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des débats
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Jeudi 8 avril 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 avril 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION DAY

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should commit itself to an annual Elder Abuse Prevention Day, fixing a date where the government, its agencies, communities, professional and business organizations and service providers can communicate a clear and consistent message and foster substantive awareness and learning around protecting our senior citizens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr. Zimmer has moved private member's resolution number 10. Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Zimmer: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this resolution. Let me address some comments as to why I think this resolution is needed, why this resolution is important and why members of this House should support this resolution. Elder abuse is one of the last silent issues in our society that needs attention, that needs to be attended to. It's the last unmentionable issue, along with child abuse and spousal abuse. It is an issue that needs attention.

The first step in recognizing or dealing with the issue, I submit to you, is awareness of the issue in all its facets. Issue awareness in the past has done a tremendous amount to bring forward the issues of child abuse, cancer treatment, spousal abuse and the awareness issues surrounding the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. So becoming aware of an issue and its effects and manifestations is really the first step in addressing the issue. That's what I'm proposing today: that we adopt an Elder Abuse Prevention Day as a first step in generating awareness of this last unmentionable issue. Let me give you some facts surrounding this issue, just to keep it in context.

In Ontario, there are 1.5 million senior citizens. There are credible studies that indicate that 4% to 10% of that seniors' population—that's 60,000 to 100,000—suffer some type of abuse. The abuse itself can occur in many forms. The principal form, the obvious form of elder abuse, is physical abuse, and we've all read about and perhaps we all know about situations of physical elder

abuse. A less obvious abuse, but just as crying out for correction, is the whole issue of neglected seniors, which in itself contemplates abuse. There's financial abuse of seniors; that's akin to fraud. There are unscrupulous commercial entities and unscrupulous relatives taking advantage of seniors, taking advantage of their assets, their bank accounts and their properties. The more subtle and indeed more taxing form of elder abuse is the whole issue of the emotional abuse of elders.

Those same studies that give that statistic of 4% to 10% of seniors suffering abuse go on to point out that 68% of the abusers of elders are family members; 32% are non-family members. If we break down the study, it tells us that of the family abusers, about 30% are abused at the hands of a spouse and, shockingly, 50% of elders suffer abuse at the hands of their adult children. Some 18% of seniors who suffer from abuse are males and, shamefully and shockingly, 38% are female seniors.

Abusers often are aware of what they are doing, but there is a whole component of the abusers of seniors who just aren't aware that their conduct, their emotional relationship with seniors, their financial relationship with seniors, constitutes an abuse. An awareness program will go a long way to make those people aware of the effect of their actions on seniors and to point out that in fact many of those actions constitute a form of abuse.

Awareness, then, is always the first step in correcting a situation that needs correcting. If you're not aware of it, you can't begin to address it, and I come back to the examples that I pointed out earlier: the great success that awareness programs have had in dealing with child abuse, spousal abuse, the treatment of cancer, cancer awareness programs, the treatment of Alzheimer's, awareness surrounding Alzheimer's programs.

What does awareness mean? Awareness programs have to recognize in this case of elder abuse all of the various forms of elder abuse: clearly the obvious, the subtle forms of elder abuse and the hidden forms of elder abuse. This resolution is a first step in raising that level of awareness.

Let me tell you a poignant story which I think captures the whole issue of senior abuse. A number of years ago an elderly woman passed away. A few months after her death, her diary was found; she was in the habit of keeping a diary. In her last diary entry, which she wrote a couple of days before she died, she wrote these words: "These years have been wasted ones, ones of degradation, of not belonging, of muted feelings."

Members, this resolution is a step toward ensuring that seniors have their golden years and not ones of

degradation, of not belonging, of muted feelings. I urge all members to support this resolution.

1010

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise today. In fact, I will be supporting the member from Willowdale's resolution. I think that anything any political party or government can do toward raising more awareness of something like seniors' abuse is certainly important to the almost 1.5 million seniors we have in the province of Ontario. I know in his first few comments, he mentioned that it was very silent. The fact of the matter is, I really don't agree with that. I think there is already a lot of awareness of it, and I'm going to point out some of those, if I may.

I'd like to say that for four years now I've had seniors' days in my riding. We bring awareness to things such as all the services that are available to seniors in our community. We even invite the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat to come. They're always great. They send staff people up to my seniors' days and they talk about issues like seniors' awareness and elder abuse.

The Ontario Provincial Police has a strategy in place. They have a special division of the Ontario Provincial Police, and I think they do an excellent job. Those folks at the Ontario Provincial Police like to go out and visit seniors' organizations. They go to seniors' days in MPPs' areas. They're out there adamantly promoting this particular branch of the OPP, trying to promote the fact that elder abuse is there and they have all kinds of solutions to help with that.

I think we all have probably at one time or another encountered someone who has suffered elder abuse. Of the key points the speaker mentioned already, I think financial elder abuse is probably the biggest problem they find. We often see that. Sometimes it's even in families, where families use older members of their families and rip them off for money. We've actually seen cases of that. Telemarketing is another one. It's terrible how some of these telemarketers have created scams that hurt our seniors as well.

I'd like to put a few people's names on the record who have worked toward elder abuse in a very dynamic way in my riding. Two people, Mrs Shirley Dmytruk and Mrs Marie Smith, are both members of United Senior Citizens of Ontario who are continually out across the province. These are ladies who are well into their senior years, and they travel right across our province talking to all kinds of senior citizens' groups and bringing elder abuse forward.

I should just quickly comment, is it ever nice that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and minister responsible for seniors is here this morning. I didn't expect you to be here and I want to compliment you for coming here and listening to these comments on elder abuse. I hope you're listening very carefully, Mr Minister. I hope you're not over there talking about green-belts all the time, but are listening to the senior citizens as well.

It's important that I also mention some of the folks in the west end of my riding: Mr George Lawrence, Rosita

des Roches from Lafontaine, John McLaughlin from the seniors' awareness group right in the city of Orillia. Once a month on Wednesday they meet with a guest speaker and they do exactly what Mr Zimmer's trying to do with his bill, and that's talk about bringing awareness to seniors on all types of issues, whether it's market value assessment issues or issues around elder abuse. It's really important that we mention these people in our comments because it's important that we bring awareness to seniors about elder abuse.

I'd like to comment on a couple of little things that our government did when we were in power and that I hope the new government will continue. I know that in March 2002, Premier Eves at the time committed \$4.3 million, including 10 new specially trained staff, to an elder abuse strategy to address and prevent the abuse of seniors. Of course, you are all very familiar that a lot of the abuse can take place in the health care industry. One of the areas we found in 1995 when we came to power was the lack of long-term-care beds. As you know, there have been over 20,000 beds allocated across the province. Many have opened up in many of your ridings. I'm sure that as very hard-working constituency men, you people all go and visit these homes, and if you haven't been to each one in your riding, you should go, and I'm sure at some point you will. I think those 20,000 new long-term-care beds have helped the health care industry a lot in elder abuse as well.

The Ontario drug benefit plan has added 1,436 drugs to its formulary since 1995 and now covers over 3,200 drug products. Seniors are the largest group of drug consumers and comprise as much as 89% of the benefits of that program. As you know, we are very concerned about some of the comments that have been made by the Minister of Finance and by members of your party about the possibility of working on that program and reducing the number of drugs that are covered and who would actually be eligible. We have a real problem with that. I know that you have received a number of concerns, a number of complaints, over the last few months since that trial balloon was floated out there.

But there are a few things. Although I support the bill, I find it ironic that this government would bring out a bill like this, because in a lot of ways you've hurt seniors.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): It's not a bill.

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry, the resolution. I think of the seniors' tax credit that you took away; the average amount of that rebate for seniors was \$475. You took \$475 out of the pockets of our senior citizens in this province. I'm disappointed. We passed that legislation. You rolled it back with Bill 4, and I can tell you that hurt senior citizens. That hurt a lot of our senior citizens in the province. They were counting on that. We had numerous calls to our office, asking when the applications would be available, when they would actually have an opportunity to receive that money back, and they certainly didn't come through with that. You rolled it back and you hurt seniors to the tune of \$475 a household or about \$400

million that would have gone back into the pockets of senior citizens in Ontario. I'm not happy with that, I know the senior citizens of the province are not happy with that, and I know that a number of the members of your caucus in the Liberal Party will not be happy with that as well.

Removing the hydro cap: Talk about elder abuse. The most vulnerable people in our society, and you took the hydro cap off, something you promised to leave in place until 2006, and we don't have it. Now they're vulnerable out there. It's something that we on this side of the House were committed to leaving in place until 2006. You've obviously broken a promise with that one, because you went across the province telling everybody that you would leave the hydro cap in place until 2006. You weren't in here an hour and you started fooling around with that. That's sad, and the senior citizens of the province won't forget that. Although this trial balloon of an Elder Abuse Prevention Day obviously is a good idea, it will not deflect the criticism that you've received about that.

I mentioned also the drug benefit plan and how they're going to tamper with that. We fully expect that you will try to tamper with that. That is also elder abuse to the senior citizens of Ontario.

A couple of my colleagues would like to say a few words as well, but I do want to thank you for the opportunity this morning. I will be supporting this resolution, but I wanted to put those comments on record. I believe that they had to be brought forward at this point, because I don't believe this government, the Dalton McGuinty government, is very supportive of our seniors.

1020

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I want to thank the honourable member for bringing this resolution forward, first of all. Just to rebut something that the previous speaker stated, it's interesting to note that the nine seniors' organizations with which the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat work on a continual basis all supported the government's idea of cancelling the seniors' tax credit, provided that the money that represents would go into seniors' services. So that's where they stand. They would rather have it in services than in tax cuts.

Elder abuse is an issue that our government, the McGuinty government, takes very seriously. We are pleased to implement the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse, the first strategy of its kind in Canada. Giving credit where credit is due, it was the previous government that initiated that about five years ago. Other jurisdictions have looked at our comprehensive strategy as a model.

The strategy focuses on three priorities: coordination of local services, training of front-line staff and public education. The strategy is being led by the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, the Ministry of the Attorney General and our community partner, the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse.

The establishment of a fixed annual day recognizing elder abuse would certainly support our public education

and awareness efforts to raise awareness of this growing problem. As has already been mentioned, there are over 1.5 million seniors in this province. We live in an aging society. Our population base will contain more seniors in years to come.

Nearly all of them live in the community. Ontario seniors deserve to live safely, with dignity and as independently as possible, with the supports they need. The vast majority of older adults, who live independently and are supported by their families, friends and community programs, or who are cared for in residential settings, are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. But elder abuse, unfortunately, does happen.

At least 4% of Ontario's seniors suffer from elder abuse. It is for them a terrible reality. This is why it's so important that we have programs and resources to help people who are victims of elder abuse, or those who want to help others they suspect are victims. It is why public education is an important tool in addressing elder abuse and helping to prevent it.

Abuse can take many forms: financial, emotional, physical, or simply neglect. It can happen to anyone, anywhere, regardless of cultural or socio-economic background. The health and safety of all Ontario's seniors, and ensuring they have safe, livable communities in which to live, are priorities for this government.

Elder abuse of any kind should not be tolerated in Ontario or anywhere else in Canada. Its prevention is everyone's business. The better informed citizens are, the greater the role they can play in ensuring their own safety and the safety of others.

The work taking place to combat elder abuse across the province is very much a collaborative effort. The progress made to date is the result of the hard work and dedication of many individuals and organizations that are making a difference on a day-to-day basis in our communities. We are very pleased that communities have come together throughout the province to combat elder abuse.

The results are both promising and impressive. Innovative local developments are contributing to real, positive change in our fight against elder abuse and improving the quality of life for all seniors in the process.

For the past year, eight regional elder abuse consultants have been working diligently across the province in supporting new and exciting local elder abuse networks. They have been working with senior groups and local service providers to promote and support community efforts to combat elder abuse, helping communities coordinate local justice, health and community services to respond to the needs of abused seniors. They are contributing to elder abuse training for front-line staff from sectors such as health care, justice and financial services.

Local elder abuse networks have been established or rejuvenated in 30 communities across the province, bringing the provincial total to 75. By coordinating local justice, health and community services, networks are addressing gaps in services and bringing new players to

the table all the time. These networks are doing innovative work in their communities through mechanisms such as community response teams, and public awareness campaigns have been developed in communities from Dryden to Peterborough to Windsor.

The McGuinty government plans to bolster these local efforts with a province-wide public education campaign. Linkages are being established with other groups that provide training to front-line staff from sectors such as health care and financial services. For example, the elder abuse curriculum is being added to the Ontario Police College training and other professional training programs. Seven networking days have taken place across the province since the launch of the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse. These days provide an opportunity for seniors and front-line agencies to share best practices and strengthen partnerships. The conference included topics such as reaching out to diverse communities, a multisectoral approach to police education, rural approaches, a northwestern development model, preventing elder abuse of older women, and training of professionals, to name but a few.

All these efforts are generating knowledge and interest that will ultimately help us in our fight against elder abuse. We are ensuring that Ontarians are more aware of how to identify elder abuse, how to address it and how to prevent it. Through the collective efforts of thousands of seniors and service providers across the province, we are sending the signal loud and clear that elder abuse will simply not be tolerated in Ontario. Progress is being made in Ontario's fight against elder abuse; it's being made, but we are not yet finished.

The establishment of an elder abuse prevention day such as proposed by the member from Willowdale today would help advance the fight against elder abuse, and I am therefore pleased to heartily support the honourable member's resolution.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in the debate and I want to commend the member for Willowdale for bringing this important bill forward. I do believe that it may have had more effect had we named it something else. I would have liked to see us name this resolution "respect for elders" because I believe we're dealing with a symptom of something that is pervasive in our society.

I listened with interest to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who spoke about the initiative of the government to incorporate into the police college a curriculum relating to elder abuse. Where we really need to incorporate this issue is in the curriculum of our schools. We need to reinsert into our education system the concept of respect for elders in our communities.

The day was, I recall well, when I was taught as a young person that when you meet someone on the sidewalk, you say hello to them; when you see an elderly person coming along the sidewalk, you're the one who moves and allows that person to have the right of way. There was no such thing as tolerance within our household when I was growing up, and to this day, and there

was no such thing as tolerance within our school, I recall well, of disrespect for elders.

I would suggest that we have a responsibility within our society to send out a clarion call to our educators, to parents, to those in positions of responsibility within our communities that it must start with holding those in our community who have gone before us—our seniors, our parents, grandparents. I see the pages here and I say to them, as you listen to this debate, think carefully about the kind of respect and how much we owe to our parents, to our grandparents, to those who have given us all that we have an opportunity to enjoy in this province. That's the fundamental issue, and I think often we have forgotten, even in this place, the whole issue of respect among members. We have young people in the galleries today and they will be watching the proceedings in the House. The concept of respect between human beings, between individuals as we relate to another is a huge signal that's sent out to youth in our communities and to the province as a whole. If we can't begin to respect each other within our own homes, if we can't respect each other within a place of government where laws are made—we can do all the lawmaking we want to say it's wrong to abuse elders. Let's stop abusing each other and start to show the kind of respect we should be showing each other, starting here. I think it's a great place to start.

Having said that, I commend the member because it is a reality in our communities. I want to support the member in his initiative. It's the appropriate thing to do. All of us, as we focus in on this, know that we will have our hand in improving the quality of life for elders in our communities.

