2001, to October 27, 2002, Bert Johnson, member for the electoral district of Perth-Middlesex, be appointed Deputy Speaker and Chair of the committee of the whole House; and

Mike Brown, member for the electoral district of Algoma-Manitoulin, be appointed Second Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House; and

That, effective October 28, 2002, David Christopherson, member for the electoral district of Hamilton West, be appointed Deputy Speaker and Chair of the committee of the whole House; and

Bert Johnson, member for the electoral district of Perth-Middlesex, be appointed Second Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, October 15, Tuesday, October 16, and Wednesday, October 17, 2001, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1400 to 1405.

The Speaker: Would members kindly take their seats, please. All three whips have arrived.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.

Galt, Doug
Gerretsen, John
Gill, Raminder

Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John

Bartolucci, Rick
 Beaubien, Marcel
 Bountrogianni, Marie
 Bradley, James J.
 Brown, Michael A.
 Bryant, Michael
 Caplan, David
 Clark, Brad
 Coburn, Brian
 Colle, Mike
 Cordiano, Joseph
 DeFaria, Carl
 Di Cocco, Caroline
 Dombrowsky, Leona
 Dunlop, Garfield
 Ecker, Janet
 Elliott, Brenda
 Flaherty, Jim

Hastings, John
 Hodgson, Chris
 Hoy, Pat
 Jackson, Cameron
 Johns, Helen
 Kells, Morley
 Kennedy, Gerard
 Klees, Frank
 Kwinter, Monte
 Levac, David
 Marland, Margaret
 Maves, Bart
 Mazzilli, Frank
 McLeod, Lyn
 McMeekin, Ted
 Miller, Norm
 Munro, Julia
 Murdoch, Bill

Parsons, Ernie
 Phillips, Gerry
 Ramsay, David
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Sampson, Rob
 Sergio, Mario
 Snobelen, John
 Sterling, Norman W.
 Stewart, R. Gary
 Tilson, David
 Tsubouchi, David H.
 Turnbull, David
 Wettlaufer, Wayne
 Wilson, Jim
 Witmer, Elizabeth
 Wood, Bob
 Young, David

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION REFORM

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Our government has continued to deliver on its plan to improve student learning and achievement in the province. We're moving forward with initiatives that ensure our students get the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. This afternoon, I introduced legislation that, if passed, would be another step in that plan: to further promote teaching excellence in Ontario's schools.

The legislation, An Act to promote quality in the classroom, would put in place two more components of our comprehensive Ontario teacher testing program. I first announced the framework for this in May 2000, and we've been working with our stakeholders to put this plan in place.

First, let me say that we all recognize the important role that a teacher can, should and does play in the lives of their students. We have many committed, excellent teachers who, on a daily basis, make a positive difference for our students. And it is important that we have ongoing professional development and training to ensure that all of our teachers consistently remain up to date and provide the best teaching possible to our young people.

Much of the work we've done to implement our teacher testing program has focused on teachers' knowledge of the curriculum or teaching strategies. But, as we all know, having knowledge doesn't mean you can impart it to students in the classroom. Of equal importance is how teachers are able to actually do that on behalf of their students.

That is why An Act to promote quality in the classroom will, if passed, provide for fair and consistent standards for teacher performance appraisals in every school. The proposed act will also set out the requirements for a qualifying test for new teachers before they can obtain their certification. I think it's important to stress that both the provisions of this legislation, the qualifying test and the performance appraisal standards, respond to specific recommendations we have received from our education partners.

As members will recall, this spring we passed legislation to establish a professional learning system for our teachers. Teachers will be completing 14 approved professional development courses during a five-year period to maintain their teaching certification. Again, it is important to recognize that the recommendation for recertification on a five-year basis originated with the Royal Commission on Learning, which all three parties supported. The new performance appraisal system will ensure that the knowledge our teachers obtain is being successfully used in our classrooms.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
 Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario
 Martel, Shelley

Prue, Michael

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The eyes are 62; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There has been a tradition in this House that when a minister makes a statement, the statement is given to members of the opposition at approximately 1:30. Today the Minister of Education tabled her statement with the House leaders of both opposition parties at approximately 2 o'clock in contrast to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, who had tabled his statement at 1:30. Is this a new direction for the Minister of Education, and if so, would she inform the House?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Just to add to that, as I have explained to the opposition before, the convention is that we deliver statements concerning introduction of bills when the bill has actually been introduced. That's indeed my understanding of what staff did today. If there's any further direction the Speaker wishes to give the government, we're quite prepared to abide by that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): As I have told the House, and I will tell them again, and I will keep a yellow sticker on page 30, "Two copies of each ministerial statement shall be delivered to the leaders of recognized opposition parties, or their representatives"—and the part is—"at or before the time the statement is made in the House." I think all members would like to get it as soon as possible, but the standing orders are very clear, "at or before the time the statement is made in the House." I thank the member for his point of order.

1410

Many school boards in the province currently conduct various forms of teacher performance appraisals, but organizations such as the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, our principal groups, have pointed out that the nature and frequency of these evaluations, the rules around them and the implementation of them vary greatly across the province. This new proposal contained in the legislation would make those rules very clear and fair. It would put in place a province-wide performance appraisal system for our teachers. Again, I think it's important to stress that this legislation is built on the principle that good performance appraisal is supportive of teachers and supportive of excellent teaching.

School principals and vice-principals under these proposals would evaluate the classroom performance of current teachers, teachers who have been in the system for some time, every three years. New teachers would be evaluated—new to the profession; new employees to a school board—twice a year during their first two years.

The purpose of the assessment will be to provide teachers with opportunities to improve their teaching skills, if necessary. And school boards will be expected, as many are already doing, to provide support measures for those teachers who need to improve their classroom performance.

If a teacher is not able to improve after continued opportunities, the legislation proposes a very clear and very fair procedure to remove that teacher from the classroom.

The legislation also initiates another very important improvement. It proposes that parents and senior students will have an opportunity to provide input into the evaluation of a teacher. Again, it has been recommended to this government by education partners that this should be put in place.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): That's just terrible.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I love the way the opposition likes to dump on our education partners when they make recommendations that the government agrees with.

While the feedback of parents and senior students on its own cannot result in the dismissal of a teacher, providing a role for parents and senior students in this process emphasizes the importance of effective communications between parents, students and teachers.

The legislation, if passed, would also mark the introduction of the new qualifying test to ensure that those who want to teach in Ontario have the necessary skills and knowledge required before they become certified. The qualifying test will be phased in, starting this spring. Candidates will have to successfully pass this qualifying test to obtain their teaching certificate from the Ontario College of Teachers. Those who fail will have the opportunity to rewrite the test, of course, at a later time and as many times as required in order to pass it.

I'd like to also point out that it was recommended to have this kind of certification test. It's very similar to what many other professions—lawyers and others—have

as an entrance to the profession test and it responds to recommendations from the Ontario College of Teachers.

Improved student learning, the goal of our education plan, requires excellent teaching. Ontario has a teaching profession that can and does make a difference in the lives of students. In today's ever-changing world we must ensure that the quality of teaching continues to meet the challenge for our students. This legislation is another step to do that, and I encourage all members to support its passage.

In closing, I would like to thank the staff of the ministry and the representatives of our education partners—teachers, school boards, principals and parents—for their advice and input into developing this bill.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I'm pleased to rise and discuss Ontario Citizenship Week.

As Minister of Citizenship, I'd like to begin my comments by asking the House to recognize this year's recipients of the annual Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. There are 14 citizens this year who received their distinguished awards last June. I am pleased to say that some of them have joined us in the House today to celebrate Citizenship Week. I would ask them to stand as I recognize their outstanding contribution to the social fabric and well-being of our province.

I'd like to recognize Lynda Arthey of Brampton, Jane Beecroft of Toronto, Penny Dainard of Orangeville, Dr Yuqiu Guo of Ottawa, Barbara MacArthur of Walkerton, Ken and Patricia Wilson of Wainfleet, Dr Joseph Wong of Toronto, and Andre Mak of Mississauga. Each and every one of these honourees has demonstrated the true spirit of citizenship in their respective communities. They are role models for good citizenship to all of us.

It is a privilege to be a citizen in the province of Ontario. We are envied around the world for that distinction. Such is this province of ours that people from all over the globe dream about living here and achieving citizenship. Each year, for 100,000 immigrants the dreams come true as we welcome them to our province.

This evening, to launch Citizenship Week, I will be participating in a Citizenship Court at the Burlington Central Library. We will be swearing in 50 new Canadians this evening, and they come from the following countries: Scotland, India, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Egypt, Northern Ireland, Iran, Israel, China, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Philippines, England, Jamaica, Ghana, Germany, South Korea, Colombia, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Newcomers, past and present, have made immense contributions to our province culturally, socially and economically. In turn, this government supports a number of settlement programs to help newcomers adjust and become full citizens as soon as possible so that they can take every advantage of what this province has to offer.

The cultural harmony that we enjoy in Ontario as a result of immigration is something we can all be justly proud of. Within that harmony is a province in which its citizens are quick to help each other out through such programs as Good Neighbours, which has helped thousands of people live safely in their communities.

Volunteerism is also a long-standing tradition in Ontario. Our celebration of the International Year of Volunteers is still going strong in our province. When terror struck in the United States on September 11, thousands of Ontarians came forward to offer practical help to stricken neighbours and close friends to the south. Across the province, our citizens were all too willing to offer up whatever they could to help the United States lift itself up from the shadows.

As a government, we take a leadership role in providing for those who may be vulnerable because of age, illness and disability so that everyone can achieve full citizenship, but we cannot do it alone. That's why, when we see so many of our citizens willingly offer to help others in need, we know we are on the right track and that we are at the helm of a province that is home to some of the most caring people on earth.

People coming to our province contribute significantly to all of our communities. They obey our laws, recognize individual freedoms and share the Canadian values of tolerance and understanding.

Today marks the start of Citizenship Week. What better time is there for us to remind ourselves to celebrate our good fortune? What could be a more appropriate time for us to reaffirm our values and our belief in the rights of every individual to live with dignity and respect, whatever their background, whatever their colour and whatever their faith?

It is a week that provides us all with the golden opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a good citizen in Ontario, the best place to work, to live and to raise a family, all of us together working hard, contributing to our economy and participating in Ontario's prosperity.

This week is also a perfect time to reflect on what has happened in the past few turbulent weeks, when all of our outlooks on life have been radically altered by the type of evil that has come to us and is so incomprehensible. We are all having to come to terms with extra security precautions and more vigilance at our airports and border crossings. Yet, as we look over our shoulders more, we have to strive to maintain and enhance the Canadian values of co-operation, to treat everyone with respect so that we can all live in peace, with dignity and in harmony. In Ontario, this Citizenship Week is a fitting time for all of us to vigorously pursue the cherished qualities of what being a citizen of this nation and province is all about: tolerance, caring and understanding.

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EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): We stand here in the province of Ontario, where there aren't enough textbooks for 66% of our students, where there is a loss of aides for special education children in every single school board, where transportation has become an issue since the children walk dangerous routes to school every day; where schools are closed prematurely and sometimes unnecessarily and where classrooms are so crowded that young children and older alike have difficulty learning.

And what do we have in front of us from the Minister of Education in the face of all these pressing problems but an administrative item that this government has turned into a political hand grenade. Rather than taking an issue like the evaluation of teachers, the actual approach that should be taking place at the school and with the school board, and making it into something that all of us can agree to find a partnership with teachers on, they have turned it into political football.

Today, with the final introduction of legislation, culminates 17 different announcements by this government on so-called teacher testing. For 17 times this government has tried to exploit the atmosphere of conflict and turmoil that it has created. Instead of actually addressing the issues that would help students learn, that would help ensure that we have the very best teachers in our schools, the government brings us today something that really properly should be in the hands of school boards and individual teachers.

We see in the legislation today the ideological struggle of this government, the inability of the government to provide equally for all kids because we see a government standing in its place and saying, "We need a centralized standard. We need to control what happens to all the school kids," but only those kids in publicly funded schools. The legislation today that purports to increase the quality of teaching, that purports to do something for children, only applies to publicly funded schools. This government doesn't have the courage, the consistency or the absolute responsibility to ensure that these standards apply to all those who teach in this province.

We see also that this government has done this without regard for the unintended effects. So many of the things that at one time, under different conditions, people could have found ways to agree on, could have found ways to build partnerships to improve schools, this government has always found the more difficult route in the sense of providing for more conflict. This will put a burden on principals and vice-principals who have to do the evaluation they think is necessary and then do Mike Harris's evaluation—the standard evaluation, the one they are forcing right now, for example, on special education children all around the province and wasting funds on.

We're losing half of our principals over the next five years because they find that the things this government does make no sense for the well-being of teachers. They find that they're not interested in the well-being of children. We are committed on this side of the House to finding ways to ensure that we can have confidence. Last year, we lost 5,000 teachers in this province for reasons other than retirement. We don't give a blank cheque to this government to do anything when it comes to education that will create further harm.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On behalf of Dalton McGuinty, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, I'd like to extend congratulations to the medal recipients here with us today. You have given us much to emulate and we are proud of you.

But that is as far as we go to see eye to eye with this government, because as soon as this government came into office in 1995, they started to decimate the programs of multiculturalism. What happened, Mr Minister, to the idea of the advisory council on multiculturalism? You have done away with it. You have decimated it. It's gone. It gave us advice on how to live with each other.

How about the ethnic relations committee and, especially, the race relations committee? What did you do with that one? Where are those programs? Gone.

It doesn't matter what happens here today as the minister stands up and says he wants to congratulate us in terms of Citizenship Week. What we need today is a foundation of our programs back. We need the foundation. Where is it? What about the whole idea of the Ontario Welcome Houses? What happened to those programs? They were established to give advice, to open up the doors for immigrants to get jobs—gone. What about access to trades and professions? I want you to know what happened to that. We had to drag them into the 20th century. Access to trades and professions is not gone but it is going at a snail's pace.

In short, as we celebrate national Citizenship Week, we know that we need the programs. We ask this minister to stand up, not only in caucus but in cabinet, and say to the Premier, "Give us back the programs and let's see the money. Show us the money and show us the programs." That's the important part, and we ask him to do it.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say, on behalf of New Democrats in response to the Minister of Citizenship, that we honour those recipients of the medal for good citizenship. They do tremendous work. In fact, some of them are replacing the work of governments. This government is relying more and more on citizens to do the work that they have abandoned. That's why they love to honour the citizens of this province and volunteerism. They know that this non-government government is not here to fix the problems and needs to rely on the volunteers to do that job for them. I say to you, good citizens, that citizens ought not

to replace the role of government as they do their volunteer work, and that's what's happening in this province.

The Minister of Citizenship is going into his riding, I'm assuming, to swear in 50 new Canadians in our community who come from many different countries. I want to contextualize the problem for him, and he knows it well. He and his government have eliminated the Anti-Racism Secretariat, not the race relations department but the Anti-Racism Secretariat, that was designed to be proactively working against racism. They got rid of that program. Now more than ever we need it, but this government says, "No, we don't need it."

We had cuts to the ESL program from that ministry, \$600,000, to help the very new immigrants whom this minister says he's going to swear in tonight. He and his buddies have eliminated the welcome houses, all of them. Those houses were designed to receive new immigrants and help them with their transition. They're gone. Then, of course, the ultimate is the elimination of the employment equity we had introduced, which was designed to bring fairness to people with disabilities, people of colour and aboriginal people. It was designed to bring fairness, finally, to those groups in our society that weren't getting the fairness they were looking for, and, at the end, he's got the gall to say that this is a society that deals with tolerance—and we're happy about that—respect and understanding. We agree with him, except that these were the programs we had in place that were designed to bring about greater tolerance and respect for one another in this province.

That's why it's so hard to be able to speak more positively, other than to honour the recipients and to thank them for the good deeds and the good work they are doing, on behalf of and in place of this government.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): With respect to the Minister of Education, boards of education are already doing performance reviews. Everyone is doing it across the board—nothing new. I suspect that teachers will welcome it because they are already getting it, but the government presents it as if it were something very new to the teachers, and it isn't. I say that's fine, bring it in, Minister. Teachers will accept it and work with it, again, in spite of your assaults and in spite of making it appear that teachers are not doing a good job and that you need to fix them.

Teachers will do their job, as they have always done. With you and in spite of you they will be there to continue their good work, while you create a two-tier system—one private and one public, one that's presumably good for the public system but not for the private—which is what you are doing today, like every other issue connected to this. You are expecting public school teachers to be tested, to be appraised, but in the private school system those who are not certified don't have to be tested. They don't have to be appraised. They don't have to be obliged to report to the sexual abuse bill

that we were dealing with just a couple of days ago and continue to deal with. Those non-certified teachers who teach are not subject to that law, will not be subject to this bill the way regular teachers in our public system are. You are creating two standards. If it's good enough for the public system, I say to you, Minister, it ought to be good enough for the private school. Put in place the same mechanisms and measures for private schools as for the public school system.