1030

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, I want to thank the pages. The pages probably play the most important role in this Legislature. They found my tie, my suit and my glasses. So I want to thank Mark and Michael. I ran up here at the last minute from one meeting to another. Without the pages I don't know how we would function around here. I congratulate them. I believe it's their last day today and I want to thank them on the record for the work they've done. I know we'll be doing that a bit more formally later. I'm not sure if it's the last day today. Is it or isn't it?

Interjection: One more week.

Mr Bisson: One more week. I almost sent you guys away early. You would have been mad at the NDP. Future voters would never have gone there. You get another week.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): They should be.

Mr Bisson: Come on, Jim. You're so cynical.

Back to the point: I want to say that I, along with the rest of my colleagues and the New Democratic caucus, support the member for Willowdale on his motion. We agree there is a problem of elder abuse within our society. It's not specific to Ontario. We need to recognize that this is a problem that's existed for a long time. Governments in various jurisdictions, including Ontario, have

made some progress over the years, from government to government, as we learn more about these issues. As we become more aware of them, more and more is being done. I think what the member is recommending is that we try to step up our initiatives and efforts to make sure we prevent those awful situations from happening.

I want to put a couple of things on the record. A Conservative member made a couple of points that are important. I forget who it was, but it was one of the Conservatives, who got up as the first speaker; I meant to write down what riding and I don't remember. Elder abuse comes in different forms. There is the physical, which we know about. It's pretty clear understanding what that is. There's a psychological or threatening kind of thing as far as people making you feel unsure is concerned. I think there's also government policy to a certain extent, which is a subtle type of abuse.

I don't want to go as far as my colleague in the Conservative caucus in saying it's direct abuse, but I think it's very subtle. We need to make sure that the services we provide to seniors in our province are of a degree that people are able to live in some comfort of mind, knowing they don't have to worry about how they're going to be treated today or tomorrow when it comes to their physical needs, as far as having a roof over their head, food, services, all that stuff is concerned, but also their psychological needs in regard to how we deal with them.

Many of you know as members of the assembly, and if new ones haven't learned this they're going to learn it very quickly, that one of the most disrupting things for a senior is change, especially when it comes to somebody in an institution. If you have somebody living in a long-term-care institution somewhere and all of a sudden they're told that they're moving, even to a room across the hall, that can create a lot of disruption in that person's life because they've finally become acclimatized and settled into a particular issue.

Abuse comes in various forms. I don't think this is abuse that people want to give, but I think government policy sometimes has the effect of abusing seniors to a certain degree. That's why I want to put on the record that I was a little bit concerned the other day with the comments the Minister of Health made in regard to changing the policy here in Ontario when it comes to forcing seniors to take their placement once a placement has been offered in a long-term-care facility.

There is one side of my brain that says I understand what the minister is saying. In our terms, we have the problem of bed blockers. But let's keep in mind we're dealing with seniors here. Let's not look at them as units of production or units of whatever. These are people. They're elderly people. About 40% to 50% of them have some form of dementia by the time they end up in our institutions. Let's say you have an Alzheimer's patient who is becoming more and more critical. All of a sudden they're admitted to the hospital for some physical issue, but they are also suffering from dementia. It's at the point that the community care services are no longer able to provide the level of care necessary to leave that senior in

their home, independently or with a family member. They go into what we call ALCs—alternate level of care beds.

One of the big problems we have in this province right now is that the alternate level of care is mushrooming. In the Timmins and District Hospital, for example, it's a huge problem, and it's a huge problem, I would say, in most hospitals. There are so many ALC beds being taken up by seniors who are waiting to get into long-term-care institutions that it's preventing patients being admitted into other parts of the hospital when it comes to medical or surgical needs, and that's a problem.

What the government was musing about the other day, specifically the Ministry of Health, was that we may take the position that we would force a senior, once a bed becomes open within the system, to take that bed and then later transfer them back to wherever their first institution of choice was. I just want to put in practical terms what that means to a frail, elderly patient, and that's why I'm saying it's abuse to a certain extent. If you have somebody at the Timmins and District Hospital who lives in the city of Timmins and they're starting to suffer dementia and they have physical needs and they can no longer live independently, all of a sudden the government says, "Oh, by the way, there's a bed available in Matheson," or "There's a bed available in Kapuskasing." They're perfectly good institutions, I'm not going to argue that they're bad ones; they're very good. But the problem is, there's the whole link of the family and support groups that they need in order to feel comfortable and they're being sent out into a community in which they have no family support. That is going to put that elderly person in a cycle of worry and they're really going to start fretting and that's not good for their health, not to say what it means to the family.

Now all of a sudden—you've acclimatized the patient to the ALC bed—the elderly person, if the minister gets his way with this policy, is forced into an institution far away. Then the person gets acclimatized and you shift them back to the institution they wanted in the first place. I'm not going to vote for that. I think that's nuts. We've had to deal with this problem for many years. Our policy took the position that elderly people should have the right of refusal. They should pick their first institution of choice and other institutions they're interested in. If they're offered an institution that they're not happy with, they shouldn't have to take it. After all, this is their housing. I would say, if the government goes that way, it is, quite frankly, abuse of seniors, and I think we need to keep that in mind.

The other thing is this whole issue of the promise the government made in the last election vis-à-vis \$6,000 per year additional funds necessary for patients in long-term-care institutions. We saw the stories the other day where you can get more and better food living in a prison in Ontario, in some cases, than you can get in a long-term-care institution. There are a lot of good public institutions out there that provide long-term care and actually have pretty good dietary services. I know, for example, at the

Golden Manor in Timmins and others they do a pretty good job. I've never had a lot of complaints about those specific ones, but some of the private ones, I've got to say, are a problem. The government promised they were going to give \$6,000 more per patient, for a total of \$420 million in the first year. When my leader, Howard Hampton, got up yesterday and asked the minister, "Will you commit to the \$420 million you promised?" he vacillated all over the place, more or less telling us that he's going to break that election promise.

So I say there are all kinds of issues that we need to be looking at if we really want to prevent elder abuse. There are a whole bunch of issues that we've got to be looking at far beyond just a motion saying, "Come, we'll hug you; we love you. We think elders shouldn't be abused." We all agree with the motherhood-and-apple-pie statement that's made in this motion but we need to have some concrete policy issues decided by this government when it comes to a level of care for patients and when it comes to others.

Will anybody want more time, or am I going to—

Interjection: Take it.

Mr Bisson: OK. I just saw two of my members walk in and I thought they all want time.

I also want to say that my leader, Howard Hampton, has put forward a bill called An Act to protect persons in care from abuse, Bill 47. This has many good, positive steps to try to prevent elder abuse. We as New Democrats are going to be supporting Mr Zimmer's motion because we agree with the direction he's going in.

I'm asking that the government support my leader Howard Hampton's Bill 47, which deals concretely with the issues of elder abuse to make sure there are some standards that are applied, and that when abuse happens people are forced to report it, so that either staff or whoever might be a witness of abuse reports it and the Minister of Health has some ability to deal with it, which he already has, but we need to give him some additional rights under the legislation.

We will support the legislation. We look forward to the day we have a debate on Bill 47, Howard Hampton's bill on elder abuse. At that time I will be asking the Liberals to vote with us and not do what the Tories always did, which was to vote against good legislation that would help people.

1040

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate deeply the opportunity, first of all, to express my complete and total trust and support for the member from Willowdale, who has brought forward for us a culture change. I want to make sure we understand clearly what we're talking about here. We're talking about culture change. What you need to do in a cultural change is educate and make sure people move from one way of operating to the next. What I want to do is give you the quick example of what happened with drinking and driving.

The perfect example of that is drinking and driving before MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving. What they did was they changed a culture of acceptance. We

know that in courts across the province, across the country and across North America, when 12 people were sitting as jurors to convict somebody of drinking and driving, a serious offence, they usually got off. Why? Because the 12 people sat there saying, "That was me Saturday night, so I'm not going to convict them"—until Mothers Against Drunk Driving stepped forward and said, "Enough of this. We're going to change a culture and an attitude about drinking and driving." Sure enough, that's been happening. We've changed a culture.

What Mr Zimmer is asking us to do today, and I know all of us believe this, is to change a culture of acceptance. We can and must no longer accept the type of abuse that's been going on, not just in retirement homes, not just in long-term-care facilities, but indeed, unfortunately, in people's own homes, and unfortunately, even more so, by their own family members. We've got to change a culture of acceptance. What do you do? You need to bring it forward. You need to make sure it's in the open. You need to make sure, loud and clear, that it will not be accepted.

The minister has told us that our government has said yes. I know the previous government said, "We will not allow that to happen." I want to compliment the member from the third party. Howard Hampton's bill talking about elder abuse is another important step to bring to us the rules and regulations that need to be changed.

I want to take the opportunity to explain to you that in my hometown, unfortunately—I will say fortunately—we had that W-Five episode where we exposed abuse going on in a long-term-care facility; unfortunately, obviously, because we caught some people doing some things to our senior citizens that are not acceptable. The member from Oak Ridges was absolutely correct, and I support him 100%, when he says there needs to be a cultural change in our attitudes toward our senior citizens. Why do I say fortunately? Because it brought it out in the open and some good things are happening.

I'm proud to report to you today that a report I wrote about the incident went to Monique Smith, the member from Nipissing, who is parliamentary assistant to Mr Smitherman, the Minister of Health, who has made it clear that he wants action on this, not just the words that some members, unfortunately, are saying, that this is just a huggy-feely thing. It can't happen until the culture changes. That's what this motion is going to do. It's going to assist us in changing a culture.

The report goes as such:

"Report of Meeting Held on Tuesday, February 10, 2004, 7 pm at Versa Care in Brantford, Re: Seniors' Issues:

"I wish to report on a meeting I attended by invitation regarding recent events concerning 'elder abuse' initiated by the local coverage of the W-Five program and the show itself. I will include previously reviewed materials, the report on the meeting itself and follow-up for your consideration.

"The meeting was held at Versa Care Centre, a facility owned and operated by Central Care Corp."

“Versa Care facilitated the meeting with several head office” people in attendance. The local staff was there along with the manager. The police services board was there by invitation, regional ministry representatives were there by invitation and there was myself. “These were the only invited guests.... The media were not invited.”

The company has agreed to “refocused training; relationship with Mohawk College,” a local college, “to assist with their expertise; increase their inspections, ‘town-hall’ meeting with residents” on a regular basis; “hired a social worker to be ‘resident advocate’; include unannounced visitations by company officials.” They are going to review their staff routines, and assurances that the ministry and officials would assist any accommodation changes required.

I have indicated my disgust and my hurt that any senior would be abused and have committed to doing whatever I can to assist in bringing this under control. Hence my support for Mr Zimmer’s motion.

I provided information to the ministry on actions to date and future plans, which are approximately 300 unannounced visits to the facilities, 600 more visits to come; the parliamentary assistant to write a report, recommendations and findings for the minister for action.

I have indicated the vast majority of the workers and employees of long-term-care facilities and retirement homes are caring, compassionate, loving and professionals. We can’t paint everybody with one brush. Several ideas were generated, and those include: video surveillance, registry of abuse files, regulated class of all providers for PSW, province-wide advocates, and the list is endless. We must start to change the culture, and I support this motion 100%.

Mr Tascona: I’m pleased to join in the debate with respect to the private member’s resolution.

As the member from Oak Ridges stated, this is a matter of respect, and as the member from Brantford states quite correctly, it’s a matter of changing the culture. But certainly we have to have respect for our elders and the seniors, what they need today. There are issues out there, and I think the member from Timmins-James Bay pointed out one of them with respect to the health minister’s role, with respect to the treatment of seniors, especially when they’re facing a situation where they have had to leave their home, be it an apartment or a house, and they have to make a decision to go into a nursing home.

I’ve been very proud of our government’s role when we were in power with respect to seniors in nursing homes. In my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, under the new provincial standards with respect to nursing homes, we had tremendous advancement. We had a number of new nursing homes built that allowed seniors in my riding to stay in their community, as opposed to being shipped to other communities because we didn’t have those nursing homes.

I was pleased when the Minister of Health was there to open Victoria Village, which is in Barrie, a state-of-the-art facility. One thing that we asked the—and it’s still on

the table because we’re doing fundraising for it—is to have a day facility for seniors so that their children or people who are caring for the seniors can drop them off during the day to have them looked after. That’s something that the ministry has been looking at. I urge the ministry to take a serious look at that, because I think it’s important.

We have two facilities that allow for seniors to be looked after in the day in my riding, and it’s important that that is a policy of the government with respect to not only providing nursing homes, but also to allow people who are not in nursing homes to be treated and looked after with respect during the day at the facilities that Victoria Village has proposed and has built and is looking for ministry funding in terms of looking after, during the day, those seniors who are not in nursing home facilities.

This is the Barrie Examiner we have today, which talks about, “The practice of letting hospital patients wait for a bed at a long-term-care facility of their choice may soon be coming to an end.”

I quote Donna Rubin, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, who said, “Forcing residents to relocate is more than a mere inconvenience.

“This flies in the face of resident choice, and we don’t agree with it.

“The average long-term-care patient in Ontario is more than 85 years old; all are frail and more than half of them suffer from some form of dementia.

“Every time you transfer somebody, you run the risk of deteriorating their health.” Rubin also noted that family members often provide an elderly patient’s only means of emotional and moral support.

It goes without saying that we have got to be careful with respect to what policies we’re going to implement, especially if the Minister of Health is being directed by bean-counters, because that’s essentially what it looks like here. Respect has to be not only lip service. I know the member from Willowdale. His intentions are honourable, but he’s asking the government of Ontario to commit to a day. The bottom line here is to commit to a policy that shows respect, and if your policies don’t show respect for seniors, especially when we’re talking about seniors who are 85 years of age or more being moved out of facilities, that’s not respect. That’s in fact abuse of their residence choice and their rights as seniors. I urge the minister to stop that particular policy. It’s not going to work.

1050

I would say a lot of seniors are feeling threatened today. I got this the other day from the government about electricity prices changing, information about how it’s going to change, but there’s nothing in that pamphlet that would say to seniors, “Here’s what we’re going to do to help you because we know you’re vulnerable.” I urge the Ministry of Energy to look at that in terms of how they are going to treat seniors with respect regarding hydro, because they’re going to be impacted.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to rise and add a few words of support for the member from Willowdale's resolution. I want to commend him—he gets it; he understands. He's made the most important leap that we, in this House, can make. That's the one-foot distance between the heart and the head. So thank you, member from Willowdale. He understands that we need to talk about this issue if we're going to move forward on it, and he has used his good office to provide us with an opportunity to articulate our concern and to, in fact, express our resolve.

I could speak about a number of things, about the stats, the fastest-growing demographic being seniors, about the programs and resources the previous government and this government continue to dedicate to this issue, about the recent conference where over 500 professionals came together to explore ways to tackle this issue, about our elder abuse strategy, its desire to coordinate services, train front-line staff, raise public awareness, regional consultants, the stakeholder networking days. I mean, it goes on and on. There are a lot of good steps that are being taken to help define, raise awareness and respond to the issue of elder abuse.

I want to spend the three minutes or so that I have to share a couple of stories, to put a human face on this, if I can, because I think many of our seniors are living between memory and hope. There's often a combination of what I call the "F" factors: family, fear and fraud, in many cases, that seem to conspire almost to mitigate against our seniors.

A woman named Mary—not her real name—an 81-year-old woman with the exception of having a problem with short-term memory loss, lives well, comfortably and independently in a small cottage, loves to garden, very worried about her plants. In the fall came a knock on the door from a company that offered to take care of her bushes, prune her roses, get her garden ready. For \$500 he'd do that. She was delighted. She paid him the \$500 and, to his credit, he did the work, but two weeks later came another knock on the door, "You still haven't paid me that \$500 you owe me." She paid him again. This happened six times before one of the family members finally twigged in, and when Mary was asked, "How come you didn't blow the whistle?" she said, "I was afraid my son would put me in a long-term-care facility." So a little bit of support can change that.

An 83-year-old man I met—wife with Alzheimer's—at an advances-in-dementia research conference came up to me and said, "You know, Mr McMeekin, I'm not afraid of dying." How do you respond to someone whose opening remark is, "I'm not afraid of dying"? I said, "How long have you felt this way?" We talked and I said, "What do you fear?" He said, "What I really fear is getting one of those catastrophic, debilitating illnesses that makes me a burden on my family and I've got to be put away." So I said, "Well, that's pretty dark. What's your hope?" He said, "My hope is that I get sick late and die fast." You know, the fear out there that people have.

Abuse takes many forms. The member from Willowdale outlined some of those. Clearly, prevention is the

business of all of us here. Taking initiatives to combat elder abuse is a responsibility we share. It could be physical, emotional or psychological. It could be fraud, like the gardening example that I spoke about. It can also be institutional, and I want to end with this. We would never think of having somebody lose their job because they are male or female, because of their race, because of their religion, because of their sexual orientation. Yet in Ontario and Canada today, we have a form of institutionalized elder abuse called mandatory retirement. Think about it: People with gifts who are in the workforce, who make a contribution every day, are being forced to stand down. I believe the commissioner of human rights in the province and I believe Paul Martin and our Premier need to end this practice. That is one of the most important things we can do to eradicate elder abuse in our province.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Willowdale has two minutes to reply.

Mr Zimmer: I want to thank my fellow members for their support of this resolution. As I said in my opening remarks that awareness is always the first step. We as legislators must take the lead. We must start by being aware in this Legislature, in our constituencies, in our personal lives, in our communities. Our just-in-time lives often leave seniors behind—unheard of, unthought of, alone in their fear and their anxiety.

This resolution establishing an annual Elder Abuse Prevention Day is a first step in bringing elder abuse in all its forms—the subtle forms, the obvious forms, the physical, emotional and financial forms—to the forefront. We owe it to our seniors, we owe it to our society, and we owe it to our collective self-respect.

The good news is that awareness programs have a tremendous track record in bringing issues to the fore that need addressing. I talked earlier about the track record in terms of spousal abuse, the health issues of cancer, of Alzheimer's disease, of child abuse. So I want to thank members for your support in taking this first step in changing our societal attitudes toward elder abuse.

RECALL ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RÉVOCATION DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Election Act respecting the recall of Members of the Assembly / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale en ce qui concerne la révocation des députés de l'Assemblée.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I stand today to argue in support of a concept whose time I feel has come in Ontario. It's the concept—the power, if you will—of recall as found in this private member's bill, the Recall Act, 2004.

One may ask why I am interested in recall. Well, 10 years ago, I first saw the need for recall power for people. I was chatting with a fellow from Markham, the home to former MP Jag Bhaduria. After allegations of writing threatening letters and lying about his background, Bhaduria was the subject of petitions that garnered tens of thousands of signatures for a recall. The result: While he was removed from the Liberal Party, Mr Bhaduria remained as the MP for Markham-Whitchurch-Stouffville until the next election, as there was no government provision to recall that particular MP.

People were frustrated. They felt powerless in the face of government rules that only allow them a voice once every four years or so. I felt it wasn't right at the time for the people in Markham-Whitchurch-Stouffville, and it isn't right for people today. The very concept of democracy, in my mind, speaks to the need for people to have decision-making power on who represents them more than once every 2,000 days or so.

1100

I will be clear: Recall is not a novel concept in North America or in Canada or in the province of Ontario. Over the last century there have been numerous examples of governments taking the bold step to hold themselves accountable to people—again, not only on election day but every day. In this House alone, over the last decade there have been recall provisions brought forward by members of both the Conservative and Liberal parties. In 1993, Liberal MPP Carman McClelland introduced a private member's bill entitled the Recall Election Request Act, supported by a number of present cabinet ministers—Monte Kwinter and Gerry Phillips, to name a couple. Less than a year later, a PC MPP, Don Cousens, introduced a recall process resolution. Again, despite support for recall crossing party lines, these initiatives never became law.

In other jurisdictions, recall has had a long and storied history. Fifteen states in the United States employ recall for elected state officials. Half of these jurisdictions adopted recall before the First World War in response to the party machine corruption and scandals of that era. I note that most states allow recall of elected local officials.

I will mention the California recall legislation. That was introduced in 1911. While proponents favoured the amendment as another mechanism to fight graft and corruption in government, opponents criticized it as a device that extremists and malcontents could employ to harass and remove honest officials. History has proven their fears unfounded, however, as, despite numerous attempts to utilize recall, the bar for a recall election was set at a suitable level, and it was not until 92 years later that Governor Gray Davis became the first statewide official to face a recall election. In the Governor's case, the recall process was set in motion when 80,000 petitioners, which was greater than 12% of the vote count in the previous election, signed petitions to recall the Governor on grounds of both financial and electricity mismanagement.

Back on this side of the border, in 1935, William Aberhart's Alberta brought in recall legislation that was itself recalled within a year when, to his horror, Premier Aberhart discovered it was being used against him. Presently, British Columbia is the only province in Canada to allow its people the power of recall over elected officials. BC's NDP government adopted recall legislation in 1994, and since that time none of the 20 recall campaigns has been successful.

You're probably asking yourselves in the House: what is recall? As I've been suggesting over the past few minutes, recall is a procedure for voters to hold their elected representatives to account before the end of their elected term. In the case of this private member's bill, the Recall Act, any elected member may be recalled for conduct unbecoming a member after a year in office. In addition, a Premier would be subject to a province-wide recall process in which all qualified voters in the province would be allowed to participate.

To initiate the process, any voter in a member's riding can apply to the Integrity Commissioner to approve the issuing of a recall petition. As I suggested earlier, to ensure that recall powers are not abused, the bar to qualify for recall must be set at an adequate height to discourage any irresponsible applications. The first such bar is set at the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. If the Integrity Commissioner decides an application is frivolous or not made in good faith, it's immediately denied. Otherwise, the commissioner would conduct a hearing within two months to determine whether, on the balance of probabilities, the member has engaged in conduct unbecoming a member. If the commissioner determines that there are valid reasons, the commissioner will issue a ruling in writing and approve the issuing of a recall petition. Once the petitions have been issued, they must be returned within a year to qualify for a possible recall referendum.

A writ will be issued for a recall referendum if, and only if, the number of qualified signatures on the petition is more than 25% of the total votes passed in the preceding election in the electoral district to which the petition relates. This minimum requirement sets a higher bar for recall referendums than in California, for example, where it's 12% of votes cast.

Once the writ has been issued, the chief electoral officer must call a referendum for a date at least 28 days and not more than 56 days later. On the day of the referendum, if more than 50% of the votes cast are in favour of the recall, the member ceases to hold office, his or her seat becomes vacant and we have a replacement election, obviously.

So, there you have it, members: application, hearing, petitions, referendum and, finally, recall. These are the five hurdles that would have to be overcome for a member to be recalled from the Ontario Legislature.

I believe this empowering legislation gives government one more chance to live up to the campaign commitment to strengthen democracy through democratic renewal. The Recall Act lives up, in my view, to

the true meaning of democracy by giving governing power to the people, the power to retain or to remove elected representatives at times other than election days. By ensuring that electors have power today and every day, rather than only when government deigns to call an election, recall enhances the dialogue between electors and representatives that's so key to our democratic process. This is a principle that, I feel, speaks to the democratic renewal commitment that the current government was elected on.

I look forward to support, obviously, as we continue the debate this morning on what I consider empowering legislation. Through recall, voters would never again feel powerless when faced with an elected representative who engages in conduct unbecoming a member—for instance, breaking promises, being implicated in scandals or other unbecoming conduct.

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Well then, all of you should have been recalled last time.

Mr Barrett: Again, I'm not thinking of you, Mr Gerretsen; I'm thinking back to Jag Bhaduria. If recall was in place, the anger of the electorate would no longer swell, frustrated and helpless, for the four years of a distant autocracy that we can see in a majority government. Majority government members can proceed unchecked—we know this—with little accountability to the people who put them there in the first place.

Today I'm looking for support for a concept. I feel the time has come for Ontario to have recall. Obviously, no one here has anything to be afraid of or to hide. I just ask the assembly here to think beyond your present term, perhaps as legislators in California did back in 1911. Hopefully this process will never be required in the province of Ontario.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): As a rookie MPP, I took a look at this particular act with great interest. At first, I thought that the issues of accountability and how to deal with a member of Parliament who had acted in a way that was unbecoming of a member was very important. But then I got thinking about the whole process, and the more I got into it, the more concerns I had about this particular bill.

The issue of accountability in terms of conduct, I thought, as a rookie, belonged to the Integrity Commissioner and was dealt with under the Members' Integrity Act. I think the recall bill overlaps with that to a great extent. If it's an issue of conduct of the member, then I think that the jurisdiction for that belongs to the Integrity Commissioner. If it's an issue of whether the voter feels that the policies that the member is advocating and supporting are offensive, then it becomes a political action rather than an issue of the individual's conduct. At that point, I started to look at the issue around, is there potential for abuse of this process? I really begin to worry about that, because I think that voters can target individuals if they are afraid or concerned about the policies they've brought forward. As a matter of fact, my concern is, it could become as extreme as a voter who is

unsatisfied with the election result coming forward the next day and asking for a petition for a recall just because they don't like the result of the vote.

1110

I read further into the package that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant put together, and I noticed the bill says this can only be done once per government. What happens if there's a situation that's even more grievous and we've already had one recall? How do we deal with that? Do we simply go back to what we have now, which is that we bring it to the Integrity Commissioner and the Integrity Commissioner deals with it? What is the point of doing it if that's the issue?

In a lot of ways in terms of accountability, we've already had situations in the past where things such as public pressure and the media have dealt with issues of accountability. I can think of one particular incident where I had a view on the news of a member riding his horse in Oklahoma. The whole issue of his absence from the House was brought up, and I think public pressure was brought to bear and the member resigned. So there are already ways we have in terms of accountability. As I said, there is the issue of overlap.

Another part of the information I received from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant talks about success and what constitutes success of a recall, and it says 50% of the votes cast. My experience, in most cases, is that people who are not unhappy, who have no concerns, tend to stay home. How are you going to be sure, when it says 50% of those who cast votes, that the vote is truly reflective of how a member's riding really feels about the action? I think it should actually be something like 50% of eligible or registered voters. As I said earlier, I find that most people will stay home if they're very happy with a situation. They feel there's just a small group who are protesting and they don't want to be involved in that.

At this time, I want to let the Speaker know that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and the member from St Catharines.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? I'm looking to—I just wanted to make sure you wanted to be in the rotation—the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate with respect to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant's piece of legislation, which we're dealing with here, called the Recall Act, 2004. The recall of an elected member has been subject to a lot of discussion in the last few years. We know there's a procedure in British Columbia with respect to dealing with this, essentially arising from the elections they had in 1999, I think, or thereabouts, and probably the most celebrated case was the one in California with respect to the recall of Governor Gray Davis.

This is an issue that obviously deals with accountability. Certainly in an election we're dealing with situations where, because we have first past the post, the individual who is elected may be elected on 30% of the

vote or on 50% of the vote—who knows? It just depends on how that particular riding works out. As members, we're all subject to the Members' Integrity Act, in terms of the conduct that we are held to and the powers that have been given to the integrity officer in that regard. The Election Act sets out standards for members with respect to the type of conduct and who can become a member and who can't. Obviously, so the public knows, there are preconditions for people to be able to run under the Election Act; and there are also the Members' Integrity Act and the Election Act in terms of conduct of members, what is expected of them and what's not permitted.

I think the member here is looking to bring further accountability into the system. I'm not against accountability for the system. A recall act, such as it is, is something that merits consideration by this House because it is private members' business and we always give very serious consideration to private members' bills or resolutions that are put before the House.

I guess my concerns with respect to what's being proposed here have to do with procedure as well as form. The procedure is in terms of not creating a process that will subject the member, who is trying to do his or her job, to challenges at any time with respect to complaints that are put forth to the Integrity Commissioner. That process is out there at any time. A member can put to the Integrity Commissioner a complaint against another member with respect to conduct. That is already there. I guess the question is that when you have a riding as large as mine and you have a procedure that would allow anyone to get into that, the member would spend more time with respect to dealing with situations that may be partisan-driven as opposed to any substance. If a member has done something wrong, there is a criminal procedure, if it falls within that bailiwick. There is also the provincial procedure and there is also the Members' Integrity Act.

I think what the member is trying to do here is to put a precondition with respect to conduct. In fact, if it is wrongdoing, then you would have a context of saying that this conduct was wrong, through the Integrity Commissioner, and then go forth to the petition. What we're looking at here is that the petition would be 25%, and then, if there's a vote, it's more than 50% of who votes. You look at the fairness of it, saying that if an individual is elected by 50% or more of the people, then 25% of the people can have that particular member subject to recall. I think that's something that has to be looked at very seriously because there's a lot of money put into the election of a member by the taxpayer. There is a lot of effort put into the system in terms of the election, by the member and the people who support the member in terms of their election.

I would think that if we were going to consider this further and give it more serious consideration, what we're dealing with here is not something that can be taken over by partisanship. It has to be dealt with on substance, in terms of not adding on to the layers of account-

ability that already exist for a member with respect to breach of trust of their position, which is already watchdogged by the criminal procedure, and also situations that are governed in terms of conduct of the member under the Members' Integrity Act.

I look forward to the debate on this. Certainly it merits consideration. I think the member's intentions are in good faith. I think there is going to have to be a serious look at it from a procedural point of view to bring some fairness and balance not only to the members' rights but also to the election process, to not make it a farce, because once a member is elected and given the responsibilities, they shouldn't have to face another election that is partisan in terms of dealing with their right to serve their constituency.

1120

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I would like to let the Speaker know that I'm sharing my time with the members from Scarborough Southwest and St Catharines.

It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on this bill, having read in the Simcoe Reformer on March 17 that it was going to be brought forward. It is a bill that is intended to hold elected representatives accountable. Well, I was elected on October 2, and when I put my hand on my late grandmother's Bible on my swearing-in day, that was the day I said to my constituents that I would be accountable here at Queen's Park. That's exactly what I intend to do.