We have so many needs in our public system, so many that the minister needs to deal with. Our schools are crumbling. Students need textbooks. They're sharing old textbooks, and some don't have any. Teachers are leaving, and we're firing educational assistants at the Toronto board by the thousands.

We desperately need help. As this minister talks about all the great work that she's doing, we need to take the responsibility for what's happening and, above all else, invest in our public system to make it more effective.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Health. Public health units are responsible for keeping Ontarians healthy and safe. They make sure our drinking water is safe. You will know that in Walkerton it was a representative of the public health unit who rang the bells there.

Our public health units also have a special responsibility when it comes to protecting us against infectious diseases. With the threat of bioterrorism weighing heavily on the minds of Ontarians and Canadians—North Americans, for that matter—these days, I expect you would see their job to be even more important today over at the public health offices.

Minister, we have obtained documents from a September 18 meeting between your ministry and the public health branch. In the documents you indicate that you are considering making further cuts when it comes to the work that is being done by our public health units. Understanding what public health units have done and could still do for us in the given frightening context that we live in, how can you possibly justify making more cuts to our public health units?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm not sure what the honourable member is referring to. I can state to this House that health spending for our public health units has increased by 14%. It was up to a record \$362 million last year alone. We have also included direct funding for such things as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children and speech and education and development and public health research. Those kinds of funds have increased from \$5.6 million, before we were elected, to \$54.6 million last year. These are the

kinds of things that we fund 100% of as a province, and that's our commitment to public health in this province.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, if you're not familiar with the document, I'll refresh your memory. On page 11, it talks about cost reduction strategies for our public health offices. Some of the things you are actively considering include: "Dropping one or more mandatory programs; reduce the scope of one or more mandatory programs; make some expenditures ineligible for provincial funding."

I don't know why you're frowning, Minister. It's your document, prepared by your ministry staff. You understand how important—

Hon Mr Clement: I don't know what you're talking about.

Mr McGuinty: Are you telling me that you're not aware that people in your ministry have proposed cuts to the public health office, Minister? Is that what you are telling me? You should understand how important the work is that this public health office does for the people of Ontario.

I ask you again: given the work they do, given the context we find ourselves in at present, how could you possibly contemplate further cuts to our public health offices?

Hon Mr Clement: I don't know. This opposition leader excels at fearmongering and scaring and over-theatrics without a scintilla of evidence on his side. If you've got something to show me, you show it to me, because I don't even know what you're talking about, and you're scaring people. He is scaring people rather than engaging in legitimate political debate. It should stop right here and right now.

Mr McGuinty: I'll refresh the minister's memory. This is the same document that was presented to you at the estimates committee by my colleague, my critic for health. You have seen this before. You have spoken to this issue before.

I'll refer again to a document here prepared by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that's dated September 18. It says on page 11, "Potential cost reduction strategies," and it includes dropping one or more mandatory programs. It says, "reduce the scope of one or more mandatory programs; make some expenditures ineligible for provincial funding." This is your document prepared by your people in your ministry.

Apparently you've got \$2 billion more for corporate tax cuts, you have hundreds of millions of dollars for partisan government advertising, but you find it necessary to make cuts to our public health offices. I ask you again, how can you justify that?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member talks about my policy or our policy as a government. I don't know what he's talking about. I don't know what he's relating to. He is dreaming in Technicolor.

If the honourable member wants to be helpful when it comes to the public health care debate, perhaps he can join the debate. He can do better than what his government did when it was in power, which was to reduce the

number of hospital beds by 10,000 while paying for the heat, light and administration in hospitals. That was their idea of some sort of health care policy.

We were elected to clean up the mess. We are cleaning up the mess, but our commitment to public health and our commitment to the health of the citizens of Ontario is second to none. The honourable member can scare-monger all he wants, but the truth will out. If he wants to be helpful, try acting like a leader rather than acting like a cheap showman.

NUCLEAR SAFETY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): The question is to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. Today we learned about a report on the Bruce nuclear station that had been prepared by the World Association of Nuclear Operators, a report that was prepared back in 1998 but which only came to public light today. This report reveals for the first time that nuclear power plant operators disconnected warning alarms they found too noisy. It reveals that operators sometimes ignored instrument panels and sat with their backs to them, and it reveals that maintenance work was incompetently undertaken in a number of instances.

This is very alarming information, Minister. Why have you hidden this information, together with Ontario Power Generation? Why have you two conspired to hide this information from Ontarians since 1998?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): With respect to the WANO report, Ontario is being treated the same way by that international organization as every other jurisdiction that runs nuclear generating facilities, and that is, WANO does not make its reports public. In light of the circumstances of September 11, it is even more clear why those reports are not made public.

Mr McGuinty: I'm not talking at present about what might happen on the outside. I'm talking about what is happening on the inside of our nuclear reactors.

Here's something else that the report reveals. It says that there was confusion over three unplanned reactor shutdowns and that "Operators had a hard time figuring out why the shutdowns happened because the designs showed wiring layouts from the wrong nuclear stations."

This is very alarming information. I'm making the assumption—and you should correct me if I'm wrong—that you've had this information in your hands since 1998 and that you have not disclosed this information to the Ontario public, notwithstanding the urging of our privacy commissioner that you do so. I'm asking you again, why have you kept this information secret and why have you not acted on it?

Hon Mr Wilson: The world organization requires that you not make the information public, so that employees will feel free to come forward, and not fear for their jobs, to point out safety issues. I will note that the federal authority with the final say in these matters is the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. I can only say to the hon-

ourable member that that's a 1998 report, and Ontario Power Generation and the world nuclear association were working on improving their performance under that report, and British Power.

I can only say that the federal government would not have given Bruce Power a licence to operate, which it just did a few months ago, if it had any concerns about safety or any issues outstanding from that 1998 report.

Again, this is an area where the less said at this time, the better.

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Mr McGuinty: How convenient, Minister. I guess you must have had this in mind when you exempted Ontario Power Generation from freedom-of-information requests some two years ago. I guess you had anticipated the 11th of September and understood how important it was to prevent anybody from gaining access to any of this information.

This is what Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner ruled in connection with this particular case. The only reason this came out today was because this freedom-of-information request was eventually successful. But the information commissioner said that there was a compelling interest for the public to have nuclear safety information. The issue here is nuclear safety information, all about how we are doing at managing safety at our nuclear reactors, not about some outside force and what that might do to our nuclear reactors.

I ask you again, Minister, why is it that you have kept very important information that has everything to do with what is going on there and ensuring that you are taking the necessary steps, that you are being accountable for what is going on there, secret from Ontarians?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, at the time we were complying with the world nuclear association. All jurisdictions are treated the same and required to follow the same rules.

I can tell the honourable member, though, that those issues have been worked on, that the reason the report was now made public through access to information in this case was that those issues have been dealt with. In 1998 those issues needed to be dealt with. They've been dealt with. Bruce has been given a licence by the federal regulator, by the federal government and its regulator, and we're very satisfied with the measures that have been taken to correct any problems of the past. The report is now public.

I would ask the honourable member, though, to not do any scaremongering in this area. We take this business of security very seriously. Issues are brought to the attention of the companies. They need to deal with those issues in confidence with their regulators, with the federal government and with police agencies. Then, when appropriate, the information is made public; otherwise, terrorists might get a leg up.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Deputy Premier. We just received a shocking internal memo from the Children's Aid Society of Toronto that shows you plan to make serious cuts to child welfare agencies across Ontario effective immediately. The memo shows that you are using the threat of a recession and the tragic events of September 11 as an excuse to cut funding to child welfare agencies.

At a time when children's aid workers can't even begin to tackle all of their existing casework, how could you possibly restrict their funding even further?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The Minister of Community and Social Services will answer the question.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We've made child welfare and child protection a tremendous priority over the past six years. We've increased spending by more than 118%, which I think underlines the priority this caucus, this government and my predecessor, Janet Ecker, have placed on this issue. At no time have we ever contemplated reducing funding on an annual basis with respect to children's aid societies. At no time have we considered reducing funding to children's aid societies on an annual basis. I want to be tremendously clear.

I can say to the member opposite, I have never seen any options with respect to reducing expenditures for children's aid. What we have seen is a tremendous increase in the number of children who are being taken into care and taken into custody, which I think is a productive and positive aspect.

Ms Churley: Let's stop playing games with this. I'm sending the memo across to you. It says that you are making cuts and the increases you're talking about are part of a funding formula for new cases. We all know it's still not enough.

This is what the memo states: "We were informed that recessionary trends in the province have worsened and further exacerbated by the events of September 11. As a result, we were informed that all government spending is being affected, and funding for child welfare agencies across Ontario will be seriously restricted."

Front-line child welfare workers are already worried about liability under the extreme heavy caseloads they currently carry, especially after the death of baby Jordan Heikamp. Haven't you learned anything from that death? Guarantee me, right now, that you will not cut a dime, not a dime, from child welfare programs that are already stretched beyond their capabilities. Guarantee the House that today, Minister.

Hon Mr Baird: The member opposite in her first question said that changes and cuts have been recommended to take place immediately. That is simply not the case. As Minister of Community and Social Services, I have not seen any proposal cross my desk with respect to

reducing expenditures for our children's aid societies. I think it is incredibly important that we recognize the huge policy priority that this government has given child welfare and child protection: 118% is an incredible priority. I can't name a single other area anywhere in the public sector which has seen a 118% increase.

I can tell the honourable member at this time that our biggest challenge with respect to children's aid society funding is to see the levels of increase be not upward of what they were last year, of \$123 million. Last year we saw a significant increase in children's aid society spending. This year we saw another increase, and I don't see any plan whatsoever to reduce funding from that level.

Ms Churley: Minister, the cat is out of the bag. It says here right in this memo that came out of your ministry. The memo indicates that all government spending will be affected by cuts—all government spending.

So I say to the Deputy Premier today, it is astounding that you'd be so quick to cut such a vital program as child welfare. But it's even more astounding that you want to make across-the-board government spending cuts after years of gutting vital programs.

Walkerton should serve as the ultimate example of why it's wrong—wrong, Minister—to value corporate tax cuts over government funding to protect our health and our lives. I want to know, right now—right now in this House today—what other ministries have you told to slash spending? I want you to guarantee that no vital services that save lives will be cut to accommodate your reckless corporate tax cuts.

Hon Mr Baird: The member opposite spoke about a memo from my ministry. The memo she sent me over is not a memo from my ministry. It is not a memo from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. It is not a memo from the government of Ontario. She's wrong.

RENT REVIEW

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to Minister Hodgson. Minister, the courts on Friday ruled in a case of landlord who was double-dipping his tenants. The Ontario Superior Court of Justice says your tribunal allowed the landlord to both charge tenants the cost of washing machines and then to make a profit by charging those same tenants to use those washing machines.

The courts have said this is double-dipping; the courts have said it's illegal. Why is your tribunal rubber-stamping landlord rent increases and double-dipping?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The details that the member talks about were outlined in an article in the paper on the weekend. There was a court decision. I think the system's working the way it should.

He has pointed out that the tribunal, he feels, erred in how they calculated what was eligible for rent increase, and he sent it back to the tribunal. It was referenced in the paper that they think they might even settle before going back to the tribunal. But I want to assure the

member that the tribunal hears most cases within 20 days, and decisions are issued within 72 hours. Their performance is good. They're handling a lot of cases that used to go to court. Under your government's policy, all these cases went to court.

Mr Prue: Minister, this tribunal and the Tenant Protection Act has been unfair to tenants since it was enacted. When you get over half of all the evictions happening without a tenant ever being heard, when you have above-guideline increases, when you have people actually becoming homeless as a result of this particular legislation, your tribunal needs to be overhauled from the top to the bottom.

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But today I ask you just one small thing: will you issue instructions to the tribunal members and change regulations to end double-dipping and to put an end to the drawn-out and expensive remedy that tenants are having to use to go through the courts?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I don't understand the question. Under your party's policies, every one of these decisions went to court. It tied up the courts, clogged up the courts, and it took years getting decisions. So if you're asking to go back to that system, the answer is no.

If you're talking about the rent increase guidelines, the guidelines under our party are lower than when the NDP or the Liberals were in power. I wouldn't want to go back to that. You've got a strange look on your face so I'll quote you the numbers. In 1990, it was 4.6%; 1991, 5.4%; 1992, 6%. That's what you allowed as annual increases. I don't want to go back to that system where appeals to this process go directly to the court. I think the rent tribunal is doing a great job and it's quickly done.

TAXATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, Ontario's working families are already being hit hard by this economic slowdown. On Friday we learned things are going to get worse before they get better. The Conference Board of Canada reported that Ontario will be the only province in Canada headed for a recession and a report by TD Canada Trust found that your fiscal plan will result in a string of deficits.

Notwithstanding these gloomy predictions, Minister, you remain committed to your \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut. It seems to me it's becoming very clear that this cut in corporate taxes is going to leave you with one of two options: you are either going to run deficits or you are going to make serious and further dramatic cuts to health care, education and the environment. I simply want to know, on behalf of our working families today, which option will you elect to choose? Are you going to run deficits or are you going to make further cuts to health care, education and the protection of our environment?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The leader of the third party is in favour of tax cuts; the federal Minister of Finance is in favour of tax

cuts; the ministers of finance across Canada, from the provinces and territories, with whom I met last week in conference together, for the most part are all in favour of tax cuts. Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal opposition in Ontario, is the only person I know lately who is talking about increasing taxes, who is talking against tax cuts.

If you want to do something for the people of Ontario, as we are in a time of economic slowdown, then you do want to stimulate the economy. You do want to accelerate tax cuts, because they create more investment, because they give people more money in their own pockets. I thought you would understand that by now.

Mr McGuinty: Maybe I'll turn the minister's attention to what Canada Trust had to say about your recent economic stimulus package: "The government's recently announced plan to bring forward personal and corporate tax relief from January 1, 2002 to October 1, 2001 is unlikely to have a major impact on fiscal results." In other words, it's not going to work. It's not going to create jobs.

If the minister wants my advice, my advice is very clear: don't proceed with the corporate income tax cuts. Maintain some fiscal flexibility so that we might have some to address these difficult and challenging times. We think that is the responsible thing to do, Minister. You seem to forget that, according to economists now, Ontario will be the only province in recession, Ontario will have the slowest-growing economy in Canada, both this year and next, and Ontario is now facing a string of deficits.

I want to know again, Minister, which are you determined to proceed with, running a string of deficits or making further cuts to health care, education and the environment?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I just want to make sure I follow the Leader of the Opposition. What he is saying is that he is against reducing corporate taxes. He says that he is concerned about deficit. He says that he's concerned about recession. He almost takes joy in the fact that we have an economic slowdown in our country.

We're concerned about jobs. We're concerned about ensuring that there are jobs for the people of Ontario. One of the key ways of doing that is to reduce corporate taxes. It is a way of creating jobs in our province. It creates more investment; it creates more investment in plant; it creates more jobs. It has worked since 1995 in Ontario. We are going to stay the course.

HIGH TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Information technology has become an invaluable tool in my riding of Thornhill and across the province of Ontario. I believe it is important for the government to embrace this development and use it as a means to better deliver services and information to the people of Ontario.

I know there is more to IT development than Web sites and laptop computers. In fact, there is so much out there it is difficult to keep track of all of it. One of my constituents told me how much she enjoyed attending Showcase Ontario in Toronto and how informative it was. Minister, can you tell about Showcase and how it helps to improve access to information and services?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Earlier this month, as the member for Thornhill indicated, we had Showcase Ontario. Showcase Ontario is a forum in which we bring together both the private sector and the public sector so we can share ideas. This year we had about 3,700 participants in this, with about 144 demonstrations of different types of government applications in e-government. Frankly, we had more than 100 private sector exhibits.

The good part about this is that we also recognized excellence in e-government and many of the different ministries of this government received awards recognizing their teams that worked together to make the province of Ontario better. There were teams from the Solicitor General's office, from the consumer ministry, from Management Board, from finance. These employees of the Ontario government were very proud to be a team, to accept these awards for excellence.

This is a good thing: to bring experts in the private and public sectors together so we can find ways to make the government more efficient and better in e-government.

Mrs Molinari: Thank you, Minister, for telling us what this government is doing to enhance e-government services in Ontario. I know it is an industry with enormous growth potential, growth that holds promise of new highly skilled and well-paying jobs, and we all know that these high-value-added jobs are important to sustaining an economy that in turn pays for the services that Ontarians have come to expect.

Within my riding of Thornhill, companies such as Cybermation, Duplium and the student-owned Tri-Dynamic Studios have spearheaded this technological revolution.

Minister, can you give my constituents of Thornhill and the members of this House some news about the success that this government's efforts have had in increasing investments in the province both in IT and in other sectors?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I believe Ontario is well positioned to become a leader in e-government in the world by the year 2003.

Earlier this month I had the pleasure of attending and speaking at the software development lab of IBM in Markham. The good news as well was that they are slated to have 2,500 employees come to Markham and create jobs in the high-tech area. This is 500 more than the company originally intended, which is only a fraction of the 11,000 people that IBM employs in the province.