In speaking against Bill 39, I would like to make strong references to the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. We all went through a process with the Integrity Commissioner before swearing on that Bible, and I went through the investigation knowing that I had to live up to certain standards, that there were certain opportunities that I had and that I had to live up to those opportunities in a parliamentary and proper fashion. In this province, we hold our parliamentarians accountable between elections by means of parliamentary responsibility. For example, we as members have responsibilities to the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. We have responsibilities to the electorate by our conduct and words in question period, in the debates on bills and in our effectiveness as members of the government or opposition. Here at Queen's Park and in our work on behalf of our constituents, we have daily opportunities to be accountable. If not, then it's our responsibility to get out of the kitchen and resign.

With the Office of the Integrity Commissioner and its close observations of our actions in the House and on behalf of our constituents and Ontarians, I believe our conduct is always closely checked and under scrutiny. I would like to ask, what do the Tories have against the Office of the Integrity Commissioner? Day after day during the past couple of weeks, we have seen that they do not accept the rulings on our Minister of Finance, the capable and honourable Greg Sorbara. We've heard them hammered day after day. With Bill 39, once again they do not accept that his rulings will result in resignations.

They really must have a problem with the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. We on the government side don't.

Mr Speaker, this proposed bill would require the Integrity Commissioner to rule that recall is justified. As you know, such a ruling would normally result in resignations anyway. We saw that in past governments with MPP Chris Stockwell and MPP John Snobelen. The wrath of Ontarians came down and we saw what happened.

This Legislature has the power to remove members who choose not to resign. It happened back in 1884 to Adam Crooks, when a motion of the committee on privilege and elections declared his seat vacant. It was carried. A writ was dropped and a by-election held.

Establishing recall in any political context allows it to be a highly politicized process. I look at BC, where they have gone through 20 recall campaigns, a process costing over half a million dollars, and nothing has been done; no recall has been successful. Look at California. Has it made things better? I don't think so.

I do want to say, in speaking of the bill itself, there are sections—especially the details of the application for recall, the structure and composition of the recall application, and the protocol and procedures—that need some work. We do need parliamentary reform, but I really don't think it's through the recall process. We have to put our minds together. We have to understand that recall will be just another jumble in the electoral mix, a jumble which, quite frankly, we do not need. We do not need to Americanize our political process.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of Bill 39, not necessarily in its entirety or the total package, recognizing that when you debate the package, it goes for hearings and some amendments before we get to the final third reading, because I do have some problems with some of the intricacies of how the recall legislation would be implemented, but I strongly support the need for this type of legislation. I think we've heard a considerable amount of debate about the Integrity Commissioner. We just heard the member across the aisle speaking about not needing anything more than the Integrity Commissioner, but there are a lot of things that can happen here in this place that are not necessarily against the Members' Integrity Act but need to be able to be addressed by the people who voted for me or who supported me to be here.

I think of one, and I don't think anyone in this Legislature needs to worry about this legislation, because I don't think anyone would do it, but it appears that I can get elected on October 2, take one trip to Toronto, be sworn in as a member of this Legislature and then not come back again until the next election and get paid for four years doing another job. There is no one, no system in place that prevents that from happening. I think the people of Oxford have the right, if I chose to take that route, or need a system in place to make sure that they could have a representative to look after their needs. That's one of the things that needs to be addressed.

I just want to read quickly here—and it's from a news release that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, who introduced this bill, referred to: "I do believe that in any democratic society the electorate should have the right to hold elected officials accountable between elections."

I think that's so important, but what becomes even more important in this bill, and where the Integrity Commissioner has no authority, is to hold governments accountable through the Premier. This bill, of course, addresses the recall of a Premier, and I think it becomes so important that it's not against the Members' Integrity Act, but when we go to the people in an election, we actually put forward a proposal: "If you vote for this party platform or this government, these are the things that we will do." I think it becomes important that people don't have to wait four years. In this case they knew in less than six weeks after the election that they were not going to live up to the promise, but there's absolutely nothing that can be done for four years.

Yesterday we had a great debate here in the House about the treatment for autistic children, and in fact a letter was read out in this Legislature that pointed out that the Premier had said that this was discriminatory, and that immediately upon being elected, the Premier would change that, that they would provide these services for autistic children. It has become quite clear that's not what happened, but there's nothing that the people can do about that.

The people in my riding were very concerned about what would happen to the price of hydro if changes were made. We remember the previous government capped the price of hydro at 4.3 cents. It was quite clear during the election campaign, when the now Premier said, "Elect a Liberal government and the price cap of 4.3 cents will stay in place at least until 2006." That's what my people believed. Now, all of a sudden, they say, "No, that was before the election. After the election, we're going to have to put it up to make it viable. We're going to have to put it up at least to 5.5, and we're not going to guarantee to leave it there. We may have to raise it even more than that."

I think we need a system to allow people to say, "No, that's not what you told us, and you have to stand up for what you said, and we should be given the opportunity to make a judgment call." The recall doesn't say that it would automatically happen. He may be able to, in the process, justify what was done, and the people would say, "No, we're not going to have a recall," but I think we need a system in place that would allow that to happen.

I do have some concern, and that's why I say I hope that when the bill goes to committee, there are some changes made, and some reference has been made to Gray Davis's recall in California.

1130

I have a problem with the fact that we first have a recall vote, and 49% of the people who voted said they didn't want to recall and 51% said they did want a recall.

So they have a recall, and then the person who replaced the then governor was elected with 26% of the vote. Now that says to me that some 74% of the people didn't want the new governor, when only 49% didn't want the present government. So in my opinion, that system doesn't work very well.

But then, as the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant mentioned, that was put in place in 1911, and electricity prices were not a problem in California in 1911. So maybe the rules weren't written quite the way they were needed today.

I strongly support this piece of legislation. I hope that everyone in the Legislature this morning will support it to go on to committee to have it corrected or some changes made to make it a solid piece of legislation to provide the type of accountability that the people of Ontario are entitled to.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise to speak on the private member's bill put forward by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. I must tell you that I cannot support this bill. I do not believe that anyone in my party can support this bill.

This is nothing more than an importation of US politics into Canada. They have a vastly different system. I will tell you, even there their system does not work, for many of the reasons enunciated by the previous speaker here. They don't work. Maybe they're old, but they simply do not work. All we see is the fascination of people watching on television, watching the Terminator duke it out with Gary Coleman. That's what we watched for weeks and weeks. Then, after the recall was successful, only 26% actually bothered to go out and vote. It just doesn't work.

This has been adopted in British Columbia, as has been said by other speakers; and 10 or 15 years ago, people were looking for mechanisms to try to control politicians. But if anything proves that this is not a bill that's going to work, it's the BC example, where it has been tried 20 times and 20 times has failed; 20 times with people running around trying to get signatures; 20 times with millions of dollars being spent; 20 times with expectations being dashed and all to no avail. To adopt it here, I would suggest, is just going to doom it. Ontario will just follow a failed policy.

Even the Reform Party, which once championed this, which once had it front and centre in their list of suggestions that they wanted to do, has now seen—I think it's the Reform Party with a few Conservatives in it now. But the Reform Party of today, the new Conservative Party, appears to have dropped this from its agenda.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Hostile takeover.

Mr Prue: Yes, it was a hostile takeover.

This bill, in my view, has at least eight serious deficiencies, maybe more, but time permits me only to deal with the most egregious ones.

The first is that it will, by its very nature, increase partisan bitterness in this House. People will attempt to use the Integrity Commissioner for partisan purposes,

trying to remove a member or members whom they do not like.

Number 2 is that it involves a three-step process. The three-step process is one more than takes place in British Columbia, with all its faults and its failures. That step is to involve the Integrity Commissioner first. It will take an additional 60 to 90 days, or whatever the period is, for the Integrity Commissioner to research it. It's a three-step process, which makes it even more impossible to remove someone.

Number 3 is that the position of the Integrity Commissioner himself or herself should be above politics. What you are doing with this bill is drawing the Integrity Commissioner right into the heart of this Legislature, right into the heart of the political process, where the Integrity Commissioner is having to rule on largely political facts and factors, which he or she ought not to do. The Integrity Commissioner should and must remain above all of this.

Number 4: The bill has no definition of the conduct unbecoming a member. There is no definition in the bill. So what is conduct unbecoming a member? Is it to stand up in the House and make a silly speech? Is it to refuse to apologize if you have been unfair to a member? Is it to swear in the House? What is "conduct unbecoming a member"? I tried to find out where this is. Where is the definition of "conduct unbecoming a member"?

I will tell you, and I may have missed it, that we went through a couple of acts trying to look for it. Is it in the Members' Integrity Act? No, there's no definition there. Is it in the Elections Act? There's no definition in there of "conduct unbecoming a member." Is it in the Legislative Assembly Act? Again, there is nothing there.

So what is "conduct unbecoming a member"? There is nothing in the bill. We are being asked to support a bill where a member can be recalled and there is absolutely no definition of what that conduct might entail, leaving it solely up to the discretion of the Integrity Commissioner.

Number 5: This will require that there be a valid voters' list. If you're going to have to get 25% of the voters, you're going to have to determine where those voters come from. Are you going to use the old list, which might be two or three years old? We all know what happens now every election year: You're trying to use old voters' lists and people are running in at the last time trying to vote. How do you determine who those 25% are? If they've recently moved into the riding, they may not even have been there at the last vote. Are they entitled to vote? We don't know. Where is the voters' list? What are you going to use?

Number 6: We have a multiparty system in this province and throughout Canada. We saw in the last election how the parties had portions of the vote. No party got 50%. Many members in this House did not get 50% of the vote to be elected. That's the system. We know the rules. You could, in this Legislature, be elected with 30% or 32% or 33% of the vote; you could be here.

You could have it that the majority of your residents didn't vote for you, and then that same majority could

come back and say, "I didn't vote for him, so I'm going to sign this, because I want him gone because I really wanted someone else," and for no reason other than that, on the most frivolous of grounds. If it's good enough to elect a member on a plurality vote, as we have today, then you cannot un-elect a member with the same thing. If you can get 30% of the vote and be elected to this Legislature, you can't say that 50% is enough to kick you out. It makes no sense at all.

Number 7: There's nothing in the bill that talks about the spending limits. It is said they will be left to the regulations. However, in the Elections Act, which brings all the members here in the first place, it is embodied right in the act. We know what the election expenditures are. This is a lacuna here. This is a failure of the bill, to put in how much money can actually be spent to recall a member. If we have rules on how much you can spend to get here, you should have the same rules embodied in the act, on how you get somebody out. Because it's not there, this too is open to far too much discretion.

Last, but not least, number 8: I find it rather bizarre that to recall a Premier, who is, after all, the same as all of us in this House—I understand that the Premier has other responsibilities and gets paid more and has more power and prestige. I understand all that. But the Premier is, by definition, a member of this House and is elected in his or her constituency, the same as all of us. This would mean that person would have an inordinate amount of—trying to recall that person, his or her constituents would be put at a complete disadvantage. If it's good enough to recall a member, then it should be good enough to recall the member who sits in the Premier's chair.

Quite frankly, we cannot support this bill for all of those reasons and many more. I wish I had more time to talk about the others. The real solution here, and I hope Mr Bryant will consider this as he travels the province looking at parliamentary reform, is that there are two things that need to be done.

First of all, the parties need to be able to properly discipline members who do not behave in a manner becoming the position they hold. If a member fails, as the previous speaker was saying, to show up for days and weeks on end, then that member should be called by the House leader or by the leader of the party and the law should be laid down.

If they continue not to show up, they should be removed from the caucus. If the member has transgressed, the member should be removed from the caucus. I think back to the last House. There was a member from the Liberal Party who sat in that corner throughout the entire House because she had been removed, almost from the beginning, from the caucus and sat alone as an independent. That was the decision of the Liberal Party. Take it as you want as to whether it was right or wrong, it was done.

Last but not least, we need a change in the law for proportional representation, because that, and that alone, will make sure the people's voices are adequately heard

at election time, where a vote really means a vote and where you get a say on which party is elected.

1140

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I'll be sharing my time with the member for St Catharines.

Following up on the remarks by the member for Beaches-East York, I agree with a great deal of what he had to say. What we're seeing here today, the phenomenon, is something that is really born out of California, born out of western Canada and born out of the Reform Party. The once proud federal PC Party of Canada has been taken over, almost like a hostile takeover, by the western element. They're the ones who are trying to implement this recall system. They're trying to do the same thing throughout Canada, and I think it has filtered down now to that party and to this private member's bill today.

I cannot support this bill. Instead of looking at the California or BC model, I would rather look at the British parliamentary system, which has existed for roughly 1,000 years and which I do not believe contains a recall process. That is a system that has worked. There are systems in place such as caucus discipline, and other mechanisms that allow members to be disciplined if they're not behaving.

What's really at issue here is the whole aspect of being a politician and making a decision. Oftentimes we're asked to make a decision that's not popular. Some of our decisions are very difficult to make. If we make a difficult decision, and if this piece of legislation were to pass, those that are opposed to it would prepare a petition, present it here and have the member removed for making a difficult decision.

I remember my time as a city councillor when I had to make difficult decisions. I remember when we decided to take children from children's aid out of institutions and put them into group homes. When that happened, the people in the communities were upset. It perhaps was not the most popular thing to do, but it was the right thing to do. If a recall mechanism had existed back then, I wouldn't be in office today because the residents would have got a petition together, had a recall and tried to remove me from office.

Last election, in my riding, there were roughly 24,000 votes cast. Under the mechanism here, all that is required is 25% of the total votes cast to form a petition. This means that roughly 5,000 signatures by someone out there in my riding who perhaps doesn't like me for whatever reason—putting together 5,000 names, presenting it, and then the whole recall mechanism is created. That's wrong and that's something I think we have to defeat here today. I wasn't elected on October 2 to do everything that's popular. If that were the case, I'd make sure that everyone had two cars in their garage, food in their fridge, paid no money for their electricity and so on. We can't do that. There is an issue here about electoral responsibility and doing the right thing.

Throughout history, people, politicians, have made difficult decisions that weren't necessarily the most popular decision but were the right decision. All one has to look at is the example of Abraham Lincoln during the civil war. He was very unpopular and after four years people were asking the then president to try to sign some kind of peace treaty with the south, some kind of agreement with the south. He refused to do that because he knew that was not the right thing to do. What if the people would have recalled him back then? Think of the implications there.

Most recently, the concept here in Canada of whether or not to send troops to Iraq: The federal government decided not to do that. Perhaps it was not a popular decision. There were lots of people who wanted to do that. Yet if we had done that, if the Prime Minister at the time had decided to do the popular thing and sent troops to Iraq, there would be a lot of dead Canadians today, just like there are dead Spaniards and dead Americans and so many others who have died in that battle. A decision was made that wasn't perhaps the most popular decision but was the right decision to make.

So this is a very dangerous piece of legislation. I think the referendum is held at election time. It was held on October 2. I think there is a little bit of anger perhaps on the opposition benches with the results of that election and this is the sort of response that we see: legislation that would have us go out perhaps next spring and have another election. It's costly, it's not worth doing and I think it's the wrong thing. This thing has to be defeated today and I hope members will follow that and defeat this today.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be here this afternoon to support my colleague—

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): It's morning.

Mr Dunlop: This morning, OK. I get up at 5 o'clock every day, guys, so I put in a day's work before most of you guys get up.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: It's a fact. I never see anybody around here until about 10 o'clock. So what's going on with you? Come on, get to work. You're paid to be down here and do some work.