One specific reason why this occurred is that Ontario's superallowance credit, over \$100 million, was given to assist R&D in the high-tech area. Just in the last federal budget, the federal government clawed back this parti-

cular allowance. Fortunately, through the leadership of my colleague the Minister of Finance, most of this allowance was restored through our last budget. This of course encouraged the high-tech companies to continue to do R&D in this province and certainly to assist us in becoming leaders in e-government.

1500

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Health. An elderly couple in my riding of Brant in their mid-70s are experiencing some difficulty with dialysis services and home care. They do not want their names mentioned here in the House, but I would be happy to provide you with those names and addresses after question period.

Specifically, Minister, for the past several weeks this elderly gentleman has had to drive to and from Hamilton five days a week for seven hours a day to have his wife receive dialysis and treatment. The reason why seems to be very unclear. It's either that there's not enough nurses available to assist the local CCAC with services or that the CCAC lacks the funds to hire the additional nurses to assist the elderly patient. This is not an equipment issue because the couple has had the dialysis equipment set up in their home for the last couple of weeks. The problem seems to be either a shortage of nurses trained in hemodialysis or paying for the nurses trained in hemodialysis. For a government that espouses home care initiatives, especially for our senior citizens, we're concerned that travelling five days a week for this treatment is not sound for improvement.

Minister, I'd like to have a little clarification. Do my elderly constituents have to travel to Hamilton in what will soon be very cold and wet weather? Is it because the government underfunds the CCACs or home care or is it because of a nursing crisis we have in our province?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the associate minister.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. Of course, this government is very concerned about providing care to people as close to home as they possibly can. We are very determined to have the dollars in health care go to the right places so that people get the services they need. We are happy to look into the specific instances, and if you send over the information after, we're happy to look at that.

Let me tell you that in the county of Brant the CCAC has above-average funding compared to across the province. They have a funding level that is higher than many other areas across the province, and with that they also have an increase in the funding that they've received over the last three years. So from our perspective it shouldn't be as a result of the CCAC funding. There's been a substantial increase in the county of Brant in comparison to other counties within the province, but

we're happy to look into it because everybody should be able to receive care in the province of Ontario.

Mr Levac: Minister, the fact that you've just said that implies that my elderly couple are now going to get stuck with having to travel in the winter to get their dialysis treatment, and that's not acceptable for this patient or for any patient. The fact is that the allocation seems to be a problem with my riding and all the other ridings, because last Friday the nurse was sent from Hamilton to Brantford in order to treat the couple. They did this because they were concerned that all the travel would cause physical, emotional and mental hardship on my constituents. So that means Hamilton is now affected by this result.

Has home care gotten so bad in Ontario that elderly citizens have to continue to travel five days a week to wait for a patient to get treatment for dialysis because of the lack of funding for this nurse? We know that the local, branch CCAC is doing the best that it can with what it has. I commend them for their efforts, of course, and I have met with them to try to talk about this problem. However, between the funding freeze that you've implemented and critical nurse shortages in the province, you are leaving them with little choice but to send elderly patients packing to other communities for their care.

Minister, I ask you again, will you lift the freeze from CCAC funding so that my constituents can enjoy the home care service in their home that they're supposed to have?

Hon Mrs Johns: I guess when I say that I'll look into it for the person, that's not what the honourable member wants to hear today. Let me say that since we were elected in 1995 the province has put an additional \$150 million into dialysis across the province. Dialysis is one of the priority services that we have at the Ministry of Health. We're focused on bringing it closer to people's homes and providing high-quality services. So from that standpoint, let me say that I said I would look into it. It's a government priority; we'll make sure that happens.

Let me remind you that CCACs in the province of Ontario have had unprecedented increases in their funding level—72% increases across the province on average. When an operational review was done, the results in the Hamilton area were frightening—completely frightening. It said that CCAC is a big business and it's at a critical shortage right now because people aren't treating it like a business. We have to move to ensure that we have the services there when we need them and where we need them. We can only do that with good management and we're prepared to take the role on to make sure that happens.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question today is for the Minister of Natural Resources. I understand that you were recently in Atlanta at the University of Georgia meeting with people about our

forestry practices here in Ontario. I know that Ontario's forestry practices are among the best in the world and that many jurisdictions look to us for leadership in this area, the forest accord being an example of that leadership. Minister, can you tell us about your meetings in Georgia and give us some information about those meetings?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for the excellent question. I'm sure you and he will forgive me for some awkwardness in answering. I haven't been asked about the results of my travel since I was married.

I can tell you that because of the Ontario forestry accord, because of this unique agreement in Ontario, we were able to go to Georgia recently, as we've gone to other places in the world, and, with members of our environmental NGO community, our forest industry and government, talk to people like Home Depot who are sellers, obviously, of products that come from Ontario, about their issues, about the importance of certification of sustainable forestry practices; and also go to the University of Georgia and talk to the faculty of forestry there—a world renowned faculty I might add—about what's going on in Ontario. They were very impressed with the presentation and I'm pleased to say that they have suggested an exchange program with Ontario.

Mr Miller: Thank you, Minister. You mentioned forest certification. How is this important to myself as a consumer and what is Ontario doing to make sure that more of our crown forests, especially those in Parry Sound-Muskoka, become certified?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, it's been a great result of the Ontario forest accord, of Living Legacy, that we are now able to work with together our NGO community in Ontario and our forest industry in Ontario in the hopes that our world-leading forestry standards can be recognized around the world by various certification programs. We are very active on the file. We are confident that our forestry practices in Ontario are the best in the world and we are very proud to let the world know about that.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. I want to know why the minister has created two classes of teachers in this province. On the one hand, we've got public school teachers trying to educate our young people with less and less money than ever we've faced in our history. On the other hand, we've got teachers in the private school system, a system that's getting millions and millions of dollars from this government. But who gets to be tested? Who gets the performance appraisal? It's the public school teachers. Why do we apply one standard to one system and another system to the private system?

New Democrats opposed extension of public dollars to private schools. We opposed it then, we oppose it now, but you've done it. Can you kindly explain, Minister, why you plan to test and test and test public school teachers while private, uncertified teachers get to be exempt? Tell us that.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): First of all, there have always been different kinds of teachers in the province of Ontario. That's always been the case; that will always be the case.

Second, the legislation that I proposed—for example, the sexual abuse legislation, the legislation I proposed today—applies to all certified teachers regardless of who employs them.

Third, as you know, the government has been in a consultation process to look at what kind of accountability mechanism, eligibility, might well be around the tax credit proposal.

The final point is that not one dollar has gone to independent schools from the taxpayers. As a matter of fact, the proposal that this government is pursuing is to give money to parents, to respect that parental choice.

I appreciate the honourable member's question, but my answer is as I've stated it.

Mr Marchese: I want to say, yes, we always had different kinds of teachers in the past, but in the past we didn't give away public dollars to private schools. That's the difference. She has the temerity to say that the Student Protection Act applies to the private schools, but she knows better. It applies to the certified teachers, but there are thousands of teachers in the private system who are not certified for whom this law does not apply. Equally and similarly, the testing and the performance appraisal doesn't apply to the non-certified teachers in the private system. Speak to that, Minister.

Why are you giving away close to 500 million bucks that comes from a general pot of money to that system and you argue, "Yes, we're trying to help our public school teachers"? Why can't you be as generous in extending your support to those non-certified teachers who presumably need the same kind of help? Can you explain why you have two different standards that most citizens do not understand?

1510

Hon Mrs Ecker: We have been, I'll use the word "generous," to the public education system in this province. They're getting \$13.8 billion—\$13.8 billion—that was increased by over \$360 million this year, over \$300 million last year. That's more money going to the public education system than was going there when we were first elected. Our priority has been and will remain the public education system, because it's incredibly important to our province's quality of life, to our province's economic prosperity.

Second, I'd like to remind the honourable member that the Royal Commission on Learning, which his party, his government, put in place, recommended very strongly that there be professional development for teachers,

mandatory professional development, recertification, performance appraisal. Those are all recommendations that have come from our education partners. We promised we would do it; we are indeed doing what we said.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Is he here?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock for a quick minute. There he is. The member for Don Valley East.

Mr Caplan: Minister, I can tell you that we're all disappointed to learn about the problems in your provincial sales tax grant program for affordable housing. What was originally meant to be a modest but very genuine effort to build affordable housing has turned into your own housing boondoggle.

As I am sure you are aware, I have done a freedom-of-information request that has confirmed that at least \$1.6 million of the \$4 million from this program went to for-profit retirement homes or to market rent projects. Although your ministry claims that it made efforts to fix the problems by changing the criteria, it was only done after all of the money had been spent.

There are true affordable housing projects that could use this money to get off the ground and to get built. Now is your chance to do the right thing, Minister. I want you to know that many of these retirement home projects have yet to receive a cheque from you. Will you take the money back and recommit to legitimate affordable housing projects? If you won't do that, will you stand in your place today and announce that you will reopen the program to the amount that you improperly directed to for-profit retirement home projects to the tune of at least \$1.6 million?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I think the member opposite knows the answer; it was in the papers on the weekend. When the program was brought out, it was geared to smaller-sized rental units. It was an attempt to recognize that smaller units over time are more affordable than larger units. It wasn't an attempt to create a huge bureaucracy to administer \$4-million incentives to try to get some affordable housing going from the private sector in this province. He's got a concern because it went to long-term-care facilities. That's probably because their government and the NDP government hadn't built any long-term-care facilities in this province for 10 years, and people didn't realize that they would be eligible. When they realized it and they wanted to clarify it, they changed the rules, and for the last couple of years it hasn't applied there.

Mr Caplan: Geez, that is total fiction. You have yet to issue a cheque to Royal Gardens Retirement Community in Peterborough. You've authorized a grant for a quarter of a million dollars to this company, which rents their units from between \$2,300 and \$4,200 per month. Do you feel that this project is more worthy than those

proposed by the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Housing Corp, which was designed to house and support working families?

How about the Margaret Laurence Co-op or the St Clare's Multi-Faith Housing Society? They all applied for money, Minister, and they were told that the money is gone.

How about the other projects you funded: \$178,000 to the Jackson Creek retirement home in Peterborough, \$78,000 to the Shorthills Villa Retirement Community in Fonthill, or \$140,000 to Meadowbrook Retirement Village in Lively? There is no affordability component in any of these, and they're not long-term-care centres.

Minister, the choice is very clear. You can make a sincere commitment to build affordable housing and tell us that you're not going to issue the cheques. They haven't been cut yet. If you won't do that, then tell us that you're going to announce that you're reopening the program in the amount that you improperly directed to for-profit retirement homes—

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

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I explained, this program was set up based on unit size. When they recognized that it was going for long-term-care, they changed the program in the year 2000.

If you want to talk about boondoggles, just look at your own government's record when you guys were out doing the subsidy work trying to be a developer. You bought Tartaric. You cost the taxpayers \$400 million in write-offs with your "Let's be a developer" mode of government.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Solicitor General. Last spring, the OPP had a special drive to get drivers holding up traffic out of the left-hand lane of multi-lane highways. This project appeared to be very successful for a short period of time. However, it now seems that we have just as many self-righteous people occupying that left-hand lane and holding up traffic. This was particularly evident on the Labour Day and Thanksgiving weekends when there were significantly more vehicles travelling in the left lane than in the other lanes in total. When this happens, drivers attempting to pass do so in the right-hand lane. Often this leads to road rage. Did your ministry keep any statistics on the success of the campaign last spring, and how successful was it?

Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General): An excellent question. We all know that driving too slowly or refusing to move over is frustrating and very discourteous to other drivers. Moreover, it's a safety hazard. The OPP's Operation Move Over worked to promote lane discipline on 400 series highways. A team of seven officers dubbed the left lane team were committed to this campaign. From April to September, 990 charges were laid and 511 motorists were cautioned. I want to say that

violators faced a \$110 fine and/or two demerit points. We've had some very positive feedback on this program and I'm pleased that you're interested in it, and I would ask everybody to be courteous on the roads.

Mr Galt: If the left lane could be kept open for passing and drivers moved to the right after passing, our four- and six-lane highways could handle far more traffic.

I'm curious as to what other programs have been implemented by the Ontario Provincial Police in order to increase road safety. I believe these initiatives are quite successful and would like to know more about what our government is doing to protect the Ontario traveller.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Last year, we know there were 3,000 people killed on Canadian roads and there were 200,000 injured in collisions. The police are always looking for better ways to make sure that motorists who break the rules are caught and are told the error of their ways.

To this effect, the OPP had Operation Distraction, which focused on drivers involved in distracting activities. We had Cottage Patrol 2001 where officers inspected recreational vehicles, enforced seat belt laws and went after aggressive driving. Operation Impact focused on a variety of dangerous driving habits. Since impaired driving is the leading criminal cause of death in Canada, drunk drivers are always a target of the police.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Health. For the past three and a half years your ministry has held discussions on alternative funding for pediatric service positions at the children's hospital in London. The hospital's chief of pediatrics, Dr Timothy Frewen, says it's absolutely essential to end the continued underfunding of pediatric specialized services in the southwest. Your ministry has already funded such plans in Kingston, Toronto and Ottawa. But London, why not? Is this health care discrimination?

Now it's clear that the domino effect is starting to take place. Dr Reider pointed out last week that he and many of his colleagues are already receiving offers from many institutions. The head-hunting vultures are circling the hospital already, once again putting the integrity of service in jeopardy.

Minister, will you stand in this House today and stop this domino, rippling effect on the health care system in London and immediately put in place an alternative funding program for pediatrics for London and southwestern Ontario?

1520

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Let me just reiterate what I indicated to the honourable member in a conversation we had outside this House. Certainly it's the intention of the ministry to move ahead with alternative payment programs across a whole range of surgical and clinical procedures, and we will continue in that vein.

Mr Peters: I certainly encourage you to continue on that process, because it is so vitally important. It's become very painfully clear that these program cuts at this hospital have been given very little forethought. There has been no consideration given to the broader implications, not just for the children's hospital in London and southwestern Ontario but for the other medical institutions that deal with children's services across this province.

In today's London Free Press, you are quoted as saying there would be additional funding to deal with waiting lines in Toronto to treat London-area patients, yet on the radio, the London hospital's CEO said he's unaware of a waiting list and transfer difficulties. Why not provide funding to the London hospitals so that they can look after the patients of southwestern Ontario?

Please, Minister, explain to me what is going on. Who is telling us what's going on? I'm calling on you to halt these cuts now and implement a careful review of the delivery of pediatric services in all of Ontario's academic centres so that all our children have access to these services as close as possible. Will you do it? Will you do the right thing, stop this nonsense and implement a thorough, province-wide review of the delivery of pediatric services?

Hon Mr Clement: We will continue to do the right thing. In the case he is referring to, the right thing is to ensure that the clinical outcomes are the very best that Ontario can offer. If the honourable member will not take my word for it, he is probably aware that Dr Jim Cairns, who is one of the chief coroners in Ontario, also said last week in London that the decision to divest pediatric surgery "is consistent with what is the internationally recognized way of going in regard to complex pediatric surgery. The less centres, the better, and the higher the volume, the better."

We are on the side of clinical outcomes and you are on the other side at your peril if what you really care about is the future of our kids.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, in my riding of Simcoe North and in ridings across our province, our rural businesses and municipalities are looking for opportunities to increase their standard of living, which is why people were very pleased to hear about the launch of your \$200-million rural economic development portion of the Ontario small town and rural development initiative back in August. Could you please explain to this House how the program is progressing at this time?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'd like to thank the member from Simcoe North for the question. The rural economic development program is a component of the Ontario small town and rural development initiative, better known as OSTAR. The purpose of that is to make sure

that small towns and rural communities remain as healthy places in which to live, vibrant places in which to work and viable places in which to invest. This rural economic development initiative will address some of the barriers we have in rural and small-town Ontario which are identified by the very people who live in those communities.

We are investing some \$200 million over five years. Our goal is to create a diversified business climate, long-term jobs, increased investment, strong partnerships and alliances, new products and new markets for those who have the ability to invest in those markets. We'll do that by working with our partners in rural Ontario, making sure they have the tools and the resources needed to identify new opportunities for economic development.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much, Minister, for that response. If businesses, organizations or municipalities from my area or from ridings across the province want to participate in this particular program, can you give us some examples of the kinds of ideas they should put forward to your ministry?

Hon Mr Coburn: Actually, this program permits lots of room for creativity. We certainly recognize that one size doesn't fit all across this province nor does it work with the variety of challenges and opportunities that exist in our diverse rural areas. That's why ideas for projects that could be eligible for funding are wide-ranging; for example, establishing Internet terminals at tourism destinations to market local attractions to visitors, or exploring new technologies and processes for non-traditional uses of agricultural commodities or developing new food products that promote human health and prevention of disease.

Certainly in keeping with our government's commitment to wisely using our taxpayers' money, applicants must include more than one business or municipality and must share in the project costs. They must also demonstrate their ability to complete the project and carry on needed work after the project is finished.