The fact of the matter is—

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Speaker, you can disturb these people so easily, I'm telling you.

I want to say this morning how I'm here to support my colleague Toby Barrett, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, on this particular piece of legislation. What's important about it is that it falls in line with the fact that the Premier, Mr McGuinty, has actually formed a ministry in the Attorney General's office for democratic renewal. I'm hoping that the whole process of democratic renewal will be a long-term process. I hope we'll look at all types of options and give the people in the province of Ontario all kinds of opportunities to discuss the proposals in any democratic renewal legis-

lation you bring forward. I think this is an excellent opportunity to bring forth something like the recall legislation. It may or may not be part of the final analysis or the final changes the minister would want to bring in for democratic renewal, but it's an opportunity and it's an option.

What is very important for Mr Barrett and for our caucus is that we like to have—at least myself; I'm not saying the whole caucus supports it. The same probably with you folks: Maybe not everyone would support it. But the fact of the matter is, it's an interesting piece of legislation. It gives another opportunity for citizens to see democracy at work. I think that's what the minister of democratic renewal would like to see. That's why I'm actually supporting this.

A private member's bill is just that. We all get up and we have an opportunity to vote. It should be a free vote. I hope it's a free vote today because it's a democratic renewal issue. I hope you people are all going to voice your concerns and vote with your minds, not with Dalton McGuinty's office.

Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie): Why didn't you do it?

Mr Dunlop: I'm simply saying to you, if you believe in democratic renewal, you won't vote en masse against this bill at private members' business. That's very simple.

I have a couple of minutes left and I do want to share them with my colleague from Oak Ridges. I appreciate the opportunity this morning to be here and I thank the member for bringing this very interesting piece of legislation forward, which I will be supporting.

Hon Mr Bradley: I have an opportunity to speak on this because I have some very strong feelings, and it's not because it's emanating from the opposition or from any particular political party. I think this idea of recall is bizarre. It was brought to its extreme in California where we saw an actor who was brought out of the movies and immediately in as the governor of California through a recall process which was in itself, I recognize, not the same as the member is proposing, but which made a laughingstock of the state of California when we saw this happening.

1150

This is an idea which is American. This is not our British parliamentary tradition. I can remember when the Conservative Party stood for the British parliamentary tradition which I believe in, and that is, where there is accountability in this House through responsible government because we are a combined executive and legislative body.

What this opens us up to is a rich group of people wanting to get rid of an unpopular member of the Legislature who may have taken an unpopular stand on an issue. This really leaves it open to very wealthy interests who, for instance, may have an interest in a development that takes place that a member is blocking. They then have an opportunity to put together a plan, together with spending a lot of money, to get rid of that member. I say

that the electorate should make that decision at election time. I can think of some instances, but I won't share them with you at this time.

I realize it's more popular in western Canada, particularly in the province of Alberta, where a lot of ideas seem to be permeating into the east now. I remember I watched the Conservative Party convention when they were choosing their national leader. Who was the keynote speaker? Ralph Klein. That is the picture of the Conservative Party of Canada now—Ralph Klein. Those who think that his ideas apply to the east, I'll tell you, should look very, very carefully at that. I believe in the British parliamentary system. I think this is open to abuse, such great abuse. I believe we have an opportunity at election time. Just because the Conservative Party promised to close no hospitals, then closed a whole raft of hospitals, didn't mean that I was calling for the recall. I was, instead, calling for, at election time, a decision to be made, and that decision was made.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I wanted to rise in support of my colleague's bill. I want to make it clear: This is a vote today in principle. Should, in fact, there be a mechanism for the electorate to recall a member of the Legislature? In principle, I believe that there should be. There are clearly some issues with the bill, in terms of its details and so on, that I also have some concerns with. Those are things that can be worked out in committee, but it's the principle that we're discussing.

To the member from St Catharines, I can't tell you the number of people who are coming to me and saying, "How can we recall Dalton McGuinty? What is it that we can do to recall this government that has made so many promises that they're not keeping?" That's really at the heart of this, and I think the reason that the Liberal Party is saying "no" to this and will say "no"—I predict that every member of the Liberal Party will vote against this. Why? Because they know, if this bill ever became law, the whole bunch of you would be recalled. Yes, we would in fact have an election. I just say to you, I think this exercise that we'll go through in this vote today will be so revealing about the angst that the Liberal caucus has, the insecurity they have about their jobs as legislators—I predict the Liberals will vote against this bill to the person.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has two minutes to reply.

Mr Barrett: I really appreciate the ideas and the information that have been kicked around this morning. We've received input from a total of 10 ridings and, personally, I welcome that kind of feedback.

The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex kicked off a concern. The 50% of the votes cast: This does apply to eligible voters. You have to be old enough to vote. You have to be a Canadian citizen to vote on this referendum. I just wanted to clarify that. You have to be a resident, an elector, in that riding to vote on this.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford raised the question of 25% of electors being names on the petition have to be qualified voters. Their signature has to be vetted by the person taking the petition around. This is

not any kind of anonymous Rick Mercer farcical Internet name process. They have to be witnessed. Their signatures have to be vetted and matched with the eligible voters' list. So there are checks and balances there.

To the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, to counter your view, this bill is not against the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner plays a very comprehensive role. The Integrity Commissioner is the first hurdle. He decides whether this would be frivolous or vexatious. The member for Oxford pointed out that an MPP, once elected, can show up once and take off for the rest of their term, just to use that example. Maybe for that reason alone there is merit in continuing discussion on this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for private members' public business has expired.

ELDER ABUSE PREVENTION DAY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier Essex): We will first deal with ballot item 9, motion 10, by Mr Zimmer.

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

RECALL ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LA RÉVOCATION DES DÉPUTÉS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier Essex): We will now deal with ballot item 10, that being second reading of Bill 39, An Act to amend the Election Act respecting the recall of Members of the Assembly, standing in the name of Mr Barrett.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. The bill is defeated.

Private members' public business now having been concluded, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ABORIGINAL HEALTH CARE

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased that the government has taken notice of the success of the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy program and is carrying on this innovative policy that has continually improved the health and well-being of aboriginal communities across this province.

I believe this unique partnership between our province and 15 aboriginal organizations and First Nations is a success because it allows aboriginal people to have direct input into services and programs, and provides the arena

and tools so that aboriginal people can design, deliver and manage their priorities while respecting traditional aboriginal values and practices.

I'm a proud supporter of this initiative and look forward to continuing to work with First Nations people, groups and organizations across this province in building on this achievement.

INTERNATIONAL WALK TO SCHOOL AWARD

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): I would like to congratulate Morton Way Public School in Brampton for having been chosen as the first runner-up for the first-ever International Walk to School Award.

For the past three years, Morton Way has celebrated Walking Wednesdays, which encourages students to walk to and from school one day a week. Amazingly, between 88% and 98% of the students at the school participate in the program each week, trading in their daily bus ride for some exercise, some fresh air and some time spent with neighbours, parents and friends.

This program has participants in 29 countries around the world, and this prestigious distinction is extremely well deserved for those at Morton Way Public School who make this event happen every week. This program truly is wonderful and is a shining example for schools around the world.

I would like to thank these organizers for doing their part in developing healthy habits in children and for helping them stay active and fit. I thank them also for their contribution to the environment by promoting environmental awareness among students, and for diminishing pollution and gridlock in the surrounding neighbourhoods. This program shows both children and parents the importance of their physical and environmental health and shows them how we can all do our part to reduce pollution in our communities.

All of us in Brampton West-Mississauga are proud of the efforts of Morton Way Public School and I'm happy to be able to recognize those efforts here today.

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): The announcement today by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities of \$48 million in funding for colleges and universities to compensate for the first year of tuition totally undermines the stability and quality of our universities and colleges. It is a political announcement that is woefully inadequate.

In consultation with those at the university and college level, I have learned that the \$41 million for universities does not fully compensate them, because they needed \$70 million for the first year of the tuition freeze. In fact, it badly hurts the students and their quality of education since it is one-time funding only and there is absolutely no guarantee it will be rolled into the base next year.

This announcement means the universities cannot count on more money for future years. It means they can-

not hire badly needed additional or replacement faculty, nor can they do ongoing long-term planning for future years. There is also no money here for the research fund we put in place. It does not provide any guarantee that the quality assurance fund we set up last year to provide \$75 million, and to increase to \$130 million and then \$200 million, will be continued. This was set up to address the decrease in funding by all three parties over three decades.

There is no new money here for student aid. In fact, this announcement actually reduces the accessibility to university and college education.

CHILD SAFETY

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I just had the opportunity to walk across from the Whitney Block. The sun is shining and it's a wonderful spring day.

I want to take this opportunity as we look forward to an extended weekend to offer a small note of caution. While we are enjoying the warming rays of the sun and the longer daylight hours, some of our children may find themselves at some risk of harm. The creeks and rivers are running full and faster, and in some instances they are overflowing their banks. Ice is fast receding from our lakes. The risk of accidents and injuries to children playing around the waterways is particularly high at this time of year. While we enjoy the time away from our workplaces and the pleasure of family time, we need to be extra vigilant to ensure it is a safe time as well.

Ontario is blessed with beauty in both its urban and rural settings, and we should avail ourselves of the opportunity to enjoy it. Included in my riding are the wonderful attributes of the Rouge River, Duffins Creek, and the Lake Ontario waterfront. I hope my constituents visit these wonderful places as well as others, but do so with the potential risk in mind and do so safely. I encourage all Ontarians to act similarly over the days and weeks ahead.

NORTHEAST MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The Northeast Mental Health Centre is in crisis. In order to balance its books, the centre must cut \$2.3 million from its budget. This will have serious consequences for children and adults in northeastern Ontario who suffer from mental illness.

The first round of cuts impacts children. They include the end of the district day treatment program, which provides mental health services to secondary students; the end of mental health services for children in CAS foster homes; the end of mental health services for children under six living in Sudbury district east, in Espanola and on Manitoulin Island; a reduction of services to children who are dually diagnosed with mental illness and developmental disabilities; and a reduction in the

preschool speech and language program so that the waiting list for service will grow from eight months to one year.

These cuts will have a devastating impact on children, but they're not alone. The board will make more decisions about cuts on April 16, and these cuts will involve adult and community-based programs. They will have serious consequences too.

On February 23, I wrote to both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Children and Youth Services about this issue. I asked both to intervene immediately so there would be no loss of service or staff. In response to a question I raised last week, the Minister of Health said the government is working on it, but difficult cuts are underway and more will be made.

The centre needs to know now what the government is going to do to protect patients and mental health services. I call on the government today to announce additional funds for the Northeast Mental Health Centre.

ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Later today I will be presenting a petition from the students of St Peter Catholic High School in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans. These exceptional students are taking part in an advocacy campaign for a smoke-free Ontario. The project was spearheaded by the exposé team, which includes Samantha Armour, Monica Rondeau, Bailey Vieau, Kate Heney, Cassandra Steffensen, Andrew Showers, Adam Warner, Tristan Phillipe, Dylan Stogran, Rosa Zito and Kevin Richardson.

These young activists organized the distribution of 1,800 blue ribbons to all of the students in the school who support the campaign to "Examine the Facts, Express your Thoughts, Expose the Truth About Tobacco." St Peter is the only school among the 40 participating from the Ottawa area that has chosen to turn to the Ontario Legislature to advance their message and petition members to pass legislation to protect Ontarians from tobacco smoke in all public and work places. I commend their efforts and the example they represent of youth who are working hard to affect public policy for the benefit all citizens in this province. With their invaluable perspectives and contribution to the debate, we may be able to learn how best to encourage those who might be tempted to smoke to never do so.

These students from St Peter have shown that health promotion activities, whether through quitting smoking, better diet or more exercise, can be effectively promoted by dedicated young people in our schools. I commend public health nurses like Beverly MacSween for being their catalyst.

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to remind the government about a

negative impact that safe drinking water regulations are having in rural and northern Ontario.

The upgrades to facilities and the testing requirements that are now mandatory under regulation 170 are coming at far too high a cost and do not allow the time necessary for municipalities to adhere. There is a genuine threat that these regulations will force community halls, arenas, churches and restaurants across this province to close their doors or disconnect their plumbing. It is no secret that these facilities offer a great deal to the rural and northern way of life.

I was pleased on Monday, March 29, when Liberal MPP Jim Brownell asked Minister Dombrowsky a question on this topic. However, I was shocked by the lack of an answer that the minister provided him in return. This was a scripted question with a scripted answer. I don't believe Mr Brownell could have gone back to his municipal leaders with a clear conscience to tell them that the minister was committed to finding a solution to this problem. Quite frankly, she didn't even answer his question.

I have written two letters to Minister Dombrowsky regarding this topic and I have yet to receive a response. In the letters I made a suggestion and I will restate my position here today: I believe that the working group that had been set up before the election, between AMO, municipal leaders and the Ministry of the Environment, should be re-established with added participation from the Ministry of Health.

This is the only way to find a solution to this problem. I think we sometimes forget around here that bureaucratic inflexibility and iron fist enforcement are not the only way to solve problems.

1340

EASTER GREETINGS

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I rise today on behalf of the House to bring Easter greetings, not only to my constituents in the riding of Scarborough Southwest but also to the people of Ontario.

Easter is a time for families to come together and spend time with each other. In a place as rich in diversity as Ontario, this holiday is celebrated in many different ways. Whether it is the traditional Greek mageritsa, the Ethiopian dabo or the Brazilian paçoca, or just plain old Ontario ham, many mark the end of Lent and the arrival of spring with food, drink and celebration.

While at Easter we celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ, it is also a time to celebrate the end of winter and the coming of spring. Around Queen's Park and in gardens across Ontario, the first flowers have begun poking through the ground and robins have returned to build their nests and raise their young. After a long winter, it's nice to see the days getting longer, the evenings warmer and the grass greener.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to all members of this

House, their families and all the families across Ontario who will be coming together to celebrate Easter.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Yesterday I asked the Attorney General, Michael Bryant, what the Liberal government's position is regarding the prosecution of criminal charges under the notorious federal Liberals' long gun registry, Bill C-68.

As members will recall, former Attorney General David Young had announced that the Ontario Conservative government would join with six other provinces and the territories in refusing to prosecute our citizens under this billion dollar Liberal boondoggle law that criminalizes law-abiding Canadians.

The Attorney General, who is increasingly being recognized as a poseur, fancying himself as Ontario's answer to Jack Nicholson in his "You can't handle the truth" charade last week, provided an answer that was disingenuous at best. He said, "We will continue to prosecute offences to the full extent of the law in the same way the previous government used that law to do so." That response was far from accurate, given that not one charge was prosecuted under this odious law by the former government.

I ask the Attorney General to clear the air on this important issue and state whether the Liberal government will prosecute Ontarians under the wasteful and offensive long gun registry law. Stop the affected behaviour, take off the pancake makeup and give Ontarians a straight answer.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (POMPES À INSULINE POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-
santé.

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

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My bill would amend the Health Insurance Act by making the provision of insulin pumps an insured service under the act. In my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North alone, approximately 700 people would benefit from such an amendment to the act.

As you know, Speaker, an insulin pump not only prevents complications for young people but in many cases reverses them by putting a regular amount of insulin into the body that closely matches what the body normally does. Unfortunately, the cost of the pump prevents most Ontarians from having the use of it.

Diabetes is a leading cause of blindness, kidney failure and heart disease in Ontario. Type 1, or juvenile, diabetes is a life-altering condition. While people with diabetes make up only 6% of Ontario's population, they account for 32% of heart attacks, 43% of heart failure cases, 30% of strokes, 51% of new dialysis patients and 70% of amputations.

I look forward to debating this bill on April 22.

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? Motions? Statements by the ministry?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to allow the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to give an announcement to this House on the phony tuition announcement she made outside the House this morning.

The Speaker: The member is seeking unanimous consent.

I heard a no.

Mr Arnott: Mr Speaker, I sat in this House for eight years while the member for Windsor-St Clair would repeatedly and systematically complain about our government occasionally making announcements outside the House. How can he have the unmitigated gall—

The Speaker: If you'd got unanimous consent, you could proceed. There's no unanimous consent.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Before you call question period, I draw your attention to the fact that we had a memo issued by the Office of the Premier indicating that the Premier would attend question period today. We'd like to have clarification; we're advised now that he will not be, on the day it has been announced that Ontario lost 25,000 jobs in the last month.

The Speaker: I was not intending to call question period yet, but if there was a letter saying the Premier would be here—I don't know if the House leader might want to make a quick comment.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The opposition was advised, as is the course, that the Premier is unable to attend today.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Ms Mossop for an address in reply to the speech from the throne.

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

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bartolucci, Rick	Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Bentley, Christopher	Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Bountrogianni, Marie	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Broten, Laurel C.	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bryant, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Leal, Jeff	Van Bommel, Maria
Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, Dave	Watson, Jim
Craitor, Kim	Marsales, Judy	Wilkinson, John
Crozier, Bruce	Mathews, Deborah	Wong, Tony C.
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Di Cocco, Caroline	McNeely, Phil	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Tascona, Joseph N.
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Eves, Ernie	O'Toole, John	
Hampton, Howard	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 22.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that a humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to bring to the attention of the House that it's the 41st birthday of our colleague from Waterloo-Wellington, Ted Arnott.

THERESA BOYLE

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm not 41.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand it's the final day here for one of our respected members of the press gallery—she's going on another assignment—Theresa Boyle, from the Toronto Star. I know we all wish her the best of luck.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Since we're acknowledging people, today is also the birthday of the member for

Nickel Belt. I'm not allowed to disclose which birthday it is.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's quite an Easter spirit.

ORAL QUESTIONS**ONTARIO ECONOMY**

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, while your Minister of Finance has been busy defending himself from an ethical scandal, while your Premier has been running around the country and the province talking about the dire Ontario financial situation, 25,000 people have lost their jobs. At that time, in March, the only person who should have lost his job was the Minister of Finance for his lack of judgment on that scandal.

Could the Acting Premier stand in his place and now admit that their \$4-billion tax increase is sending a bad message to the investment community and he should change course before it costs Ontario even more jobs?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'll refer that question to the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let me tell the member opposite that, in fact, since this government took office, we have seen an increase in the number of net new jobs created to 51,300. Let me also add, for your information, that GDP grew by 1.2% in the fourth quarter of 2003, for annualized growth of 4.8% forecasted for this year. So the Ontario economy is chugging along and creating new jobs. One month does not a trend make.

1400

Mr Baird: This is the first verdict on the biggest tax increase in Ontario history. Bob Rae taught us that when you raise taxes it kills jobs, and Mike Harris and Ernie Eves taught us that when you cut taxes it creates jobs.

Let's look at the record: The biggest tax increase in Ontario history; they've raised taxes on small businesses, working families and seniors; they've raised hydro rates; they've raised the minimum wage; they've not implemented their promise to protect commercial auto insurance; and they've done nothing but bad-mouth our economy.

Would the minister stand in his place and admit that this tax increase is disastrous for the Ontario economy and it's time to change course before there is any more damage and before any more people lose their jobs?

Hon Mr Cordiano: The only bad mouth for this economy is the mouth this member opens every time he says something.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Cordiano: It is.

If you look at the record of job creation, in March 2004, SAS Canada opened a new 110,000-square-foot

facility; Research In Motion added 220 new positions; Freightliner added an additional 300 jobs; DataWave, 200 new jobs; CAMI recalled 100 additional employees; TelusSpectrum, 250 employees for North Bay.

Job creation is happening in the province, and the economy is going in the right direction. Things are happening. In fact, I would remind the member that when you look at our tax rates, we still have, as a result of whatever was done with the minister's announcement back in the fall, a lower tax rate than the US Great Lakes states average: 36.12% compared to 40% in the United States.

Mr Baird: The cumulative tax burden on Ontario businesses is higher than our trading partners and it's gotten worse because of the actions of this government. They've broken their promise on property taxes, they've broken their promise to small business, they've broken their promise on commercial auto insurance. They've broken every single economic promise they've made.

Dalton McGuinty looked at taxpayers in the eye in \$4-million worth of television commercials and said, "I won't raise your taxes." Now he's brought in a \$4-billion tax increase. Would you not stand in your place and admit it's having a disastrous effect on the Ontario economy, and will you not change course before even more people lose their jobs?

Hon Mr Cordiano: The only disaster that was about to happen was if that party got re-elected as a government. That was the only disaster.

If you look at KPMG's report, which was tabled just last month, Ontario still has a significant cost advantage over the United States in terms of the cost of doing business. They point out that we have a 7% to 10% cost advantage over Detroit right here in Ontario with respect to the auto sector. As well, I would like to point out that Toronto has an approximate 10% cost advantage over Raleigh and Atlanta when it comes to investing in biotech. We have all the right ingredients for additional investment. I would add that that government failed to represent us. Our presence was zero around the world. You failed to represent us internationally. We're going to change all that.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question, the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: I'll return to the same minister. That is cold comfort to the unemployed tech workers in Ottawa-Carleton who have lost their jobs, finished their severance packages and are off EI. To have a minister of the crown stand in his place and say, "Don't worry, be happy, everything is fine," when 25,000 people in Ontario lose their jobs is an absolute disgrace.

Ontario used to be the economic engine of Canada, a magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity. Now we're becoming a mismanaged, overtaxed debtor, and it's because of you and your government.

Will you not admit that you've got to change course before more damage is done to the Ontario economy? Would you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I fail to understand how this member can't understand simple numbers. Ontario's corporate tax rate is 36.12%; Illinois, 39.7%; Indiana, 40.5%; let's take New York, 39.9%—combined federal and provincial taxes. We're still lower than the US. We're going to remain a competitive jurisdiction for investment, and we're going to attract additional investment.

Mr Baird: I say to the minister, I hope he does attract new investment because we'd like to see some sort of job creation policy for the government of Ontario.

One of the big things that's driving this is a provincial treasury that is out of control. We've seen massive new spending take place since October. We've seen spending go out of control. Spending is up by more than \$2.5 billion since you took over. Rather than trying to lift us out of a difficult fiscal year, you and your party are digging us in even deeper. Dalton McGuinty's only plan is to spend more and tax more.

Would you not admit that balancing the budget and taking some responsibility which comes with the privilege of being in government is in order? Will you do that, and will you get control of government spending and ensure that we have a balanced budget this year?

Hon Mr Cordiano: Mr Speaker, when that party was in power, the answer to everything was to slash and burn and cut taxes. What did that result in? That resulted in low wages, low-paying jobs; that's what it resulted in. It didn't result in better workers or better jobs.

We are embarked on a strategy to ensure that we have long-term infrastructure and long-term viability in terms of attracting investment. We're going to invest in the areas that are critical for success: skills development, post-secondary institutions. We're going to make sure there's an environment that's conducive to higher wages. That means better workers. We're going to invest in education, something you failed to do, which is serving our province badly as we speak.

Mr Baird: Those comments are cold comfort to the unemployed tech worker in my riding, someone who's lost their job, who needs a government that's going to make job creation and economic growth a priority. Your strategy is such a noted difference from the former government. We saw 1.2 million net new jobs created in eight short years. What do we see from this government? Record out-of-control spending, record out-of-control regulating and record out-of-control taxing.

Minister, there's still time for you to act. Your Minister of Finance will stand here and present a budget in short order. Will you not advise him that it is in the best interests of the Ontario economy that you retreat from your increased tax agenda that's killing jobs in the province of Ontario? Would you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Cordiano: Talk about reckless; there's a government that left behind a fiscal mess. Talk about not being conducive to additional investment. A fiscal mess, that was your legacy. That does not attract investment, I'll say to the member.

I repeat: Since this government took office, there have been 51,300 net new jobs created in this province. The

economy's on a roll. I say to those workers who have been laid off and lost their jobs, frankly, we're doing a lot more than the previous government. We're working diligently, and you will see that there will be additional investment attracted from around the world, something that party failed to do when they were in government.

1410

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Before the election, your Premier promised you'd stop Conservative plans for private hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa. Dalton McGuinty said, "We believe in public ownership and public financing of health care. I will take these hospitals and bring them inside the public sector."

Then in November we saw that the Conservative lease became a Liberal mortgage and nothing else changed in the so-called P3 hospital, except that today Ipsos-Reid released a poll which shows that 75% of people across Ontario and across Canada believe hospitals should be built publicly, should be operated publicly, should be financed publicly and should be publicly accountable. Tell us, Minister, why are you breaking the promise that 75% of Ontarians want to you keep?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'll refer that to the Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to talk about our plan to build two excellent new public hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa. As a result of our engagement on this issue—we have two hospitals which under that party's regime would have meant that land and title transfer of ownership to the private sector occurred—as a result of the work we've done, we have made sure that these hospitals, which are publicly controlled and publicly accountable, will always be in the hands of the public hospital body that has been the contributor to land and is the great contributor of services in these communities.

I think the real test at the end of the day is not a public opinion poll waved around by the honourable member, but rather the proper function of two hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa, hospitals that I am virtually certain will be a source of great pride in those local communities.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you say this is a public hospital. We've actually had an opportunity now to read the document. If it's a public hospital, maybe you could tell us why schedule 17 of the contract lays out a penalty that the private corporation will pay if they misplace a patient, if they injure a patient or if they take the life of a patient. If this is a publicly operated hospital, operated as a public service, why will a private corporation pay a penalty if they lose a patient or if they cause the death of a patient? That doesn't sound like a public hospital to me.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member will well know, in part as a result of our commitment to accountability,

that lots of documents are available with respect to this. At the end of the day, the hospital that is being built will deliver public services in the way they are delivered across hospitals all around this province. There is, in the provision of services in that hospital, nothing that cannot be done in another hospital in Ontario; in fact, no alignment of services that is not being provided in similar ways in other hospitals around the province. At the end of the day, these are hospitals that will be publicly accountable, publicly controlled and publicly owned, and they will be hospitals that will be great sources of pride in the communities of Brampton and Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question, the member from Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr Hampton: With respect, I don't think the minister answered the question. How is it that a private corporation has a penalty clause in their contract that says if they lose a patient or if a patient's death results, they pay a penalty?

There is also another interesting section, schedule 8. The private consortium will be responsible for disposing of biomedical waste and hazardous waste, project house-keeping, replenishing liquid soap, providing linen and laundry, moving patients and deceased within the hospital, moving specimens and samples within the hospital, and moving medical records and X-rays within the hospital. If this is a public hospital, why is a private corporation responsible for all these things? Can you tell us that, Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What I said to the honourable member in my earlier response was that the provision of services in this hospital is consistent with the provision of services in other hospitals all across Ontario. The list of services that the member reads out is consistent with the roles that other private sector entities are playing in Ontario's hospitals today. At the end of the day, the provision of these clinical services in these hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa will function exactly as public hospitals across this province function. The real test here is, will these hospitals provide services that make the people of the communities of Brampton and Ottawa proud? Yes, they absolutely will.

Mr Hampton: I believe I heard the answer that Elizabeth Witmer used to give. That's exactly what the Conservatives used to say. The Conservatives used to say, "All of these services will be provided by a private corporation on a for-profit basis. This is a great deal."

Minister, can you really tell me what is the difference between your private hospital and the Conservatives' private hospitals? Because when you read the agreement, there's no difference at all. Your private hospital is the same as the Conservatives' private hospital, except maybe you've changed one word. What is the difference?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The difference is obvious, in part measured by the fact that the honourable member has access to contractual information because this government committed to making that information publicly available. Further, this member very well knows that in his report on the future of medicare in the country of

Canada, the Romanow report clearly spoke to the reality, which is that in our public health care system, where the amount a person has in the form of their own resources shall not dictate the services they receive, that does not mean there isn't room for the private sector to play a role in the delivery of ancillary services.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. You have about five seconds to wrap up.

Hon Mr Smitherman: If that party was so principled on this point, then one must wonder why during their five long years of government in this province they didn't re-publicize, why they did not bring back into the public domain that variety of services that in our publicly funded and universally accessible health care system are delivered by the private sector.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. On this side of the House, we've been warning you for months on your irresponsible economic agenda. You're going to destroy Ontario's competitive advantage. This isn't just our message; this is the message of people like Jack Mintz, who is professor of taxation at the Rotman School of Management. He says that Ontario's economy as you stated it today to the member for Nepean-Carleton is uncompetitive. You're just not using all the right numbers. You have failed 26,000 people and their families. You simply don't get it. You continue to break your promise to protect small business, the real job creators. Why do you continue to pour sugar in the very engine of Ontario's economy?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'll definitely put my money behind the KPMG study, an independent study done to assess the cost competitiveness of Ontario. I'll put my money behind KPMG any day over what you're saying. Let me quote from what they've said. Very clearly they have demonstrated that Ontario continues to show a 7% to 10% cost advantage over our US competitors. That means we are in a much better position to attract investment than many other jurisdictions, including other parts of the world, not just the United States. I would like to add that when that party was in power they presided over boom years and still left a deficit, after many years when the economy was booming. Shame on you.

Mr O'Toole: I'm just talking with the people of Ontario, my constituents in Durham; you're more about KPMG. The people of Ontario can't eat numbers and KPMG reports. You simply don't care about working families or small businesses. Look at the record here. You've been raising property taxes, income tax, jacking up hydro rates and destroying the very confidence in Ontario's economy. Your track record is clear. Let me reveal your track record: 163 employees at Domtar in Cornwall fired; 900 employees at Ford Windsor fired; 125 employees at Corel Corp fired; 245 employees at the

trailer park, Orangeville, fired; 24 employees at Babcock and Wilcox in Cambridge fired; 150 employees of Alcatel in Ottawa fired; 31—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr O'Toole: You're starting to sound like Donald Trump. You've failed 2,600 people. You fired them. Can you tell me what hope you've left for the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Cordiano: Let's actually hear what Professor Mintz said when he was at committee. This was his advice to the committee: "Don't cut taxes until the budget is balanced." That's what he said to you when he was at committee. That was his advice. Let's not forget what that previous government did. What did they do to nurses? They fired nurses. What did they do to water inspectors? Fired. What did they do to meat inspectors? And what did they do to you last time? They fired you.

1420

TUITION

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Colleges, Training and Universities. I know your tuition freeze is welcome news for Ontario students who have faced spiralling tuition increases. My own two sons will be entering post-secondary education in September and we need to ensure it is a high-quality system. Indeed, our students' success is vital to the future well-being of our province. We need to ensure they're receiving a quality education, whether they are in North Bay, North York or the Davis campus of Sheridan College in Brampton.