Actually, it is a program that rewards innovation and creative ideas—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Dr Burke Baird, the chief of pediatrics at the Sudbury Regional Hospital, recently sent a letter to your ministry. In it he said the following: "I am writing to share my grave concern with the recent changes to OHIP funding of audiology services. My concern is that with the requirement to be assessed in the presence of an ear, nose and throat surgeon, accessibility to the critical service of timely hearing assessments will be profoundly impaired." Further, "I can guarantee you that this recent change in policy will have a severe impact on our ability to assess and monitor these fragile

children.” I remind you that this is the chief of pediatrics at our hospital, someone who knows what’s going on in our community.

In light of this letter, will you now listen to the concerns of health care professionals in my community and reverse your decision on audiology services?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Let me assure this House that you don’t need the presence of an ear, nose and throat surgeon. It would be part of the OHIP rules that there be an ear, nose and throat physician who is available. If that is the case, then I can assure this House that that procedure or service is fully recompensable under OHIP, just as it is through any hospital services and so forth.

If the honourable member has a particular instance that falls outside of that, where someone is being denied care which is available—and as I say to this House, it is available through our OHIP system in the same way it’s been available at least for the last 30 years—then she should bring it to my attention. Otherwise, I’m not sure what she’s referring to.

Ms Martel: You clearly don’t understand how serious this issue is. We have a lack of ear, nose and throat specialists in northern Ontario. Thunder Bay now needs three and Sault Ste Marie needs another. We now have 34 northern communities which need 117 family physicians, the same family physicians who are required to get a referral to an ear, nose and throat specialist to get an assessment in the first place. We have the chief of pediatrics who has taken the time to write you a letter to express his concern about the problem in our community and what this will mean to fragile children. In light of that, in light of the underserved areas right across northern Ontario and in light of the fact that in most hospitals there are long waiting lists for these assessment services, will you now listen to the concerns being brought forward by health care professionals and reverse your decision on the delisting of audiology services?

Hon Mr Clement: Indeed, it was the recommendations of a series of health care professionals that created this understanding of the policy in the first place, so we are in fact listening to health care professionals. Of course we listen to health care professionals and that’s entirely what we should be doing, rather than making a political game out of it.

I say again for the record that these services are available by OHIP. They are available through ear, nose and throat specialists; they are available by community health centres; they are available at a hospital. They are available.

The honourable member refers to shortages of physicians. This has been a concern of this government, and we have acted through the creation of the new northern medical school, through the creation of an expedited process for international medical graduates, increasing the number of international medical graduates from 36 to 90 who are available per year for our underserved communities and through the increased remuneration for doctors who choose to serve in the

north. All of these programs are there to help us recruit and retain medical professionals in our underserved areas and particularly in northern Ontario, which is a policy about which this government is proud.

1530

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Over the last couple of weeks there have been a number of questions and statements made in the House with respect to the lack of community care funding for nursing and home care services. I know you’re doing a review, and I know you want to hand this question over to the associate minister, but I want to hear from you because right today there are hundreds and thousands of individuals who don’t want a review, who don’t want to know what’s going to be made available two or three months from now, but they are hurting today. They’re coming out of hospitals sicker and quicker. They need help because there’s nobody in their homes to take care of them in any way, shape or form.

What are you doing today for those individuals who need the nursing help, the home care help that they so desperately need? Minister, I’m asking you, I’m pleading with you, make funding available. Just about every community care access centre doesn’t have enough funds to deal with the demands for the services they provide to the people in their community. What are you doing today in order to alleviate that situation?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I’ll defer it to the associate Minister of Health.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): Let me say again that funding in this area has increased substantially since the time our colleague across the road was talking about it.

When we looked at an operational review in Hamilton, they were saying they were under budget by \$19 million. When all the work was done, and we had a ministry-appointed person in there, we found out there were dollars to service the people of the province. What we found out was that at the senior management level there was little understanding of the factors that contributed to the deficit. We found out that the board provided inadequate strategic planning and leadership. It was ineffective in communicating with its stakeholders. There was no effective monitoring of management services that were being provided—utilization and caseloads. About 10% of the dollars that came from the province were used for administration and another 16% were used for case management.

The party on the other side would throw money at the situation. The Mike Harris government is determined to make the system better so that quality health care is provided to all the people of Ontario.

VISITORS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity, if I could, to welcome Greg Reid, the chairperson, and Donna Lucas-Astley, a member of the Ontario Parent Council. They're in the gallery today.

PETITIONS

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'd like to present a second set of 1,000 names from the Guelph, Waterloo, Fergus, Kitchener, Cambridge and New Hamburg communities, which reads:

"Whereas the services delisted by the Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total; and

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions; and

"Whereas the new Harris government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario; and

"Whereas this new Harris government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario; and

"Whereas this policy will undoubtedly lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians,

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Mike Harris government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

I concur and will affix my signature to that. We have signatures now from 107 Ontario communities.

NURSES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the nurses of Ontario are seeking relief from heavy workloads, which have contributed to unsafe conditions for patients and have increased the risk of injury to nurses; and

"Whereas there is a chronic nursing shortage in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has failed to live up to its commitment to provide safe, high-quality care for patients;

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

"We demand the Ontario government take positive action to ensure that our communities have enough

nursing staff to provide patients with the care they need. The Ontario government must:

"Ensure wages and benefits are competitive and value all nurses for their dedication and commitment; ensure there are full-time and regular part-time jobs available for nurses in hospitals, nursing homes and the community; ensure government revenues fund health care, not tax cuts; ensure front-line nurses play a key role in health reform decisions."

This is signed by thousands of Ontario residents. I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to it.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Criminal Code of Canada considers animal cruelty to be a property offence; and

"Whereas those who commit crimes against animals currently face light sentences upon conviction; and

"Whereas those who operate puppy mills should, upon conviction, face sentences that are appropriate for the torture and inhumane treatment they have inflicted on puppies under their so-called care;

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

"That the Ontario provincial government petition the federal government to move forward with amendments to the cruelty to animal provisions in the Criminal Code as soon as possible."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's entitled "Listen: Our hearing is important.

"Whereas services delisted by the Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total; and

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions; and

"Whereas the new Harris government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario; and

"Whereas this new Harris government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario such as northern Ontario;

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the people from Garson, Naughton, Sudbury and Cochrane, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

I affix my signature and give it to Ana to bring to the table as I am in agreement with it.

PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):

Further petitions from the Hamilton second-level lodging home tenants' committee. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas individuals who are tenants or residents in facilities such as care homes, nursing homes or domiciliary hostels under certain acts are provided with a personal needs allowance to meet incidental costs other than those provided by the facility; and

"Whereas the personal needs allowance has been fixed by the Ontario government at a rate of \$112 for nearly a decade and has not kept pace with cost-of-living increases, and furthermore is inadequate to meet incidental costs such as clothing, hygiene products and other essentials;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately review and amend provincial legislation to increase the personal needs allowance from \$112 a month to \$160 a month for individuals living in care homes, nursing homes or other domiciliary hostels."

I continue to support these petitioners by adding my name.

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AIR QUALITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This one is strictly within provincial jurisdiction. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Harris government's wholly owned Nanticoke generating station is North America's largest dirty coal-fired electricity producing plant and Ontario's largest producer of the chemicals and acid gases which contribute to deadly smog and acid rain; and

"Whereas the Nanticoke plant, which has more than doubled its dangerous emissions under the Harris government, is now the worst air polluter in all of Canada, spewing out over five million kilograms of toxic chemicals and mercury, a potent and dangerous neurotoxin; and

"Whereas at least 13 Ontario municipalities and seven northeastern US states have expressed concerns that Ontario Power Generation's proposed cleanup plan for Nanticoke is inadequate in protecting the air quality and health and safety of their residents; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association has stated that 1,900 Ontarians die prematurely each year and we pay \$1 billion annually in health-related costs as a result of air pollution; and

"Whereas because the Harris government has now lifted the moratorium on the sale of coal-fired power plants and has set a date for deregulation of electricity, the operator of the Nanticoke plant will likely stoke up

production to maximize profits which will only worsen the air quality in cities like Toronto, Hamilton, Welland, Niagara Falls and St Catharines;

"Be it resolved that the Mike Harris government immediately order that the Nanticoke generating station be converted from dirty coal to cleaner-burning natural gas."

I affix my signature; I'm in complete agreement.

OHIP SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by the Sanatan Mandir Seniors Club in Markham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the provincial government's decision to delist hearing aid evaluation and re-evaluation from OHIP coverage will lead to untreated hearing loss; and

"Whereas these restrictions will cut off access to diagnostic hearing tests, especially in geographic regions of the province already experiencing difficulties due to shortages of specialty physicians; and

"Whereas OHIP will no longer cover the cost of miscellaneous therapeutic procedures, including physical therapy and therapeutic exercise; and

"Whereas services no longer covered by OHIP may include thermal therapy, ultrasound therapy, hydrotherapy, massage therapy, electrotherapy, magnetotherapy, nerve therapy stimulation and biofeedback; and

"Whereas one of the few publicly covered alternatives includes hospital outpatient clinics where waiting lists for such services are up to six months long; and

"Whereas delisting these services will have a detrimental effect on the health of all Ontarians, especially seniors, children, hearing-impaired people and industrial workers; and

"Whereas the government has already delisted \$100 million worth of OHIP services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately restore OHIP coverage for these delisted services."

I agree with the petitioners. I affix my signature to it.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I have a petition from 150 people from across the city of Toronto who are concerned about the lack of funding for home care services.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to institute 'patient-based budgeting' for health care services in the 1995 Common Sense Revolution; and

"Whereas community care access centres now face a collective shortfall of \$175 million due to a funding freeze by the provincial government; and

"Whereas due to this funding shortfall, CCACs have cut back on home care services affecting many sick and elderly Ontarians; and

“Whereas these cuts in services are mostly in homemaking services, forcing Ontarians into more expensive long-term-care facilities or back into hospitals; and

“Whereas the North York CCAC has projected a shortfall of \$10 million and is forced to cut service and move patients to waiting lists; and

“Whereas the York CCAC will find itself in a similar situation if ‘patient-based budgeting’ is not instituted immediately;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately institute real ‘patient-based budgeting’ for health care services, including home care, so as to ensure that working families in Ontario can access the health care services they need.”

I affix my signature to the petition.

OHIP SERVICES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have further petitions from my riding of Hamilton West. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the Harris government’s decision to delist hearing aid evaluation and re-evaluation from OHIP coverage will lead to untreated hearing loss; and

“Whereas these restrictions will cut off access to diagnostic hearing tests, especially in geographic regions of the province already experiencing difficulties due to shortages of specialty physicians; and

“Whereas OHIP will no longer cover the cost of miscellaneous therapeutic procedures, including physical therapy and therapeutic exercise; and

“Whereas services no longer covered by OHIP may include thermal therapy, ultrasound therapy, hydrotherapy, massage therapy, electrotherapy, magnetotherapy and biofeedback; and

“Whereas one of the few publicly covered alternatives includes hospital outpatient clinics where waiting lists for such services are up to six months long; and

“Whereas delisting these services will have a detrimental effect on the health of all Ontarians, especially seniors, children, hearing-impaired people and industrial workers; and

“Whereas the government has already delisted \$100 million worth of OHIP services,

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately restore OHIP coverage for these delisted services.”

I continue to support these petitioners.

LONDON HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre is a world-class academic health sciences centre serving people throughout southwestern Ontario;

“Whereas the Ministry of Health has forced the London Health Sciences Centre to find \$17 million in annual savings by 2005; and

“Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre has agreed to cut 18 programs in order to satisfy directions from the provincial Ministry of Health; and

“Whereas these cuts will put the health of the people of southwestern Ontario, and particularly children, at risk; and

“Whereas these cuts will diminish the London Health Sciences Centre’s standing as a regional health care resource; and

“Whereas these cuts will worsen the continuing physician shortages in the region;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Mike Harris government take immediate action to ensure that these important health services are maintained so that the health and safety of people throughout southwestern Ontario are not put at risk.”

I am in full agreement and will affix my signature to it.

OHIP SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have this petition of some thousand signatures from the Thunder Bay chapter of Voice for Hearing Impaired Children, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Harris government’s decision to delist hearing aid evaluation and re-evaluation from OHIP coverage will lead to untreated hearing loss; and

“Whereas these restrictions will cut off access to diagnostic hearing tests, especially in geographic regions of the province already experiencing difficulties due to shortages of specialty physicians; and

“Whereas OHIP will no longer cover the cost of miscellaneous therapeutic procedures, including physical therapy and therapeutic exercise; and

“Whereas services no longer covered by OHIP may include thermal therapy, ultrasound therapy, hydrotherapy, massage therapy, electrotherapy, magnetotherapy, nerve therapy stimulation, and biofeedback; and

“Whereas one of the few publicly covered alternatives includes hospital outpatient clinics where waiting lists for such services are up to six months long; and

“Whereas delisting these services will have an extreme detrimental impact on the health of all Ontarians, especially seniors, children, hearing-impaired people and industrial workers; and

“Whereas the government has already delisted \$100 million worth of OHIP services,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately restore OHIP coverage for these delisted services.”

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Mr Speaker, as you know, there are 40,000 people in Thunder Bay who don't have a family doctor. It's a real crisis. We have a major petition campaign going on.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Our community is facing an immediate, critical situation in accessing physician services and in providing hospital care to the people of northwestern Ontario. While the concern for recruitment and retention of physicians has been a concern for many years, it is now reaching crisis proportions. Training more physicians in northern Ontario is certainly the best response to this problem in the longer term. We are, however, in urgent need of support for immediate short-term solutions that will allow our community both to retain our current physicians and recruit new family doctors and specialists in seriously understaffed areas.

"As residents of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario, we urge you to respond to our community's and our region's critical and immediate needs. For us, this is truly a matter of life and death."

As I said, over 40,000 people have signed these petitions and I am glad to add my name to this petition.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I'd just like to say that this is dealing with Bill 87. I had attempted to get an agreement among all three parties. We have worked out an arrangement with the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. Unfortunately, we weren't able to get agreement from the third party. What I'm proposing to do is to move a motion. It's government notice of motion number 59.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 87, An Act to regulate food quality and safety and to make complementary amendments and repeals to other Acts, when Bill 87 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy; and

That the vote on second reading made pursuant to standing order 28(h) be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "deferred votes"; and

That the standing committee on justice and social policy shall be authorized to meet in Toronto for up to three days; and

That, following two days of public hearings, the standing committee on justice and social policy be authorized to meet for one day for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That, at 4:30 pm on that day, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration, and not later than November 27, 2001. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on justice and social policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, 90 minutes shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, to be divided equally among all recognized parties, and at the end of that time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "deferred votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The motion that you have just read is not the motion that you have given notice of. Are you going to re-put the motion?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Yes, Mr Speaker, I will. My apologies for that confusion on that. We'll just double-check on here.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 87, An Act to regulate food quality and safety and to make complementary amendments and repeals to other Acts, when Bill 87 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 28(h), no deferral of the second reading vote may be permitted; and

That the standing committee on justice and social policy shall be authorized to meet in Toronto during its regularly scheduled meeting times for two days of public hearings and one day for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That, at 4:30 pm on the day of clause-by-clause consideration, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration, and not later than November 27, 2001. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on justice and social policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, 90 minutes shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, to be divided equally among all the recognized parties, and at the end of that time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "deferred votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

I believe that is the motion we should be debating.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms Ecker has moved government notice of motion number 59. Debate?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm pleased to be able to speak on this time allocation as it relates to Bill 87, the proposed Food Safety and Quality Act. I think it's a shame that it's come to this for a government that's had extensive consultation in all areas, particularly this bill. It's become a hallmark of our government for extensive consultation. As a matter of fact, our government has had more hours of hearings after second reading than either of the previous two governments that were here from 1985 to 1995. It's had more hours on third reading than either of the governments from 1985 to 1995. What's

more, we've had more hours of hearings in Queen's Park in committee as well as out on the road. Those are facts and figures that are well documented.

I think the other one that's quite interesting is the fact that we've had several hearings out to committee after first reading. I believe we're up to four or five bills now; quite a few, anyway. The nutrient management bill just happens to be one of those that went out. The committee, with all parties, went out and travelled the province and heard from a lot of people.

As I said, extensive consultation is a hallmark of this government, similar to what we're doing here with Bill 87, the Food Safety and Quality Act. There has been consultation on it for some time now. With the nutrient management bill there's now been over two years of consultation. That just gives you some indication. It's obvious the third party is playing party politics here to insist that this bill be put to a time allocation motion, which indeed is most unfortunate. We might better get on with other pieces of legislation in a true democratic way.

Over the past several decades, advanced technology, the diversification and aging of our population and changes in lifestyle have encouraged the introduction of new or more convenient foods and beverages in the province of Ontario. As well, products once considered seasonal are now available year round. Ontario consumers can enjoy an abundant supply of these safe, high-quality foods, produced here, in other parts of Canada or in the farthest corners of the world. But the growth and the variety and availability of these foods and their sources also involves a higher risk of exposure to food-borne illnesses. The risk of food-borne illnesses can be minimized by the concerted efforts of all participants along the production, distribution and preparation chain to do their part for food safety.