Our colleges and universities across the province need to be fairly compensated for the tuition freeze. What level of compensation is being given to our post-secondary institutions for the freeze and how did we determine this level of compensation?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I would like to thank the member for Brampton Centre for that great question. I'm very pleased to tell the House today that this is the start of a new era in post-secondary education.

Let me also tell you that there were students out for the announcement this morning, which took place at York University, which also has Seneca College on its campus. There were students there from all over this province. There were students there from Thunder Bay; there were students there from Windsor; there was one fellow who drove all the way from Windsor this morning and is driving back this afternoon.

The compensation that will be provided for universities and colleges was very thoughtfully considered and based on a matter of equity. We looked over the past four to five years, and that has resulted in a 2% compensation on regulated, 6% for the colleges on deregulated and 8% on—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs Jeffrey: Minister, our government's compensation package is for the first year of the freeze. Why have we not announced compensation for the second year of the freeze?

Hon Mrs Chambers: We have announced the first year of compensation based on the history that I just referred to. The second year will be considered during the consultations that are taking place over the next several months, which will enable stakeholders such as students, institutions, parents, all the stakeholders in this sector to look at what they want the system to look like on a go-forward basis. Rather than being presumptuous as to what the compensation should be for the second year, we will go through those deliberations in an orderly fashion and announce the results in the fall.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Nepean-Carleton.

Interjections.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I'm going to miss you guys this weekend.

The Speaker: Order. I know the opposition is quite anxious to ask questions.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I want to return to the Acting Premier, someone who is quickly earning the title as the minister of job destruction.

Minister, you have created the perfect storm for job losses in Ontario. Businesses, particularly our valued small businesses, cannot survive the soaring hydro rates under your energy policy, the extraordinary tax increases you've brought in in so many areas, including property taxes, and an increasing regulatory burden since your government came to office. You've essentially introduced a job-killing tax. Many of these small businesses just won't be able to survive this storm.

There are 25,000 people in Ontario who went through a bad experience in March. They've lost their jobs and they're worried about themselves, their futures and their families. I want to ask you specifically, what message of hope do you offer to these 25,000? What are you doing today to make their lives better?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): This government takes very seriously the fact that some people have lost their jobs, and we're concerned about that. We're working very diligently, very hard, as a government to put in place the right conditions so that we can continue to attract investment, so that we'll have further attraction of investment. We are investing in the things that will make us successful.

Today the Minister of Colleges and Universities announced a freeze for colleges and universities. That's very important. The key to an innovative economy, something you totally ignored, is to make sure that we have the best-trained, most highly educated workforce in the world. We're doing that.

Mr Baird: Beyond platitudes about years to come in the future, you're offering no hope to people who are unemployed, no hope to people who are pounding the pavement looking to work, and that's a real disgrace I say to the minister.

This is déjà vu all over again. This is the way we were warned it would be. The last time the Liberals wreaked havoc on the Ontario economy was 1985 to 1990, when they were big taxers, big spenders and big regulators. I want to say to the member opposite, there is still time to make a difference, to change course and abandon this job-killing tax.

Will you stand in your place and promise the people of Ontario that in the next budget there will be no increase in taxes, that you will not allow any more tax increases to wreak havoc on the Ontario economy and our small businesses? Would you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I would remind the member that the corporate tax rate in Ontario is 36.12%. That is lower than most of our US competitors. The combined corporate tax rate in the United States for all the Great Lakes—the average corporate tax rate—is 40%. We are 4% lower. As a matter of fact, the combined federal-provincial small business tax is 18%, which is significantly lower than many other jurisdictions. I remind the member as well, as I said earlier, that the economy has created 51,300 jobs. There are a number of new jobs being created all over this province. It is unfortunate and I feel for those people who have lost some jobs. We are doing everything we can to work with those people. My ministry is making an effort when there are layoffs. There is a unit of the ministry that will work with the communities involved and the people who are affected. I remind the member that this government is undertaking to invest in the right areas, which are post-secondary institutions.

1430

ONTARIO DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, as you know, Brantford in my riding of Brant is a city that has faced in the past some economic development obstacles. However, we are moving forward with true vision and looking forward to a rejuvenated downtown. Specifically, the old Eaton Market Square, a integral part of our downtown area, is a vital component to this redevelopment. I know that you have heard from myself and municipal officials in the past about your understanding of our needs. Could you tell me the status of the Ontario downtown revitalization program agreement—the ODRP—between our downtown and our ministry?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): This government takes very seriously the vitality of our downtowns. As a matter of fact, downtowns, particularly in our mid-sized communities, are really the heart and soul

of the community. Presently, there are still 10 outstanding loans under the Ontario downtown revitalization program, a program that was started some 30 years ago. These agreements were basically to help revitalize the downtowns of various communities. Over the years, most of those loans have worked extremely well and the downtowns have been reactivated and rejuvenated.

In some cases, though, perhaps as a result of box stores being opened in suburban areas—or in Brantford's case, the fact that the downtown Eaton's store was lost some time ago—we realized that some of these loans have been in jeopardy. For that reason, we were able to renegotiate the loan with the city of Brantford to make sure the citizens of Brantford will benefit from the revitalization.

Mr Levac: It's extremely good news that that negotiation took place and that we are now going to move forward with the vision of our downtown and our development—good news indeed for Brantford. This project is key to revitalization.

I know there are other areas in the province going through very similar circumstances that need our attention as a government. What role do you see the government of Ontario playing in assisting municipalities across the province, along with us, in bringing business back to the cores of our downtowns?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: We feel this is literally a win-win situation. Not only were we able to renegotiate the loan with the city of Brantford, but we were able to do exactly the same thing with the city of Guelph, and we're willing to look at many of the other communities that are still burdened by these loans as well. We look forward to working with the minister of infrastructure and the Minister of Finance to make sure the downtowns of our communities are as strong as possible.

The kind of loan agreements that have to be worked out will have to benefit not only the taxpayer of Ontario, in making sure the loans are repaid, but we want to make sure that the heart and soul of the communities—namely, the downtowns of these areas—is as strong as possible. That's what this government is all about. That's what we're all about on this side of the House.

SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Acting Premier. Welcome back, Acting Premier. Before the election, you promised to restore funding cuts to second-stage shelter programs by the previous government. Your announcement on April 6 led us all to believe that the \$3.5 million would immediately go to existing second-stage housing.

However, it turns out that that is not the case. Instead of funding, abused women are getting smoke and mirrors. Ministry officials have told me that no decision has been made on where the money will go. Eileen Morrow from OAITH was told the same thing. The money will not even go out the door until consultations are conducted within the framework of the upcoming

affordable housing consultations, and there is no guarantee that the existing shelters will get any of that money.

Why are you breaking your promise to reinstate funding to existing second-stage housing programs?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'll refer that to the minister of children's services.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Children and Youth Services.

I'd be pleased to answer on behalf of my colleague Minister Papatello. The \$3.5 million is indeed going to second-stage housing. That is what we announced and that is what we will do.

Ms Churley: Your Premier promised to reinstate funding to existing second-stage housing programs. Ministry officials told us very clearly that that has not been decided, that consultations will take place and the minister is looking at a new kind of model.

Housing providers believed that is what the Premier promised on April 6. They cannot wait another day for that money. They have been struggling to continue providing those services since the previous government cut. Now they're in shock because they have been told very clearly that there's no guarantee they are the ones who are getting that money.

I'm asking you again, why are you breaking your promise? Why don't you fully reinstate the services that were cut?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'm pleased to answer the question from the member opposite. I was the critic in this area when I was in the opposition. I know very well what was in our platform. What was in our platform was to reinstate funding for second-stage housing. That's what we announced and that's what we will do.

TOBACCO GROWERS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Acting Premier: During the election, your leader presented Ontario tobacco farmers and tobacco communities with both a threat and a promise. You've kept your threat to jack up tobacco taxes. Governments across Canada now take in over \$8 billion a year in tobacco taxes. You kept your threat; you must now keep your election promise of compensation.

Acting Premier, this Legislature's finance committee supports compensation unanimously; that the tobacco community needs some of that \$8 million back. Farmers have seeded their greenhouses. They're now working up lands. And I regret to report the banks are very nervous right now.

You've kept farmers waiting since October. Farm families cannot handle the stress of your government's constant runaround. What are you waiting for? Are you hoping the growing season will soon be in high gear and tobacco farmers will no longer have any time to lobby this government? Where is the compensation, Acting Premier?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The province of Ontario and the McGuinty government actively encourage consumers to reduce the use of tobacco products. And the member is right: We're keeping our promise, just as we are on every other matter.

With respect to the specific issue of compensation, we're working with the federal government and industry on the tobacco round table. The process will complement the current federal and provincial initiative in the tobacco-growing regions and support the transition of growers into other viable alternatives. The Ministry of Agriculture will continue to support all farmers' fair share of safety-net programs and the supply management system.

What distinguishes this government from that member's government is that our Minister of Agriculture responds to farmers quickly and positively. This government is keeping its promise, and I'm glad you noted that in the preamble to your question.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Minister, we heard your colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Food and the Premier of this province speak repeatedly about transition funding for tobacco farmers, a fund which is to be created from the additional taxes that you're presently collecting on cigarettes and tobacco products. At a meeting of 1,700 farmers in my riding, the agriculture minister said, "We are prepared to create a \$50-million transition fund." I understand today the minister is meeting with his federal counterparts, hopefully to discuss this very issue. Minister, can you tell me and this House, have you given him authority to negotiate this transition fund at this meeting and, if so, have those dollars been allocated?

Hon Mr Duncan: The Minister of Agriculture, unlike the previous government, is meeting to resolve these issues. This government is trying to work out a co-operative arrangement to move this along faster—something that government didn't seem to want to do under any initiative.

I applaud the Minister of Agriculture for his efforts, not only on behalf of tobacco farmers but beef farmers and wheat farmers. This government is committed to the farming community in this province, to the rural community in this province, in a way that that government never was and never could be. I'll put his record up against yours any day of the week.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Education. I fought long and hard against the Tories' flawed educational funding formula, one that has been ripping the heart out of our rural communities. Their one-size-fits-all approach to education created chaos in our rural schools.

School closures force rural students out of their own communities and on to longer bus rides. In fact, the first

school closed in Ontario by the former government was Romney Central School in my riding.

I'm pleased that our government recognizes that rural schools cannot adequately function under the constraints of a flawed formula. Students and parents are pleased that our government introduced a moratorium on school closures. We must be flexible in recognizing that schools are an important part of any community. Minister, can you assure this House that the interests of rural Ontario will be recognized?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I want to commend the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex, who has been one of the strongest advocates for rural students and school bus safety in this House, for the experience that most of us who represent urban ridings don't have to recognize, which is when it comes to transportation, when it comes to the size of schools, there is a different education experience in this province. The one-size-fits-all of the last government closed 100 rural schools and made it much more different for the quality of education to be achieved there.

1440

What I can say is that the rural consideration is something that we acknowledge not only as part of our education commitment, but as part of our overall commitment to quality of life in Ontario. If you take rural schools out of rural communities the way that this past government did, you take the heart out of rural communities. So we have already begun to look at amending the funding formula and looking particularly in areas like transportation, the size of schools and the ability to access the same quality of programs as anywhere else in the province. We believe the quality of life in rural areas and education in rural areas should be as good as anywhere else in the province.

Mr Hoy: Minister, I've been contacted by many parents in my riding regarding the school board's proposal to change elementary and secondary school start times. This will result in students catching the bus up to 90 minutes earlier each and every day. Parents are deeply concerned that the early start time will affect their children's achievement.

The Tory government ignored rural Ontario. Parents want this Liberal government to take into consideration the unique challenges faced by rural students. Are you aware of the serious concerns parents have with busing in rural Ontario?

Hon Mr Kennedy: This is a serious question in terms of the amount of accommodation that has had to be devised by boards. They've been forced by the funding formula that was put in place by the previous government to go to all kinds of lengths. There has not been, in seven years of funding, a real funding formula to address transportation, so boards have had to go to extreme measures on their own.

What I can say to the member is that we will bring in a funding approach. We will do that in consultation with school boards and, just as importantly, with communities, to make sure that the impact of anything we do at

Queen's Park will result in only one thing: the better education of students. We will not make them sacrifice as they have in the last seven or eight years, due to a lack of commitment to public education. There is a commitment to those students, first and foremost. Whether it's busing start times or the actual instruction in classroom, those children's interests will come first and those communities will have a chance to have a say.

SEX OFFENDERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. When I asked you a couple of days ago, you didn't appear to be aware of the Community Safety Act that I was trying to refer to, passed by our government in 1997. The act, as I understand it, gives police chiefs the authority to voluntarily notify their communities about the presence of a sex offender.

Clearly the Peel community wasn't advised of Douglas Moore's presence, a situation where René Charlebois's murder, and possibly others, may have actually been prevented. Are you prepared to amend the Community Safety Act to make it mandatory for police to notify their communities of a sex offender's presence?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'm sure the member must know, particularly since it was his government that brought in Christopher's Law, the Ontario sex offender registry act, that when an offender is in an institution, has been charged or is on parole, subsequent to April 1, 2001, they must report within 15 days and are put into the registry. If they have been convicted and discharged prior to that, the law does not allow that name to be put in. Now, you're talking about another act that has nothing to do with the Ontario registry for sexual offenders. That was what I was responding to.

Mr Dunlop: I understand Christopher's Law, and I understand your response on that. I'm referring to the Community Safety Act, which allows police officers to voluntarily make the presence of a sex offender known in the communities. I'm simply asking you, under the Community Safety Act, are you or are you not prepared to make it mandatory for police services to provide that to the communities?

Hon Mr Kwinter: Actually, the member doesn't seem to understand. The mandatory aspect of Christopher's Law is that a sexual offender who has been discharged from prison or is on parole must, within 15 days—this is mandated—report to the officials for the Ontario act.

It is up to the police to decide whether or not someone should be declared a dangerous offender. That is something the police have the authority to do. I happen to have confidence the police will do it when they think it's necessary. It isn't up to me to mandate when they should be doing operational activities. Under the act, Christopher's Law, that is mandated. The big issue of

discussion today is why it wasn't retroactive, and that was your responsibility when you brought that law in.

TOURISM

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Minister, the tourism industry in Ontario is still very much recovering from the shocks in the marketplace in the last few years. I want to tell you that in my riding of Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake, they have also felt the shocks in the tourism industry. In fact, many small and medium-sized companies, such as travel agencies and tour companies, are still feeling the effects of the prolonged downturn in travel demand. My question to you is, what assistance are we providing to Ontario's travel industry to protect them from unnecessary financial risks and liability concerns?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I want to thank the honourable member from Niagara Falls for the work he has done in promoting tourism, which is a vital part of the Ontario economy. It's a \$20-billion industry.

Just recently our ministry released the proposed regulations to the Travel Industry Act in Ontario. The current law, regrettably, does not give great protection to the travel agents themselves. If a large supplier such as an airline, a hotel or a cruise line company goes out of business, the small agency is the one that's held liable. We will be bringing forward legislation this spring that will limit the burden on the so-called end-supplier liability, because we believe the travel agencies should not be suffering unduly as a result of this failure.