Consumers rely on food producers, manufacturers and retailers to ensure the safety of their food. They also expect governments to exercise their authority to set food safety and marketing standards and to make sure that standards are indeed met. In Ontario, we need to keep pace with changes in scientific information, technology and industry practices, and modernize our approach to and role in the food safety system. Bill 87 would allow us to do just that.

The proposed Food Safety and Quality Act would increase the effectiveness of the provincial food safety system, further safeguard public health, increase consumer confidence and improve the marketability of Ontario's agri-food products.

In the 1990s, the global food trade, emerging food safety hazards and the public's changing preferences for types of food has led government in Ontario, and around the world, to take a critical look at public and private sector efforts to ensure the continued safety of our food supply.

On a global level, food safety systems are being modernized using a consistent approach, for example, of risk- and science-based from field to fork, as opposed to the century-old method of plain old visual inspection.

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The science-based system uses a systematic assessment of identified food safety risks along the food chain and implements appropriate measures to minimize those risks, rather than simply trying to spot and remove problems after they occur. "Field to fork" means everything from the farm all the way through to the consumer.

The government of Ontario supports adopting such a system, beginning with consultation and the modernization of most existing food legislation, other than the Health Protection and Promotion Act, and placing the new, consolidated act under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

The proposed Food Safety and Quality Act would consolidate and modernize the food safety and quality components of five current food-related statutes that are now under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' jurisdiction. They include (1) the Dead Animal Disposal Act; (2) the Edible Oil Products Act; (3) the Farm Products Grades and Sales Act; (4) the Livestock and Livestock Products Act; and (5) The Meat Inspection Act.

There's a sixth act, the Ministry of Natural Resources' Fish Inspection Act, which would also be consolidated under the proposed legislation. OMAFRA would be responsible for the administration of fish regulations under the bill. This means the food safety and quality requirements for commercially harvested Ontario fish, including fish from aquaculture operations and fish processing, could be established and administered under the same act as most other provincially regulated food products.

Bill 87 is the culmination of a great deal of work by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In addition to developing the proposed act, we have undertaken several initiatives in recent years to help ensure that our food is safe and of the highest quality. As part of the normal course of business, OMAFRA has recognized the need for improved water quality standards at our abattoirs. To address this, last year staff upgraded testing programs and coordinated the installation of effective water-treatment systems. This has led to enhanced product safety and quality at provincially inspected abattoirs. Plants not able to source potable water are now closed until the problem is fixed.

A new computerized information system, the food safety decision support system, has been in use since late 1999. This has enabled massive amounts of data to be obtained from audits, laboratory testing and inspection reports to be accessible for risk management purposes. The data are used to determine licensing eligibility and inspection staffing needs in the meat and poultry industries.

In addition to Bill 87, there's one other significant Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs initiative linked to improving Ontario's food safety system. Bill 81, the proposed Nutrient Management Act, and Bill 87 have the common goal of improving the

competitiveness and the economic activity of the agricultural sector. The proposed Nutrient Management Act addresses the management of materials containing nutrients and other farm practices, including the management of dead stock on the farm. Bill 87 includes the off-farm disposal of dead animals. These two bills are being coordinated to ensure that the appropriate management of dead stock is continued.

The proposed Food Safety and Quality Act would allow us to broaden the scope of Ontario's food safety system to cover more foods, starting at production and ensuring coverage throughout the food chain. We must take advantage of recent scientific advances to keep us competitive with the rest of the world. We need to strengthen enforcement measures to ensure the safety of all people here in Ontario.

Ontario has been working to improve the food safety system for some time. An internal review of Ontario's food inspection system determined that food safety risks could be further minimized by, among other measures, focusing inspection on higher-risk foods and using updated scientific information to determine and address food-borne risks. It is recommended in Bill 87 that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs assume the responsibility for food safety inspection not only in abattoirs but also in meat and fish processing plants that are not federally registered to ensure a consistent and equitable risk-based approach to inspection.

Creating a single, modern and comprehensive Food Safety and Quality Act rather than updating separate statutes lays the groundwork for integrating the existing web of legislation, providing the flexibility the industry needs to remain competitive and enhancing food safety throughout the food chain. It will provide the tools to consistently and effectively manage the range of foods available in Ontario. This legislation will clearly establish the industry's primary role in ensuring that the food it produces is safe and will define a government's roles in standard setting and oversight of the entire system.

The proposed legislation would also ease the incorporation of national standards now being developed to provide equivalent or common requirements for food safety across Canada. The proposed new Food Safety and Quality Act would provide for the establishment of safety standards as well as the relevant existing provisions related to food quality, labelling, packaging and advertising.

Since all players along the food supply chain have a responsibility for the safety of food by ensuring that industry practices and facilities do not contaminate the food we eat, the proposed legislation recognizes all the players in this chain: those who grow, store, cut, cook, can, bag, transport and sell. The proposed legislation provides the powers to set standards and deal with identified food safety risks from the farm right through to food distribution.

Currently, the compliance and enforcement tools vary with each piece of legislation. A single Food Safety and Quality Act would provide a common set of tools

necessary for establishing, implementing and enforcing a comprehensive, efficient and effective food safety program. These major provisions, prohibitions and enforcement measures will provide the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs with the ability to inspect food and premises and take the appropriate action to prevent the marketing or distribution of food products regulated under this bill.

Bill 87 provides the government with the tools necessary to set standards and requirements and to effectively administer and enforce the act and its regulations with regard to food safety. The act and its regulations also establish the industry's roles and responsibilities with respect to food safety and quality.

If passed, regulations under the new act would be developed in consultation with all affected stakeholders, and I stress "consultation." This has indeed been a hallmark of our government. Full implementation of the changes to the food safety and quality system will depend on the timing of the approved regulations and the readiness of industry.

For some sectors, the regulations would result in little change. In other areas such as aquaculture, horticulture and processed meat sectors, new or more specific food safety requirements may be introduced

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We are committed to consulting on each commodity or sector regulation that comes under the authority of the proposed act. In the end, our overall goal is to move in a step-wise fashion to (1) a modernized science-based food safety system founded on the principles of risk analysis and risk management; (2) a seamless system that covers the food chain from field to fork; and (3) a market-friendly system consistent with Ontario's trade responsibilities and industry's needs. When we have reached that goal, all of Ontario will benefit.

I can very enthusiastically support this bill. I find it unfortunate that we've ended up in time allocation, especially with all the consultation that's been carried out. But I can certainly enthusiastically support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I was born after World War II and I've never had a greater sense than I have had in the past month of how fragile and how very important democracy is to our way of life.

This is not a bill that merits time allocation. This is a bill that merits full public debate. When time allocation is put into place, as is being forced on us today, it doesn't mean that just members of the opposition lose their voice; it means our constituents from both sides of the House lose their voice on this bill. That is absolutely shameful for a bill that is as important as this, that there is a need to restrict public input and debate into it. If there is a motto for this government, it seems to be "Never time to do it right; always time to do it over." I strongly protest the desire and the consistency of this government in all of its moves to restrict debate on each and every bill of any substance.

The bill itself, as I said, is important. What I find difficult to deal with is this government, and if I think of an analogy, my wife and I have had quite a number of children through our home over the years in our role as foster parents. Certainly they bring different challenges with them and different perspectives on life. Some of them will say when asked to do something, "No, I won't." Others will say, "Yes, I'll do it," and then not do it. I find the ones who say, "No, I won't," are easier to deal with. They're upfront and you can talk to them and analyze why they don't want to do this particular thing. The really difficult child to work with, the problem child, is the one who says, "Yes, I'll do it," but then actually doesn't deliver. This government says a lot: "Yes, we'll do it." "Yes, we'll solve this issue." "Yes, we'll produce a bill."

Here's a bill they're producing that gives the appearance of having solved the problem of our food safety, but it doesn't deliver other than the title. It's difficult for members of the public to understand that the title doesn't really mean the bill's going to do something, that it's just a title. There is a sense with this government that when we talk about something, the problem is in fact solved: we don't need to solve the problem; we just need to talk about solving the problem.

If we look at the bill as they've proposed it, it's a hollow bill. All of the details will appear in the regulations. I know this government says we're going to have some consultation on the regulations, but the bill itself has to be voted on and the regulations do not. To consult is quite separate from consulting and reacting, and there is no obligation to react to any suggestions coming forward during consultation. There's no power in this bill. The power lies in the backroom activities afterwards that will decide what format the actual bill will take.

If we look at combining the acts, the Dead Animal Disposal Act is a problem that this government, in place for over six years, has not been able to resolve. That is a significant issue to the rural community that affects all of Ontario. They weren't able to deal with the problem when it was simply the dead livestock act because the reality is there is no marketable value from dead livestock as there was quite some years ago when I was young. The farmer is faced with paying someone to take it away, and there's an acute shortage of firms in that business. It means the animal has to be disposed of. Can the animal simply be taken out and buried? No, things don't work very well that way in Ontario in January and February. Can the animal be dragged into the woods and abandoned? Yes, it can, unfortunately, but that has effects on our groundwater and our safety. In six years this government has not been able to address that.

The Edible Oil Products Act: it sounds like a fairly minor act that's going to be rolled into this, but it is a significant act because it profoundly affects our farmers who right now have the security of knowing that a product that's labelled cheese is 100% a milk product, a product that is labelled anything in the dairy chain we know is 100%. Will this enable edible oils to be mixed

into it? We don't know. But we do know that there is a fear on the part of the farmers—and there should be a fear on the part of the people—as to what will be contained within that product that is labelled dairy.

People are often cynical about politicians. This process and this act only gives them ammunition for that. Here we are talking about something that really has no substance, and they feel absolutely powerless to be involved in the process. The beauty of this from the government's side is that we can talk about it, but we don't have to put any funding into it; we just talk about it.

If we look at this government's track record on food safety and food inspection—a 45% cut. Is that a commitment to food safety? Obviously not. It's gone from \$12.5 million to \$7 million under the life of this government, reduced the inspectors from 130 to 80—five enforcement officers for the entire province.

Does this government truly believe that there is not a problem with food safety? They must, because between 1996 and 1999 there were only 18 people or corporations convicted of breaking food safety rules. Unfortunately, I don't think the 18 is a reflection of the status of food safety in Ontario; it's a reflection of the status that this government is not committed to making food safe. To have inspections requires money expenditures, and they have clearly not committed money to it. We are dealing many times with a smoke-and-mirrors government that believes that as long as we talk about it we can fool all of the people all of the time. I don't think that. This bill may be more efficient in the sense that right now the government is not enforcing six acts, so this way they will simply have to not enforce one act rather than not enforcing six.

We are concerned about the issue of illegal slaughterhouses. The government says it is. The primary inspection tool we have for illegal slaughterhouses in this province is the media. We have to count on the media to expose an illegal operation. The Toronto Star has probably been the leading inspection mechanism for this government in terms of slaughterhouses operating illegally, unsanitarily and unsafely out of backroom hidden buildings. That is an absolutely dismal reflection on the government's commitment to it, when they rely on a newspaper to expose it for them to follow up.

We're watching what is happening at Guelph with the animal health lab there. We are in not just a world economy but a world environment now, where things can cross from one side of the ocean to the other and we're getting diseases we've never heard of before. We're getting potential risks that we never heard of before that require research to ensure that we have an antidote and a mechanism to deal with it. This government, while paying lip service to the lab at Guelph, continues to cut the funding. It may be good to help compensate for the corporate tax cuts, but they are putting at risk the health of every man, woman and child in this province when they very quietly reduce and reduce the funding to deal with these hazards that are obviously facing us.

Then they talk—and it's Toryspeak—where they say “alternative delivery mechanism” in the bill. What that means is a variety of things: it means privatize, it means to download and it means fees. This government that cuts the corporate taxes in fact levies the taxes in another way. This bill gives the minister tremendous powers to levy fees.

I have some experience in beef farming. If I as a small farmer take an animal in to a slaughterhouse, I'm forced to pay the fees, and I will be forced to pay the fees because a slaughterhouse, to stay in business, will have to pass it on to me. The slaughterhouse in turn is going to sell its product into a world market. Beef prices are not determined by what happens in Ontario; beef prices are determined by what happens in North America. So if I'm forced to pay a fee, it has the effect of putting me out of business and it has the effect of putting all of the other small farmers out of business. Then that leaves the market open for the large multinational corporations, for us to purchase our beef across the border, as happens to some extent now. So the fees that would be levied by this government or by the minister would not apply to each and every beef producer; they would apply to the small Ontario producer, the small family farm. It will be an attack on it.

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In Ontario, all of these small farmers together, combined with the large farms, are a \$28-billion-a-year industry, the second-largest economic engine in the province. This bill is extremely important because it has a potential to adversely affect our family farms and put at risk the industry.

We have other economic dilemmas and other economic attacks facing this province. This bill should not be rammed through. We should hear from those affected by it. The process of limiting the debate is fundamentally wrong, and I oppose it.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to take this opportunity to put on the record a couple of issues in regard to this, first of all, closure motion, which means to say that we are given a little bit more latitude on what we're able to speak to and what we're not allowed to speak to, and also specifically on this particular bill.

Let me just first of all say generally on Bill 87 that I would be willing to accept that there are some aspects of this bill that not only I but the rest of the NDP caucus support in regard to the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001. The big difficulty we have, however, is that although the bill attempts to bring together various pieces of legislation under one omnibus bill, I guess you could call it, the food safety legislation, which is probably desirable—I wouldn't argue so much that that's a bad thing in itself—and puts in certain measures in order to deal with this issue generally, I have some problems with the bill from the perspective that much of what's to do in the bill goes back to whatever's going to be in the regulations. This is something that we're seeing more and more of now.

To be fair to the Conservative government the other way, it's not the only government in the history of Ontario that has come back with regulation in regard to legislation. We all know in this place that a bill is drafted, the minister tables the bill, there's a debate in the House and some time within that debate—hopefully before third reading; sometimes at second reading—we get to see what some of the regulations are. Then the details of the bill often are within the regulations themselves.

Normally we as members are able to deal with that because a bill is fairly specific in most cases. You know what a bill is going to say, and you say, "OK, it's the intent of the government or the minister of the day to do X, Y or Z." You know that the regulations are really only speaking on how you make X, Y and Z happen. In normal cases, the bill is fairly direct about what it wants to do.

The problem I've got with this bill is that when you read it, the bill itself is fairly vague about what it wants to do. It leaves much of the business of what's in the bill to the whim of the minister and the cabinet when it comes to drafting regulations. As a member of the Legislature, I think you would agree, Mr Speaker, it's fairly difficult to accept a vote on a bill when you really don't know what the government is going to do at the end of the day when it comes to regulation.

We—the third party, the NDP—have said in debate that generally we don't disagree with what the government is trying to do by way of this legislation but we want an opportunity to see the details of the regulations so that as we're having debate on second reading we're able to look at the regulations and say, "Yeah, this is a good thing," or, "No, this is a bad thing," or, "This is where we think we need to fix the bill when it goes to committee," so that at least you know what you're dealing with when you're talking about the bill.

Instead, what you've got is the government saying, "Trust us. Don't worry; be happy. The bill is what we say it is and don't worry about the trivial stuff in the regulations, because—nod, nod, wink, wink—everything will be OK." The difficulty with that is that we don't know if everything's going to be OK. The government could put anything that it wants into this legislation by way of the regulations it will impose by cabinet some time, whenever they get around to doing that. Unfortunately, they'll probably only do the regulations after the bill has gone to committee and finished third reading. So somewhere between third reading and proclamation of the bill there will be the regulations that will come out on this bill. It will basically really give you the details of what's in that particular bill.

I notice my good friend Mr Kormos, who agrees with me, is here right now. I'm not so sure but I think Mr Kormos probably is in the House because he wants to speak to this some time today. Or does he want any time at all? He answers, "No, I'm leaving." Yes, you do. Of course you do.

That's a way of telecommunicating when you're on the floor. You can't actually speak to somebody. Send

me a note if you're trying to tell me something over there, rather than waving. There we go. Oh, they're waving at each other. I see. OK. You really don't get the appreciation of what's happening in this House by watching the debate because members are waving at each other and trying to pass each other notes. I thought it was directed at me but I happened to be caught between the waver and the wavee, so I'll just continue.

I'll only say that I can support what the government is trying to do generally with the bill, as I was saying, but I have some great difficulty actually voting for this bill at this point because most of what is in the bill is really not in the bill, it's going to be in the regulations, and that's going to happen some time between third reading and proclamation of the bill. It's a pig in a poke. You really don't know what you're going to get.

We have suggested to the government, why don't you bring the regulations upfront, and if you're not prepared to bring all of the regulations, at least bring the framework of what it is you're trying to do. We can also understand, because we've been government, how bills are put together. Technically there are some difficulties when you're trying to pull a number of bills together and you might not be able to bring all of the regulations, but maybe you could bring forth at least the main thrust of what it is you're trying to do. Then we as members of the Legislature, on all sides of the House, can take a look at it and we can have some reasonable debate.

More important, we can take those regulations and bring them out to organizations like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and others who are interested in this debate and show them not only the bill but the regulations, so those people who work in the food industry, both on the farm and the processing side, are able to look at the bill and the regulations and say, "Yeah, this is a great thing. We think this is good stuff and you should support it." At least in that way I'd feel a little bit more comfortable, as member of the Legislature for the riding of Timmins-James Bay, voting on a bill on which not only my constituents but those people who know all about the food industry could come back and say, "Yes, this is a good thing." Then we could stand up in the House and say yes, and maybe even then we would support speedy passage.

But the government is basically saying, "No, we're not going to give the Ontario Federation of Agriculture any details of the regulations, or anybody else for that matter. What we're going to do is move a time allocation motion here today, on October 15, in order to give this bill speedy passage," so that you can go off wherever it is that you draft your regulations and bring them back outside of the public purview.

A member got up earlier—I forget which government member it was—and said, "It's really unfortunate that the NDP are playing games and are not willing to give us unanimous consent to move a bill in a period of three hours and pass it through this House." Of course not. It would not be responsible on our part as an opposition to give the government speedy passage of a bill that it

hasn't given us details on. Can you imagine if you walk into a dealer somewhere to buy anything and the person says to you, "You're here to buy whatever product. Here's a picture of it and here's a write-up on it. Trust me, everything is OK. Just fork over your money and you can pick that up some time next week when I'm not in town"? What would most consumers say? They would say, "Come on, give me a break. I ain't buying this thing unless I see it, feel it, touch it, try it out and make sure it's worth the value that I'm going to pay for it." Most consumers understand that, and as a member of the Legislature I understand that. I'm not about to be a party to fast passage of a bill in the House on the basis of not knowing what it's all about.

I say to the government, first, the reason we're opposing your time allocation motion and the reason we would not support you in getting speedy passage of the bill is simply because you need to give us the details of the regulations. Never mind satisfying Gilles Bisson in the opposition or the NDP caucus or the Liberal caucus for that fact. We're part of it. What you need to do is satisfy the food industry and let them know for sure what they're going to get into.

I want to put on the record a letter—it's actually dated today—that was addressed to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Going through the letter, the people in the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters—excuse me. You can tell I'm from northern Ontario. Sometimes I get my acronyms mixed up. It's the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and I apologize to those I might have insulted by saying that, or not insulted, basically saying that. He says here, "Second reading debate of Bill 87 has been completed and it appears to be moving through the legislative process at an accelerated pace. This is taking place before any careful analysis of OMAFRA's responses, so critical to our position"—meaning the OFA—"on the legislation, can be made. OFA is also concerned that the economic impact of this legislation has not been carried out by the ministry."

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So the OFA, who are the experts, in my view, when it comes to this particular issue, are saying, "Slow down; whoa. We've got some problems here. We're not totally convinced that the ministry responsible for the bill has done its homework on this and we're worried that at the end of the day there are not only some financial issues that will come home to roost," pardon the pun, "but also that it'll be an issue of what is really in the bill. What are we really buying here? What are we really setting up? How is this thing going to work in the end?"

So they're saying to us, "Given there has been a short period of time dedicated to consultation with 'field to fork' organizations on this bill, and given the significance and far-reaching authorities of the bill, it is our expectation that it would be subject to public scrutiny."

I just heard, not more than 20 minutes ago, a Conservative member of the House get up and basically denounce the NDP opposition for being frivolous and not

very responsible in not allowing the government to move forward on a unanimous consent motion to give speedy passage of this bill. The reason we're not allowing it is because the very people this bill is supposed to work for are saying to us, "Whoa, hang on, slow down. We want to check this out. There are some issues here that we're really somewhat concerned about."

It's not to say that the OFA at the end of the day will not support the initiative. I may very well support the initiative at the end. I think there are some things in what you're trying to do here that generally are OK. But we're saying, "Hang on. Let's look at the detail. Let's not buy a pig in a poke. Let's not go in and do this blindly. Let's take a look at what the issues are. Seeing that the bill doesn't spell out in legislation all of the detail and most of that is left to the regulation, give us the regulation, or at the very least, give us what you intend to put in the regulation by way of document so that we know what we're buying and at that point we can either vote for or against." Then we feel that we've done our job.

They also go on to say, "OFA respectfully requests Bill 87 be moved to a standing committee of the Legislature with a provision for public hearings before moving to third reading."

The government is going to say, "We're doing that." The government is going to say, "We're allowing this, by way of our closure motion, to have some public hearings," but you're basically talking about one day on the road and a couple of days here in Toronto.

The last time I checked, most of the farm community and most of the people in the agricultural community generally and those people who process food are not all in Toronto. I want to say to the members across the way, the province is a pretty big place. Once you get north of Steeles Avenue and once you get west of the Don Valley and the other side of the Gardiner, there's a whole other province out there. It goes on for hundreds and hundreds of miles. In those areas there are all kinds of agricultural communities, there are all kinds of people in the agribusiness who want to have an opportunity to speak to this.

So why not go to the communities in around Ottawa where there's a large segment of the population employed in the food industry? Why not go into southwestern Ontario where there's a huge industry? Southwestern Ontario, as I would hope most people would know in this Legislature, is one of the largest areas as far as the basket where we grow foods and produce foods into finished product in this province. Yes, Toronto plays a role as well, because we know this is where a lot of it is shipped through and some of the processing is done, but generally southwestern Ontario has a fairly large role. And even, I would say, in central and northern Ontario, both northeast and northwest, there are also very important interests when it comes to the food industry.

So I say, in defence of those people who live in those parts of the province—the northwest, northeast, southwest, central and southeast part of the province—

they're not going to get an opportunity to speak on this bill.

It is my view, as a social democrat, that public scrutiny is a good thing. If we truly say we believe in democracy and that we believe in the tenet of democracy, which is openness and transparency and, yes, criticism where need be and praise where necessary and where it's deserved, that, for me, is a good thing. I want the opportunity for members of the public who know something about this type of legislation, who understand what the implications are, to come forward and to say to us, "Yes, Mr Government, Mrs Government, members on the committee, you have done a good thing." If they say that, I've got to take them at face value. Maybe those people who are coming before the committee in numbers from different parts of the province may say this is a good thing once they've seen the regulations and have had a proper opportunity to look over this bill. Then it deserves our support. But it certainly doesn't deserve our support if the process is being truncated. If people in the food industry are saying, "There is insufficient time for public consultation. There is much in the way of details that have not been put forward in the legislation and will come out later in regulation and we haven't seen it," I would say that it leaves much to be desired.

The other thing I want to say—I forget who the government member was. I wish I had written it down. I think it was Mr Galt, but I might be wrong, who got up and said, "The NDP is playing politics by forcing the government to go to time allocation." First of all, governments don't need to be forced into time allocation. I want all members to look back at previous sessions, when the government came and changed the rules of this House. You don't need, quite frankly, to put anything through time allocation to get your legislation through because of the way you've set the rules.

If you look at where we were in the debate on this particular bill, there were maybe two days at the most left to debate by the time members would have finished speaking to the bill. So I say to myself, "What the heck is the government up to? Why do they need to put this thing into time allocation?" Most of our members in the NDP caucus had spoken to the bill, of those who wanted to speak to it. I think we had two or three speakers left who wanted to speak to the bill. They were the only ones left. I'm not sure about the Liberal caucus, but I would imagine it was the same; there weren't all that many people left who wanted to speak on the bill. The big issue for us, as New Democrats, was to make sure there was sufficient time in committee to deal with issues so that the public was able to raise their issues, and we wanted to ask some details on the regulations.

The government was not forced into having to do time allocation, because we would have called this bill up in due process today, under the current rules of the House. The NDP would have had the opportunity to have one member up because of where the rotation was, because the last time we left it was starting a Liberal rotation, which means that by the time you go through it, we

would have had the chance to have one speaker, and the following day that you called this we would have had our other two speakers up. So at the most you would have had two days of debate and this bill would have been done.

"What are you gaining by going to time allocation?" is what I'm asking. You're gaining nothing. To me, it's a frivolous use of the rules of the House to go to time allocation when you're almost finished debate on a bill that is not that controversial, so I find it kind of strange that you would use time allocation. Members of the opposition were basically saying to you at the House leaders' meeting, "There are about two more days of debate left on this bill." I figured on one day, which is what I actually was referring to the last time I was talking, I think at the last House leaders' meeting. I didn't realize we were that caught up in the rotation that it would actually be two, but the point is that you were no more than two days of debate away from having this bill. So what have you gained? You've gained one day. In the process we've not, in my view, done a good job in providing the public out there who want to speak to this bill the opportunity to come to committee.

I really wonder about—I'm not going to say the "competence" because I know the House leader and she's a very competent individual. I have a lot of respect for Janet Ecker. I don't agree with her politics but I think she's a very competent individual who's trying to do a good job. So I say to myself, "I know it's not incompetence on the part of the House leader, because she is very competent." I wonder then, "What is going on? Why has the government got to bring this thing in in time allocation?" It makes no sense to me.

I say to the government across the way that time allocation may feel good from the government's side, introducing it and making it go through and saying, "We got our way. Showed them." Well, you didn't really achieve anything, in my view. You gained one day, but at the cost of what? At the cost of giving the opportunity to those of the public who want to speak to this bill.

This brings me to the point that I want to make as a second point—this is where we get a bit of an opportunity, because it's time allocation, to stray away from the bill a bit—and that is the whole issue of democracy.

I have been a member of this Legislature for three terms. That's not a long time in respect to this place. There are members who have been around here a lot longer than I have, but I've been around here three terms, some 11 years now. I have seen the transition from what were rules that were fairly lax when I first got here to rules that were tightened up by all governments. The Liberals came in first of all, and I think it was Sean Conway who was the minister responsible as a House leader at the time, and brought in, at the time of debate on auto insurance when my friend Peter Kormos had held up the House in a bit of a filibuster, rule changes that very much limited the participation of members in this House.

And, yes, I was the member of a government—the NDP government, that is—that under our House leader, Dave Cooke, made changes to the rules. I remember in caucus, when that debate came before us, saying we had to change the rules. I was saying, like I would imagine the current Conservative members, “Yeah, go get them, Dave. Boy, we’ve got to stop that opposition from stopping our agenda going through.” I was just as stupid and naive as the others until I talked to a couple of the members who were more senior to me, people like Howard and Shelley and Floyd and a few others, who came to me and said, “You know, Gilles, what comes around, goes around. You’re going to find out if, unfortunately, you end up being in opposition in this place one day”—because we were then government—“that these rule changes are going to come home to you to roost.” Certainly they did. The rule changes that we made, in the grand scheme of things, in the NDP government were not a wise thing.

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Now I’ve sat through two Conservative governments where on two occasions you’ve changed the rules of the House, to the point that debate has become almost meaningless. We sometimes are able to effect some change in debate—I’m not saying it never happens—but I remember a time, when I was first elected to this place, that when a bill was introduced in the House, the minister sat in on the debate through the entire second reading, which might have taken a period of a whole session to get through. The minister and his or her parliamentary assistant would sit through the bill, listen to what the members of the government and opposition had to say and make notes. We had our staffers paying attention in the wings. The thing would be brought back to the minister, and the minister would look at some of the points. Yes, some of it was political rhetoric, and you sort of cut that from the chase, but at the end of the day there was a certain amount of compromise that went in. The minister would go in and say to the opposition critics, “OK, we hear you. You don’t like this. You like this. You want that changed.” There was a bit of toing and froing in order to change the legislation so that it would become a little bit more acceptable to the general population of Ontario.

We have now gotten to the point where we have second reading debates and the ministers aren’t even here—not even the parliamentary assistants. In this case he is. I’m not picking on you on this bill specifically, Minister of Agriculture; you are here. What I’m saying is that far too often we have debates in this House where the ministers or parliamentary assistants are not even present during the debate. That worries me, and I think it worries a lot of members, if you sit down and really think about it. It means that the comments that are being made by members of the government and the opposition are not being taken into consideration. They’re not always just comments that we bring ourselves and are our own personal feelings. The government members who’ve been around here long enough know that more times than

not you do some work with the community to find out what the issues are and you bring their concerns to this House. That’s what democracy is all about. It worries me that we’re coming to the point in this Legislature where individual members are not able to play the role they need to play in this Legislature. That bothers me, and I think it bothers a lot of Ontarians as well who sit down and think about this, because it means that democracy is kind of broke.

I’m not going to sit here and chuck grenades at the government because, in fairness, it’s not just the PCs that made this happen. I think you’ve accelerated it big time, but you’re not the only ones. The Liberals, New Democrats and PCs all had a hand in this. We’ve all changed the rules to some extent. As I said, early on, we felt very justified when we were making those rule changes in our respective caucuses because, darn it, that opposition was getting in the way. Well, you know what? The way I see it, that’s what democracy is all about. Yes, democracy is slow. Democracy is not quick like a dictatorship. Democracy is not about making things happen just like that. Democracy is about debate. It’s about an exchange of ideas. It’s about, yes, ideas that might be contrary to the government view or even contrary to the view of the majority of the population. You have to have those kinds of debates to see issues from the various sides. Once you’ve had those debates in this Legislature, you then need to have a mechanism to get out of the Legislature into committee, or whatever other format, so we can take those issues and bring them into the debate so that we can reflect those various views in our legislation.

I agree that at times a government’s just got to do what a government’s got to do. If the Tories come in and they’ve got an ideological belief that they’ve got to cut capital taxes, you’re obviously going to get some arguments from this side of the House when it comes to corporate taxes. That’s your ideological belief, and I expect you to do that. But on these kinds of things I say you have to have a really good debate. As a matter of fact, even on the tax issue, I would argue, you have to have debate. I would argue that the tax cuts you’re proposing, that you want to accelerate, income tax cuts, are not as effective as moving on the PST side. I think that’s healthy debate. So my point is, I think we’ve really let democracy slip, all of us in this Legislature, by allowing changes to the rules to the point that members don’t have the kind of role now that they used to have in this Legislature when it came to making things change.

I remember first coming to this Legislature and talking to some of the people who were here before me for a number of years, people like the former leader of the Liberal Party, Bob Nixon, Floyd Laughren and others who were here for a long time. They’d talk about the kinds of things that happened in this Legislature in years gone by and about people like Elie Martel. It was really a toing and froing.

Members in the Bill Davis government would come to the opposition critic and say, “Listen, we’ve got a

problem. We don't agree either. How about if we work together and try to find some way to accommodate?" No wonder Bill Davis and the Tories stayed in power for so many years. As much as we may not have agreed, as New Democrats, with the Bill Davis government, at least there was an attempt to say, "OK, let's not look at things only from the right-wing perspective; let's look at doing things from various perspectives so that we make it right for Ontario." The Tories held power for 40-some-odd years doing that. I would argue that the Tories, in this particular reincarnation that they are, are going to have a hard time holding on past your second term. I think one of the things that is going to be your downfall is this feeling the public has got that you're not listening.

You talk to the people across Ontario, and I know government members will agree—other than our party's supporters, because party supporters, the dyed-in-the-wool Tory, New Democrat, Liberal, no matter what you do in the Legislature or what you do out there, are going to support you. So we're not talking about them. I'm talking about the general public that moves its political affiliation, depending on the election. The reason most of those people are really upset at the government, and the reason you're dropping in the polls, is this whole sense that this government doesn't listen. On a number of occasions it goes off on its own without taking into account what the public's view is, and they're saying, "Oh, I don't really like that." "Some of the stuff the government does I understand had to be done," they say to me. "I kind of like that Mike goes out there and just does it, but on the other hand, oh, boy, it doesn't make me feel too good."

We had a vote in the city of Toronto, with all the various boroughs that were being amalgamated, who had referendums, over 70% of them saying, "Don't amalgamate." The government said, "Never mind that. We're going to do it anyway because we're smarter." It didn't matter if you were right or wrong. The public said no, and it's their government, and the government just went ahead and did it anyway. There's a whole bunch of examples where that has happened, issue after issue.

How do you get around that? That brings me to my favourite subject, the whole issue of parliamentary reform. I believe there needs to be voting reform. I'm one of those individuals who say that the current system of parliamentary dictatorship we have nowadays, that is based on the old British model, is old and out of date. It's a system that was designed hundreds of years ago that was meant, when it was originally set up, if you look at the history of the British parliamentary system, to give the governing classes greater say in Parliament by way of parties and give individual parties, especially those that have the biggest clout—the ear of the king, which had to be the Conservatives in those days—virtual power in the assembly.

So we have this system that's antiquated, that's old, that's passé, and we're still in this British parliamentary system in the new millennium, the 2000s.

I say we need to take a look around the world and take examples of where Parliaments have evolved into different ways of electing their members and, more important, once they've elected their members, how they operate. You can look at systems such as Germany's and New Zealand's, which I think have more interesting ways that you can elect members. They have what they call a mixed proportional representation system.

Proportional representation, before I put people to sleep, is a very simple system. In the pure form—that's Israel's—you have an election, and if 49% of the people vote for let's say the Progressive Conservatives in this case, 49% of the seats would be given to the Progressive Conservatives. Simple. Bang. You don't even vote for MPPs or MPs in that system. I would not argue that. That wouldn't work in Ontario. We have an attachment to constituencies and members, so I don't believe that the Israeli pure model would work.

But pure PR, proportional representation, is, whatever percentage of the vote a party gets, that is the number of seats they get in the Legislature. That's a simple way of explaining it. But then there are various types of models. The one that I have always preferred is a model that is closer to the German and New Zealand models that say you still have constituencies. You would have an election in the year 2003. If we were to have such a system, there would be elections in all 103 districts that we call ridings. Each party or individual candidate, if he or she is an independent, would put forth their name as a potential candidate in the election and you would have your vote. Whoever wins the riding—first past the post—wins the seat. Nothing changes.

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I happened to get 53% in my last election—fairly significant. But let's say you were to get 40% and you were the member with the most votes; you would still get the seat. The people in a constituency still directly choose who their representative is. That wouldn't change. The only difference in moving to the PR system that I would advocate, which is my preference as a model, is that we would look at the end of the election and say, "OK, now that we've elected the Legislature"—and let's say, for example, the NDP won more seats than anybody else. Let's say we come out of the next election and we've elected—I'm just going to make up a number—40 members. They would then say, "What was the percentage of the vote that the NDP got?" The NDP got 47%. They would then say 47% of the seats should belong to the NDP. They would move up the number of seats that we have in the Legislature so that our members equal 47%. They would then go to the second-place party and say to the Liberals who, let's say, were second with 38% of the vote, that they get 38% of the seats. They say, "How many members did they elect directly?" They elected 36. They get two off their list. Where do you get the list? Then they would do it for the third party; the point being, you get your direct member elected and then you get your list member based on the percentage of the vote that your party got.

How you get the members off the list is an issue that we can get into some debate on. Some people would say parties can basically nominate their list so they can bring people into the caucuses who have some specialty. For example, the party leader and the caucus apparatus would look at the end of the election and say, "Look who we have elected. We're lacking on people who are representing ... " the financial district, the labour district, the manufacturing district or whatever it might be. They go to the list and they bring those people in so they have that specialty. That's one model. Another model would be, you look at the runners-up in the election and you say, all right, if the NDP takes two people off the list, who are the MPPs who didn't get elected in the first-past-the-post system with the highest number of votes? They go one and two. That's another way you can do it. But that could be worked out by way of committee, whenever we do get to that system.

Why would it be important to go to a proportional representation system? Because you wouldn't end up in the situations we have now. What we have now is a Conservative government that got—what? You got 43% or 44% of the vote in the last election. I can't remember; it's somewhere around there. By virtue of you winning 43% of the vote, you ended up with about 60% of the seats in the House because of this antiquated British parliamentary system we have.

How could it be that 43% of electors in Ontario said, "I want Mike Harris," and they end up with a 60% majority in the House? It makes absolutely no sense. That's not what the public wanted. It's like the free trade election of Brian Mulroney. If ever there was a debate in this country where Canadians were fairly divided and there was no consensus, it was on the free trade debate. I'm not going to get into the debate and whether it was good or bad. The issue was, when we had that election, a majority of Canadians voted against free trade. Some 68%, if I remember—I think that was the number—voted in opposition to free trade. Mulroney got in the low 40s or a high 30 percentage of the vote in the general election, but because of the antiquated British parliamentary system we have, he ended up with a majority and he was able to do it. Wilfrid Laurier would have died and gone to heaven in—when was the election that he lost?—1905 or 1908, where he campaigned on basically the same issue and lost to the Borden government. This system is quirky that way. You have a party that gets 44% of the vote and gets 60% of the seats in the House. It doesn't make any sense. I argue very simply that if a party gets 44% of the vote, they should have 44% of the seats, and then the other parties should end up with the same number of seats.

Mr Wayne Wetlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Then the NDP would never have formed a government.

Mr Bisson: The members across the way say, "Nobody then would form a government." Of course you'd form governments. How do you think Germany and most of the strongest economies in Europe work? The only system that is not a proportional representation

system in Europe is England, and they're actually changing. The Parliament of Scotland and the Parliament of Wales have now been changed. As they created them, they are being made into PR systems. England itself, the mother of all Parliaments, through the Jenkins commission is looking at the whole issue of moving to PR. We are but a few of the jurisdictions out there of democracies that still have this old, antiquated British parliamentary system. So I say look at what the Europeans have done. Has Germany a weak economy today? Heck, it's the strongest economy in Europe, arguably, and they are a mixed proportional representation system. I think one of their strengths is that diversity. It's like we say in French, "Vive la différence": long live the differences. Because at the end of the day, if you can end up in a debate between Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats—

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Food safety?

Mr Bisson: Food safety? No, I'm allowed to do whatever I want in this debate. I made my points on food safety already.

If you're able to get into a debate among all three parties on any issue, in this case food safety, and you're not able to get a clear majority in the House to vote for your bill, maybe the litmus test is the bill shouldn't pass, or there at least should be changes so that the bill is passed with a majority in the House.

I would argue that under a PR system, what would have happened with this bill is because the Tories got 44% of the vote in the last election, they'd have 44% of the seats. The Minister of Agriculture would come into the House and say, "All right, Conservative members, who's with me?" Now the dynamics have changed. Every vote in the Conservative caucus counts, and they have to take you as a backbencher seriously. What's important to your constituency had damned well better be important the Minister of Agriculture, because you're going to deliver your vote. So the ministers have to pay more attention to the backbenchers in the government. Number two is, if the minister now has all his members lined up and all of his votes in place, he now has to come to the opposition and say, "Who's prepared to support this bill?" Mr Bisson from Timmins or Mr Bartolucci from Sudbury or Mrs Di Cocco from Sarnia says, "There are a couple of issues here I want you to deal with." What do you think the Minister of Agriculture is going to do? He's got to make some changes. Hey, what a great thing. It means the public is heard. What's the weakness in that? Do you know what would happen? I would argue that we would end up passing much better legislation.

What we have in our current system is we pass, by way of rules of the House, a bill in about a week through this Legislature. That's the time it takes to go through second and third reading. But at the end of the day, I would argue that our bills are not very well thought through. A good example is what they've done on the municipal tax issue: seven pieces of legislation to fix the mess that was created with the original piece of legislation because the bill was rushed through the House

without thinking, without proper debate. Maybe we should have taken an extra couple of weeks. Maybe we should have taken a whole session to get it right, to go out and talk to the public and to canvass them.

I would argue a system of proportional representation or, as I like to call it, a system of voting reform, where we look at the issues of democracy, would better serve not only the members of this Legislature but it would certainly serve the public much better than the current system serves now.

I want to say to the government again by way of wrap-up on Bill 87, there's much in this bill that I can support. There's much in this bill that the entire NDP caucus can support. To us, what you're trying to do by way of the bill—there are a number of issues that, quite frankly, we're in agreement with. But, as I said earlier, you're trying to pass by way of this bill a piece of legislation where all the details are in the regulations. And without having the details of the regulations, we're being asked, "Trust me. It's OK—nod, nod, wink, wink—vote for the bill." I'm sorry, that's not the way it works. True democracy means to say all members of this House have to pay close attention to what's in the bill and vote accordingly. I would argue that if the government is prepared to give us the details of the regulations, they might get a little bit more support around this bill, if they really told us what they were up to in the legislation. At the very least, listen to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, which has concerns with this bill.

1700

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Oak Ridges.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Thank you, Speaker. I'm sure you enjoyed the political science lecture from the member from Timmins-James Bay as much as I did. I have to say that I haven't heard him quite as reasoned and rational for a very long time. I don't disagree with a lot of what he had to say. I think, probably, if the truth be known, that many members here are frustrated with the process in this place.

When I was first elected in 1995, I had a vision of coming to this place and indeed playing a very meaningful role in helping to debate, meaningfully, issues before this House. It didn't take me very long to realize that not only were members not listening as the debate was going on, but there were few in this place, unlike now, when of course we have every member in their seat and the galleries are filled. But on most occasions, unfortunately, there are not many members here, and when they are here, there is so much more theatrics that takes place rather than reasoned deliberation and debate that it becomes frustrating I think not only to us who are in this House, who kind of get drawn into the vortex of this process, but I know that those looking on are equally frustrated with what goes on in this place.

As an example, I was in a telephone conversation with my sister, who lives in St Thomas, recently moved there from Brantford. She happened to be watching the proceedings here when her honourable member just last Thursday or two weeks ago Thursday was expelled from

this place by the Speaker for unruly behaviour. In that conversation, she expressed her frustration and said, "What's going on there? Why do you people have to conduct yourselves that way?" I was being lectured, and appropriately so. I agreed with her that this isn't how we should be conducting business here.

Quite frankly, sometimes the question is asked, "Why are there not people of higher quality and better calibre willing to put themselves forward for election?" I'm sure there are more than a number of reasons—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Name names.

Mr Klees:—and I'm not referring now, of course, to the member for St Catharines, who is from that school of high-calibre and well-qualified and highly esteemed members. I wouldn't, of course, name names. For those people who are not qualified, the electorate has a way of somehow dealing with that over time.

But why is it that there aren't more people willing to step forward and put themselves forward for public office? I suggest that one reason might be how in fact we conduct ourselves when we are here. The question has to be asked, "Do I really give of my time? Do I sacrifice my career? Do I sacrifice the time of my family and quality of life that we would otherwise enjoy for this sometimes meaningless and frustrating process?"

I suggest that the fault lies with both sides of the House. The government, I believe, could be doing certain things that make the role of the backbencher and that make the role of cabinet ministers more meaningful. I think it's inappropriate that any piece of legislation would come before the House that doesn't have, first of all, strong support; I would say a majority, not 100%, because we'll never, ever agree on every article of any piece of legislation. But there certainly should be major support, strong majority support for legislation that is put before the House, first of all from the government side.

I've often said in discussions, whether they be in cabinet or in caucus, that if in fact there's a strong objection and we can't get a majority of caucus to support a particular proposal that's being put forward by a cabinet minister, pull it back. There has to be something wrong with it. Let's rework that legislation until such time as we have that support. Then when it comes here, I also agree that the debate that takes place, as we're debating now, should be done so; and the staff who are sitting behind the throne should be listening to what the honourable members from the opposition and the back bench here are saying, and rather than sending notes in saying, "Here is the way to dispel that particular recommendation and justify why we're doing it the way we are," why don't we make some accommodation or why don't we make some changes, whether it be to legislation or regulations, to make it the best public policy that we could possibly give the people of Ontario?

We've got some work to do, and we have a legislative committee—Speaker, you know that—that has the mandate to deal with legislative reform, parliamentary reform. I'm very interested in the work that committee is doing. I hope the members of that committee take the

opportunity they have been given by this House to deal effectively not only with the rules of procedure here but how individual members can participate in a more meaningful way in the debate.

It's embarrassing when we have visitors in the gallery, and I want to challenge you, Speaker—I know that's not appropriate for someone from here to do that, but I mean it in a poetic sense—because you have the authority, the authority is given to you, to keep order in this place. While, first of all, the responsibility is with each member of this House to conduct themselves appropriately and to refrain from unnecessary heckling so that we can't even understand each other or hear each other, let alone have the public understand what we're doing, Speaker, this is your responsibility. We as members have elected you to do this job. I would ask you—you obviously don't have to reply, but I would like you to think about it—why you allow the kinds of things to go on here that do go on from time to time that make no contribution to the legislative process, do nothing to enhance the stature of this Legislative Assembly, do nothing to add to law-making in this province. I think it rests with you to become much more assertive, relative to the rules of this place. Our standing orders don't allow for the kind of conduct that goes on here. This has somehow evolved over time, that I think the Speaker perhaps, for whatever reasons, in his wisdom has decided that this kind of jousting should be allowed to happen. I think it's not in the best interests of this place, and I would challenge you to take on that responsibility of bringing order and decorum to the Legislative Assembly.

Having said all that, I want to commend my colleague Brian Coburn, the Minister of Agriculture and Food, who introduced Bill 87 in the Legislature on June 25 of this year. I had the opportunity to listen to the Minister of Agriculture as he advocated for this kind of legislation within our caucus at the cabinet table, and I can tell you that he is an individual who takes this legislation very seriously. He has wanted to do his best as Minister of Agriculture to ensure that in this province we have a comprehensive piece of legislation that would allow for food safety with the highest standards in the world. I believe that under this legislation we will achieve that.

1710

Ontario's food is safe today and we have past governments and past administrations to thank for that. But we are living in a changing world; technology is changing. We have a responsibility to modernize our system of food inspection in this province and all that goes with it. We have a responsibility to send a signal, not only to the producers of food but to the processors and consumers as well, that we have Ontario's best interests at heart.

This legislation will do that. I know the Minister of Agriculture looks forward to wrapping up debate on this legislation later on. I'll allow him to go into further detail. I simply want to say that the previous speaker, the member for Timmins-James Bay, made reference to the fact that in his party's opinion this legislation is hollow

because it doesn't go into sufficient enough detail relative to the regulation.

So that he understands, and so that the public would understand, the generality, the larger and broader framework of this legislation, is so written by intent, and the reason is that the intention is to allow much more flexibility to deal with a changing environment and to deal with the changing technologies that we are faced with. To entrench all of the details into legislation effectively hamstringing an entire industry. It hamstringing the government from being able to deal with some of those changes that we need to be able to react to and respond to with flexibility and urgency.

We believe we have before us a very comprehensive piece of legislation that will serve the people of this province well. I commend the Minister of Agriculture for having brought it forward and trust that all members of this House will see the wisdom of giving it quick passage.

Ms Di Cocco: I've heard this late afternoon a number of interesting points of view regarding behaviour in the House and regarding some political science aspects of proportional representation. The member from Oak Ridges talked about a better way to conduct ourselves in the Legislature, which I have to say I am in full agreement with, in the sense of how we can conduct ourselves with more decorum and the ability to debate with what I call a depth of sincerity I think this House requires.

There are a number of members I've listened to, and sometimes during question period, as you say, and at other times it is very difficult to hear yourself think, never mind hear what the other perspective is. It's something that's been very difficult for me to get used to; I don't think I ever will.

The bill I am speaking to is Bill 87 on food safety. This was introduced in June of this year and is called the Food Safety and Quality Act. I and the Liberal caucus support all the measures that are going to ensure that Ontario's food is safe. But this bill, in my view, is somewhat meaningless and I'm going to give some reasons why.

First of all, there has been no commitment to additional provincial funding for food inspection. Safety starts first and foremost with food inspection. What has happened here is that OMAFRA's food inspection budget has been cut by 45%. These are the facts. We can use a lot of words about food safety, but sometimes the action speaks for itself. The fact that we've cut funding for food inspection by 45% means that we certainly don't walk the talk. The number of food inspectors, by the way, has been cut by 38%, even before these new responsibilities are going to be added. Ontario's food inspection service is overstretched. So we've got a need to put in more food safety and inspection services, yet we don't have funding to provide the needed resources.

Second, I think it's important to note that almost all of the important details in Bill 87 are in regulations. In other words, they don't need to come back here to be

discussed. Again, we as MPPs, as members of this Legislature, have yet to see the proposed regulations.

One of the main focuses in this bill has to do with the Edible Oil Products Act. It's going to literally, as they call it, streamline it or rescind it. To me, this is a real bombshell. I say, as I have heard in the debate, it's been slipped in on the very last page, I believe on page 38. It's to repeal the Edible Oil Products Act. The Edible Oil Products Act ensured there is no mixing or blending of oil products with dairy products. This is quite significant because we're talking about food safety.

When people go to the store and buy a pound of butter or other dairy products or cheese, you want to know that these are dairy products and they're not edible oil and that they haven't been mixed with an oil-based product. Yet this bill, if you notice it, again on page 37, repeals that. We don't know what's going to be put in its place. This position has been taken without any consultation with the dairy farmers, and I thought we were here to represent the interests of the constituents.

The other aspect is that the broad regulatory powers that we see here once again give the minister of the government broad powers. On the other hand, it makes no funding commitments as to the provisions of the bill. So I believe this is one of those bills that appears to be doing something.

I want to talk about food safety in the context of environmental safety. In my area we have the largest toxic hazardous waste site, in the middle of some prime farmland in St Clair township. I have to tell you that the incinerator there has lower standards than non-hazardous incinerators and I cannot understand why we cannot change the regulations to make it more stringent. They're not changing the regulations. The amount of toxic substance that's coming out of that incinerator affects agricultural land far and wide. I believe that not only the agricultural ministry but the environment ministry, in my view, certainly are not working together to make sure not only that our food is safe but the environment in which our food is growing is safe.

One of the aspects that troubles me greatly about the context in which this bill is brought forth is the fact that you talk about an "alternative delivery mechanism." If I'm going to interpret that by Conservative language, I believe it means privatization, downloading and dumping responsibility on to farm commodity groups. Even before these new responsibilities are placed on Ontario's food inspection staff, they are already underfunded and understaffed.

1720

I want to go back just a tiny bit in history and talk about some comments that were made by Premier Harris in 1995, during that election. He talked about "no cuts to agriculture." He also said that he wasn't going to close any hospitals. He also said there were going to be no cuts to our education system, and yet that is exactly what has happened.

Again, I'm just going to reiterate the cuts and the dramatic impact on the enforcement of Ontario's food

safety laws. In the three-year period from 1996 to 1999, there were only 18 people or corporations convicted of breaking food safety rules. So we don't seem to have the will or the man- or womanpower to enforce the rules that are there. You hear of dozens of media stories that have highlighted illegal slaughterhouses and uninspected and unhealthy meat processors.

Another important safety resource that is drastically underfunded is the animal health lab at the University of Guelph. Millions of dollars in cuts have seen the animal health lab's ability to monitor antibiotic resistance drop. It has also seen its ability to conduct surveillance on emerging animal diseases drop.

I know an incident whereby a young man consistently breaks out when he eats meat, and one of the things the doctors are looking at is that he is reacting to the antibiotics that are in the meat.

The government's response to these vital concerns has been to say that farmers and the public should rely more on farm organizations and the private sector than actually take responsibility.

These are my comments for now on this Bill 87.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I have been listening with some interest to the comments from members opposite with respect to the Food Safety and Quality Act and time allocation. Sometimes the comments stray away from the issue and get into all kinds of areas of debate.

This bill, at least from what I can gather, is something that is generally supported on all sides of the House in terms of working with our agricultural and agribusiness community to maintain our position and the recognition not only here in Ontario but beyond our boundaries that we provide safe, quality food. In order to maintain that position, that reputation and that recognition, we have to make sure that we stay on the leading edge and take advantage of some of the new technologies out there that are driven by the consumer and those of us who purchase and eat food.

Certainly we're very discriminating when it comes to the type of foods we like. That consumer initiative is not lost on the food processors and those who grow the various food products we enjoy. That drives them into new markets, new food products. In order to maintain a safe regime of inspection and quality control, we must embrace new technologies and recognize the contribution that our stakeholders, the producers, make. Since I've come to this ministry, various organizations have certainly recognized the co-operation, the interest and the dedication that the producers and food processors take in ensuring they produce safe, high-quality products for our enjoyment and our consumption.

Not only does it provide safe food for us, it opens up new opportunities in the global marketplace. That's one of the things we want to pursue not only as a province but as a country: that we open up new marketing opportunities, a wider range of products that can be put into markets beyond our boundaries in that global

marketplace so that we continue to enhance that economic growth we experienced in agriculture and agribusiness. It's a \$25-billion economic generator to us here in Ontario, and that's not by accident. That's certainly by a lot of dedicated hard work, research and development that we contribute to as a government, that the stakeholders and processors contribute to through their organizations to minimize the risk and improve the quality and market opportunities for those in agriculture and agribusiness.

It's a win-win situation for all of us in Ontario. At the end of the day, it continues to provide our consumers with safe, high-quality food at the lowest prices. Our farmers are recognized, well beyond our boundaries, as the most efficient producers, and that certainly contributes to the economic benefits we enjoy in this province.

There were some comments made across the way with respect to consultations. We spent a considerable amount of time discussing food safety. In fact, we had 11 meat and poultry consultations. As we all know in the House, those consultations provide valuable input to us as we develop the bill. We had another 16 consultations during the year 2000 in preparation for the bill. So we had input from various sectors, all corners, that have an interest in producing safe, high-quality food.

On July 20, farm organizations were invited for information sessions to receive information about this proposed legislation. Three of these information sessions took place in the last week of August.

Actually, our stakeholders have been very supportive—I've heard that from all corners of the province—of the initiatives we have taken to get the information out there and have the ability to listen. This is another step in the process. There are additional opportunities for that when the bill goes to a legislative committee and continued consultations with our stakeholders and those interested.

Current inspection systems have served us well over the years. This system was developed a number of decades ago. We all know that in the intervening years, as I indicated previously, we have had changes in our food products, a wider range of products, and new developments have taken place. That change continues, and it continues at a more rapid pace than ever before. Our consumption habits have changed dramatically. Distribution, food patterns and trade requirements constantly evolve and more persistent types of food-borne bacteria are identified. This all occurs as populations change, as companies merge, and as new products are developed.

In addition to that, new players enter the marketplace. So it follows along logically that we must improve and adapt to address the risks that accompany these changes. This legislation proposes to do just that: to give us the flexibility to be more adaptive to change in a more efficient and responsible manner.

1730

Certainly, we must ensure that everyone along the food supply chain—from the growers or producers, from farm gate to the dinner plate, all these folks—also plays their part in providing safe and high-quality food products to our consumers. Regulations have to be put in place to be able to ensure that process follows along as we expect as consumers.

Our stakeholders understand this. They accept it. They've initiated the HACCP programs on their own. They've taken their own initiative to enhance the quality of their products, and at their own expense, so it opens up new marketing opportunities. They understand that in a global marketplace they have to do this. When the bus is leaving the curb you better be on the bus or you'll stand there and you'll have missed those opportunities. We want to maintain our position in the global marketplace, and expand and be able to grow that.

We all know that we must do better. We must take advantage of the knowledge of new technologies and our desire to protect the public. But from a business sense and from a competitive point of view, it's also important that we have legislation that allows us to accommodate change and meet those challenges which follow in meeting consumer demand in the marketplace.

The stakeholders have also told us—and I think this is the most encouraging part that I've found over the course of the introduction of this bill and in our consultations—of the desire and the willingness to work with us to make sure we get it right; that we get the best possible legislation to meet those emerging challenges and changes that we have; that we take advantage of science-based initiatives so they can be implemented in a food safety system. A science-based foundation will help us take advantage of those new sciences and technology and new market opportunities that will only enhance the economic gains that we have in the agricultural business.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I think this legislation is being speeded through too quickly.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Speeded through?

Mr Bradley: Sped through too quickly, pushed through too quickly, in my view.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: "Rammed," says my colleague from Sudbury. I think it has to be looked at in more detail. It's not a matter of simply holding it up for the sake of holding it up. I think we've got a major challenge ahead of us in terms of food safety.

I asked a question in this House on September 27 and everybody looked at me like I was out of this world. The news media had no interest in it.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: It wasn't unusual, as my friend the minister says, except that everybody's talking about it now. You said "anthrax," you said, "smallpox," you said, "the plague," and people looked at you blankly and said,

“What’s that all about?” “He’s fearmongering,” I heard suggested on the other side. Well, all that the American papers are talking about, all the news being talked about today, is anthrax.

Mr Conway: Which one have you got there?

Mr Bradley: Cleveland’s Plain Dealer is this particular newspaper. But I want to say to you I’ve had a concern for some time. I said to the Liberal caucus a couple of years ago that I thought—and this was not because of tampering with food so much as it was that diseases might infiltrate the food system and the lack of adequate inspection—it was going to become a major issue. We had foot and mouth disease that made people apprehensive. We had the mad cow disease that made people apprehensive. I think there’s a feeling that as we saw privatization—

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Ha ha.

Mr Bradley: —and my friend from Etobicoke North always reacts when I mention it—coming into the field of food inspection, for instance, they became apprehensive.

It seems to me that one thing that has happened as a result of the tragic events, the horrifying events, of September 11 is the fact that the public is now looking to government itself to provide more assurance. Now, that may make the ideologues on the government side—not all are ideologues; I understand that—start to be apprehensive themselves, but I can tell you that the public is looking now to government for assurance, for services, for security, for protection.

I worry about the food safety system. We have so many changes taking place in the way food is prepared and processed. I happened to agree with the Toronto Star when they did a series on the restaurants in Toronto, and I agreed with the city of Toronto when they took action against restaurants which were not preparing and presenting their food in a safe way. I think that was positive.

I think we have to have far more people inspecting far more often the food that is prepared for us. I think that governments are going to have to devote an investment to food safety, and my fear is that those resources are not going to be there.

I’m also apprehensive about placing the fox in charge of the henhouse, so to speak. In so many cases this government has privatized the supervisory system, the check and balance system, that I think is best in the hands of a government which is responsible to the people—not to a third party, not to a party which may or may not have a conflict of interest. So I say to the minister and to members of the government that while this bill moves some distance toward the protection of food safety, it moves not nearly far enough, and there is lurking in the background that issue of privatization, which can affect us all.

We know, for instance, that there is no commitment for additional provincial funding for food inspection. OMAFRA’s food inspection budget has been cut, I think, by about 45%, and the number of food inspectors has

been cut 38%. Even before these new responsibilities are added, Ontario’s food inspection system is overstretched.

Second, almost all the important details in Bill 87 are in regulations, and we really haven’t seen those regulations. Now, the public’s eyes glaze over when we talk about the minutiae of the parliamentary system. Nevertheless, the public should know that it is superior to have as much as possible contained within the legislation, which is debated in this House, and far less found in the regulatory framework, which is put in place after the legislation. We would like to see those regulations ahead of time, before we’re able to pass judgment on this kind of legislation.

I think our farmers work extremely hard—I know the Minister of Agriculture would agree with me—to ensure that the food that is presented and provided to the people of Ontario and grown or produced locally is as safe as possible. Our farmers know that their reputation is on the line when this happens, when they are presenting that food for the public to purchase. I know that there are some onerous provisions for farmers in this legislation. That’s why I think there is a role and responsibility for government to assist the farmers in meeting those obligations. I think our farmers benefit immensely from a very strong inspection system, so the public knows that at least the produce from Ontario, whether it’s cattle, chickens or pork, or whether it’s beans or wheat that is produced, that what they’re getting sourced in Ontario is valuable to them and is safe to them.

I think in the background we have lurking—it’s not associated with this bill but I think we have to start thinking about it, and this is most unfortunate—the issue of tampering with food. That boggles the mind, to be able to try to contemplate just what could be done with food. Again, this is an enlarged role for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, which has been—“decimated” would be the wrong word but it’s a misused word that can be applied to what has happened to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

I have to share some of my time with my good friend Joe Cordiano.

But we also have to make sure that we preserve the agricultural land that we have in Ontario. Right now in the Niagara Peninsula there are some municipal politicians who will not be satisfied until they’ve paved everything from Metropolitan Toronto to Fort Erie. Then they will think they have reached paradise.

I happen to believe that there is a strong case for preserving agricultural land where there is good soil and where there is a climate which is conducive to the production of certain kinds of food. I am keenly interested in hearing what the member for York South-Weston has to say about this matter because I know he always has compelling arguments to make about legislation before the House.

1740

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I thank my colleague for yielding the floor. It’s always difficult to follow when he speaks because he’s so knowledgeable

on so many areas that challenge this House. It's always good to hear from him.

Once again we are faced with a time allocation motion from this government, and once again we shake our heads and wonder why the government has to resort to this mechanism in the House. This is an important piece of legislation. Repeatedly in the past this government has brought forward time allocation motions, and we have dealt with the very serious and challenging matters before this House. In the past this government has introduced time allocation for serious matters like the downloading question, like the amalgamation of the city of Toronto and on a number of other important bills, tax bills. This government rushed property tax bills through this House. Guess what? The government had to come back and reformulate those bills, reintroduce them into the assembly for consideration yet again because they didn't get it right.

Food safety is too important an issue to leave to a second chance. It's too important to the public interest to do that. We are concerned because the budgets have been cut and the resources are not there for OMAFRA. The budget was cut by 45%, and food inspectors were cut by 38%. This government wants us to trust it because it's going to bring in regulations which will specify how this bill will work. It's simply not good enough.

I heard earlier speakers discuss how this assembly needed to change in terms of its decorum and the conduct of the members. That may be well and good, but I think that what has eroded the stature of this assembly, if I may say so, is the fact that more and more power has been vested in the executive branch of this government, particularly this government.

I've sat through four different Premiers now who've been in power, and there has never been more of a concentration of power than has occurred under this government. I think that does a great disservice to this Legislative Assembly and to all members of this House. We should be able to debate freely. We should be able to investigate more issues. Our committee system is not functioning properly. There was a time I can recall not too long ago when we had special committees of this assembly investigating matters that were of great consequence, that needed lengthy periods of time to be examined.

We haven't seen that in quite some time, and I think it would serve this House well if we did have committees that were meaningful, that investigated bills such as this, and if we had more hearings.

Mr Bradley: And we had the Premier in the House.

Mr Cordiano: And we had the Premier in the House more often. Yes, that would help too.

But I think the committees are rubber-stamp operations now; that's largely what they've been reduced to. They are rarely given an opportunity to examine bills in their full length with enough time. The fact of the matter is that this Legislative Assembly and the private members in this Legislative Assembly are given less standing. The standing orders have been changed to

allow the government to ram bills through this Legislature. I say to members, at the end of the day that is a dangerous thing for the Ontario public, particularly when it comes to food safety, when it comes to the environment and when it comes to health care.

For the last number of weeks I've been talking about the case of certain constituents, a Mr Derango and the Oddi family, with respect to the lack of home care. Lack of home care is a serious crisis that faces this province. We've raised that issue in this assembly on a number of occasions over the past few months and over the past number of years. Yet the response we get from this government is a muted one, "Well, we've raised budgets" etc. The fact of the matter is that the demand is growing at unprecedented levels and we have a huge challenge facing the province. We should examine that. What's wrong with a special legislative committee investigating the crisis in home care?

Yet we have members of this assembly who come to this House and are willing to rubber-stamp whatever this government puts through in the form of legislation and ram it right through without enough consideration, without lengthy and serious debate, which is what is essentially required here. We diminish the stature of this assembly by allowing the executive branch to continuously erode the powers of this Legislative Assembly by bringing forward bills that require time allocation, which at the end of the day reduce and minimize our ability to examine these bills fully and in a great deal more detail. The case has been made that this government has repeatedly done that.

Previous bills, as I mentioned earlier, were put through this House and then had to be reintroduced because they weren't thought through carefully. This government has repeatedly shown itself to be inept when it has to get legislation right in areas that are crucial, I say to the government and particularly to the backbenchers of this government, because you do have some power to do something about it. You can stand up and defend the interests of the private member by not repeatedly allowing these time allocation motions to be brought forward. Where are the voices in caucus that say, "Let's have some real debate on some of these issues; let's have real debate when it comes to dealing with matters that are of a sensitive nature and in the public interest for all of our constituents"? What's wrong with having committees do more of the work, and meaningful work? That is no longer happening in this place. Repeatedly, as I said earlier, committees are nothing but rubber-stamp operations. That's a dangerous thing.

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: That too. We should investigate what this government is doing with advertising expenditures, no doubt about it. But that is a dangerous thing for the public.

So I think it's incumbent on the government to allow adequate debate on each of these matters and to furthermore allow for these bills to go before the public in public hearings and to have public input. I think that

would help democracy in our parliamentary system. It would elevate debate and it would elevate this Legislative Assembly, and I think people would take what we do quite a bit more seriously if we took what we do quite a bit more seriously in regard to the role of private members in this House.

This is a time when people do take what government does very seriously. This is a time when people are looking to government and to Legislative Assemblies and the House of Commons for more direction and more assurance. I think it's very important that members understand that, that taking these bills and ramming them through the Legislative Assembly is not the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate.

Mrs Ecker has moved government notice of motion 59.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Members please take their seats.

Mrs Ecker has moved government notice of motion number 59. All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob

Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Miller, Norm	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Harris, Michael D.	Newman, Dan	Young, David
Hastings, John	O'Toole, John	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Bryant, Michael	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Levac, David	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Martel, Shelley	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1803.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Alvin Curling, Gerard Kennedy,
Frank Mazzilli, Norm Miller, John R. O'Toole,
Steve Peters, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Ernie Hardeman, Monte Kwinter,
John O'Toole, Gerry Phillips, Joseph Spina
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Steve Gilchrist
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Norm Miller
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle, Garfield Dunlop,
Steve Gilchrist, Dave Levac, Norm Miller,
Michael Prue, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Michael Gravelle
James J. Bradley, Leona Dombrowsky, Michael Gravelle,
Bert Johnson, Tony Martin, Frank Mazzilli,
Jerry J. Ouellette, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Toby Barrett, Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant,
Carl DeFaria, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Tina R. Molinari
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Margaret Marland
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Julia Munro
Ted Arnott, Marilyn Churley, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Margaret Marland, Julia Munro,
Jerry J. Ouellette, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vacant
Bruce Crozier John Gerretsen, Raminder Gill,
John Hastings, Shelley Martel, Bart Maves,
Julia Munro, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Rosario Marchese
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Garfield Dunlop,
Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Morley Kells,
Rosario Marchese, Ted McMeekin, Bill Murdoch,
Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Alternative fuel sources /
Sources de carburants de remplacement**

Chair / Président: Doug Galt
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Marie Bountrogianni
Marie Bountrogianni, James J. Bradley, Marilyn Churley, Doug
Galt, Steve Gilchrist, John Hastings,
John R. O'Toole, Jerry J. Ouellette, Ernie Parsons
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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