I want to thank TICO, the Travel Industry Council of Ontario. I also want to thank ACTA for their comments and work, the honourable member and all those people who support the travel and tourism industry in this province.

Mr Craiton: Minister, given the recent press coverage about the instability in the airline sector, how is this proposed legislation going to protect consumers in Ontario?

Hon Mr Watson: The honourable member is quite right: It's a two-part strategy. Obviously we have to ensure that the small travel agencies are successful and viable and also that consumers are protected.

As the honourable member and members of this House may know, the Travel Industry Act allows for a compensation fund of up to \$5,000 per individual if a ticket is purchased through a registered travel agency, to a maximum of a \$5-million cap. If it's a large incident, that would be pro-rated. So the McGuinty government is very much committed to ensuring consumer protection for those people travelling.

While I have the floor, I want to also congratulate in advance the greatest hockey team in the history of Canada, the Ottawa Senators, as they compete tonight against the Toronto Maple Leafs. Go, Sens, go.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Minister, for years now, property taxpayers have benefited from a bulk purchasing unit at the Ministry of Health. Fleet and Equipment Services provides 100 to 150 ambulances each year to municipalities around the province. Those municipalities save money because Fleet buys in bulk and sells ambulances to municipalities at cost. There is a concern among Fleet staff that your government is considering getting rid of the bulk purchase function from Fleet, and that would certainly drive up costs to municipalities. I ask you today, can you confirm that your government will maintain the bulk purchasing function at Fleet?

1450

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): When I took over as Minister of Health in this province, I came to understand that the previous government had made a decision and had planned to close the Judson Street ambulance service. Subsequently I received many letters, especially from smaller municipalities around the province, that indicated the service was essential to them, or at least that it was extremely convenient and, therefore, helpful.

I'm pleased to say that our government has taken the decision to reverse the previous government's decision and we're going to maintain those services. They will be delivered in a somewhat different way. I've been given every assurance, and I trust it to be correct, that the same kind of value pricing that was available then will be available in the future.

Ms Martel: I appreciate the response. If I might, I am concerned about the suggestion there will be change somehow in the operation. So I'd like the minister to do three things: firstly, to confirm with the OPSEU staff who work at Fleet that they indeed will not be losing their jobs and their position is secure; secondly, to reverse a change made by the previous government and allow Fleet to bid on municipal tenders for ambulances and ambulance equipment; and thirdly, guarantee the budget for 2004-05 so that the current staff, who want to keep their jobs, can work on orders for delivery for this coming year. Will do you that, Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member well knows, because OPSEU well knows, that there will be a modest implication on OPSEU jobs, that there will be in the change of—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: With all due respect to the honourable member, you were closing it and wiping out 12 jobs. The changes we've made will cause dislocation for three individuals. What we're in a position, therefore, to be able to do is—this government, operating within the fiscal challenge, takes every opportunity we can to direct every penny that we can to the precious services that Ontarians require. We've been able to make an amendment to the plans from the previous government to keep this function alive and make sure it provides exactly the

same benefit it always has to the municipalities all across the province of Ontario.

TRAFFIC SIGNAL

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a question to the Minister of Transportation and it involves a very serious safety problem in my riding of Simcoe-Grey. I've raised this matter in this House before. In fact, when I raised it last week, you said no to me within an hour of me getting back to the office after raising it in this House, and that is the issue of the need for traffic signals at the entrance to the Nottawasaga Inn and the Green Briar housing development on Highway 89 east of Alliston in the town of New Tecumseth.

It's a very serious matter. Someone's going to get killed because the residents of Green Briar, of which there are several hundred, most of them senior citizens, can't get out, particularly around 3 o'clock each day when over 2,000 cars are going in each direction, so 4,000 cars around 3 o'clock each day when Honda just up the road changes shifts. You can't get out of the driveway to turn east or west without the possibility of getting killed.

So I ask you, Minister, since you said no last week, will you come with me, will you stand in the middle of the intersection at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and see if you don't fear for your own safety? Come on with me to my riding.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I'm glad he was there counting cars. I will direct my staff to evaluate the situation. We are concerned about the safety situation and, if it is warranted, we will be more than pleased to install lights.

Mr Wilson: Your staff have already evaluated. In fact, your staff, your regional managers, the Honourable Frank Klees when Frank was minister back in June of last year, made the announcement at the Nottawasaga Inn that lights would be installed. Two weeks ago in the local paper, your regional Ministry of Transportation officials told reporters they had set aside \$80,000 for the lights, that they'd like to go ahead and do the lights.

Something happened since you guys came into office. You cancelled the lights, yet you haven't told your regional staff. They think they're still going to put the lights up. An hour after I raised this in this House last week, you sent me a letter saying no. Either you don't know what's going on in your ministry or you don't care about the safety of my constituents.

Someone's going to get killed. Two people got killed just a kilometre west of this location last year, two employees of the Nottawasaga Inn. Will you change your mind and say yes? If not, will you come with me any day of the week, around 3 o'clock, and see the thousands of cars and see what a safety issue this is for my constituents?

Hon Mr Takhar: When their government was in power, they determined that the traffic light was not

required. What I'm saying is that I will direct the ministry to redo the count, and if it is required, we will do it.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I have a question for the Minister of Health, but first I would like to thank him for coming to the Trillium Hospital and not only complimenting them but rewarding the Trillium Hospital with a cheque for best practices. It meant a lot to Mississauga South.

As you know, Ontario will be hosting a conference on tobacco control. In the past, junior representatives from tobacco companies have attended without much fanfare. This year, however, registrations started coming in, and many were surprised with the high number of senior executives from tobacco companies who registered to attend. Many people, including presenters, are arguing that the intent of the conference will be compromised and they have apparently started threatening to pull out. What message does it send to have executives from tobacco companies attending a provincially subsidized conference on tobacco control?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Similar to the question from the previous member, when I took on responsibility as Minister of Health, I found this incredible situation had occurred where the former minister had given direction to the ministry officials that they were to allow tobacco industry executives to be in attendance at those conferences where strategies were to be developed for the fight against tobacco.

I sent a letter to Mr Mel Martin, chair of the organizing committee, that said, in part, "I want to assure you that I recognize the committee's authority to make decisions" but that, "I would encourage the conference organizing committee to deregister tobacco industry representatives and I would ask that you fill the same spots with youth who are committed to the fight against smoking." And I'm very pleased today to say that the organizing committee did just that. Tobacco representatives will not be in place at the Ontario Tobacco Control Conference.

Mr Peterson: The public knows your commitment to make Ontarians the healthiest Canadians. You have an opportunity to send a message about our government's commitment to public health. What are you going to do to ensure that senior executives from tobacco companies do not attend the Tobacco Control Conference 2004?

Hon Mr Smitherman: As a result of the work that we've taken today, I can assure all members of the House that they won't. Further, I'm pleased to say that today I had the opportunity to speak at the Empire Club. I reached out and said to Ontarians that we need to start a revolution where people take back their own health, where they begin to make those small steps every single day in their life: one more set of stairs, five fewer cigarettes, lose a pound or two, do all that you can, and commit to the theme of continuous improvement. I think

continuous improvement is exactly the right theme for a government that is committed to continuously improving the quality of health care in Ontario.

PETITIONS

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I would like to include, again, several hundred more petitions that Joan Faria from Hamilton has been soliciting from seniors across the GTA.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protection for our senior citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes in Ontario."

I have attached my signature in support as well.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Petitions? I don't know how we'll go here because we have so many people standing. Member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have the greatest respect for the motion you just made.

My petition—I wish the Minister of the Environment were here listening. Well, she is here. I hope she's listening.

"This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Durham riding have raised concerns over the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids;

"Whereas Bill 149 was introduced by Durham MPP John O'Toole to regulate the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids, including paper sludge;

"Whereas Bill 149 would require that no person shall spread sewage sludge or other biosolids without a certificate of approval or provisional certificate of approval from the director;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to" immediately "pass Bill 149 to amend the Environmental Assessment Act and add the" new "relevant section regarding the spreading and storage of sewage sludge."

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of Deb Vice, Martin Feaver and the other members of my riding.

1500

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm pleased to present a petition from over 1,200 students from St Peter

High School in my neighbourhood of Fallingbrook in Ottawa-Orléans.

“Whereas the city of Ottawa has been smoke-free since August 2001; and

“Whereas we, the students of St Peter High School in Ottawa, think that all of the people of Ontario deserve to be protected from tobacco smoke;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to pass legislation without delay to make the whole province smoke-free in all public and work places.”

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by 1,600 of my residents.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

“Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

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

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

RENT BANK PROGRAMS

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas secure and stable housing is fundamental to the well-being of individuals and families; and

“Whereas communities cannot thrive unless they meet the basic needs of their citizens; and

“Whereas the previous government ignored the concerns of tenants;

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

“To support the McGuinty government’s plan to establish and expand rent bank programs across the province, in order to protect those that, due to an emergency, cannot meet their rent payments;

“To introduce real tenant protection legislation that will protect tenants from excessive rent increases.”

RIGHT TO LIFE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I’ve been asked to present this petition by Mr Colum Tingle, on behalf of residents of Parkdale-High Park. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the right to life is guaranteed unless limits to it are prescribed by law (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, sections 7 and 1);

“Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to the government of Ontario, the Legislature of Ontario and all matters within the authority of the Legislature of Ontario, (section 32.1), including the regulation of the practice of pharmacy;

“Whereas the right to live is limitless in that neither case law nor statute law prescribes limits to the right of life;

“Whereas drugs, health care aids and devices whose purpose is the limitation of the right to life are provided through members of the Ontario College of Pharmacists;

“Whereas honouring the guarantee of the rights and freedoms of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is in the public interest;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

“To call on the government of Ontario to require, in the public interest, the council of the Ontario College of Pharmacists to make a regulation to prohibit pharmacists keeping, compounding and dispensing drugs or providing health care aids and devices whose intended use is limiting the right to life unless appropriate limits to the right to life are prescribed by law.”

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

“Whereas the majority of seniors, many of which live on a fixed income, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

“Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make the choice between eating and filling a prescription;

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

“To cancel any plans to raise costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medication more affordable for Ontarians.”

It’s signed by several hundred people from my riding, and I affix my signature.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have another series of petitions; we’re up to over 2,500 at this point.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit pro-

gram for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors; and

“Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

“Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report’s strong support for a national drug program;

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

“To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

“To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

“To instruct Premier McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more funding from seniors.”

And this has my support as well.

RECREATIONAL TRAILERS

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): I’m pleased to present a petition primarily to the Minister of Finance, but to the House today. It’s probably the largest petition I’ve ever had.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, MPAC, and are subject to property taxes; and

“Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local economy through tourism, without requiring significant municipal services; and

“Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds” throughout Ontario;

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

“That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders.”

I’m pleased to endorse this on behalf of the many people looking forward to affordable vacations this summer.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the residents Wasaga Beach, wish to bring forth our concerns regarding the transfer of

approximately 5,700 tonnes of 14-year-old sludge, which contains metals from the North Simcoe transfer station, to our recently closed landfill site. To date, there are no EBR requirements for hauled sewage.

“Due to this and the geography of the Wasaga Beach site being so close to the longest freshwater beach in the world and other sensitive areas, there exists a threat to the environment and the public’s health. The questionable product should be moved to a desolate location. Once damaged, the environment and people cannot be replaced;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: To stop the sludge from being transferred to Wasaga Beach.”

I’m a resident of Wasaga Beach, and I support my constituents with this petition.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): I just happen to have another petition of thousands, I might say, that the people of Durham have confidence I will present to the House on their behalf.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in Ontario adopted adults are denied a right available to all non-adoptees; that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin; and

“Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

“Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact revisions of the Child and Family Services Act and to other acts to:

“Permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information;

“Permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person’s amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18;

“Permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children;

“Allow adopted persons with birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; and

“Replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling.”

I’m pleased to present this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

1510

LCBO OUTLET

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition for an LCBO agency store in Baxter.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages and to provide rural consumers with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services,

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter an LCBO agency store.”

I more than support this petition and sign it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): Our constituency office is always open to accept petitions from all concerned parties within Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s seniors have worked long and hard to build the outstanding quality of life the citizens of Ontario enjoy today; and

“Whereas seniors’ drug benefits enable older persons to lead healthier lives and avoid more complex care in hospitals and nursing homes; and

“Whereas in addition to their taxes, many seniors already contribute towards their prescription drugs through deductibles and dispensing fees; and

“Whereas the vast majority of seniors face increasing costs on fixed pensions and cannot afford to see their incomes eroded further;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not eliminate or reduce the provincial drug benefits provided to seniors.”

I’m pleased to present this on behalf of the constituents of Durham.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

“Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

“Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O’Connor’s report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

“Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources.”

I’m pleased to sign that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY DISCLOSURE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA DIVULGATION
DES TRAITEMENTS
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 31, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 15, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 15, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to Bill 15.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent as the House leader requested? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that Bill 15 be immediately called for second reading and that the bill proceed in such a manner that one member for the NDP be allowed to speak for up to 20 minutes with no questions or comments, and following this speech the question on second reading be immediately put, that the order for third reading be immediately called and the question on third reading be immediately put without debate or amendment and that any bells be limited to five minutes.

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

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Let me say that the reason I want to speak to this legislation

is that there's a bit of history here. The government of the day wants to claim credit now for exposing the fact that salaries, bonuses and insider contracts at Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One have gone through the roof. Of course, they will point to the previous government and say it's all their fault.

I just want to, as I say, refer to a bit of history. The former government decided that they were going to privatize Ontario's hydro system, and so they brought forward an act in 1998 called the Electricity Act. The Electricity Act basically made it clear that Ontario Power Generation was going to be privatized and Hydro One was going to be privatized. Their view was that this would lead us into a new era of lower-priced electricity and a greater security of supply of electricity. It was going to clean up our air and it was basically going to resolve any problems that we might have in terms of a looming energy shortage.

I just want to remind people that four years later—well, now it's six years later—here we are. If you check your hydro bill and compare it with what it was four years ago, the hydro bill has doubled now. The electricity shortage is worse than ever. Yes, the air in southern Ontario is dirtier than ever. And oh, yes, the lights went out. That's how successful this privatization strategy was.

Now we find, and it's disclosed almost every day, that there were a whole bunch of insiders who were indeed lined up at the trough ready to fill their pockets. We've had examples of people making \$4 million or \$5 million on insider contracts. In fact, the dream team that was hired for the restoration of Pickering A made off with \$40 million over a period of about two years and then left town, and left, obviously, an inadequate or bad job in their wake.

What I want people to notice is that in fact it was not just Conservatives who voted for this; Liberals voted for this as well. The very government that now wants to somehow take credit and say that they're cleaning up things was very much in favour of this exact privatization. In fact, I have a few quotes.

This is one quote from Dalton McGuinty. What did Mr McGuinty have to say? Well, in February 2001 he said, just like the Conservatives, "We believe you've got to go toward deregulation. That's the way to bring this thing to heel. That's the way to introduce real competition."

Then, in October 2001, Mr McGuinty said, "Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario."

In December 2001, when someone named Mike Harris announced that he was going to privatize not only Ontario Power Generation but Hydro One, Mr McGuinty said, "I think that it's important that we move ahead with competition, both in terms of generation and in terms of transmission."

In May 2002, when the deregulated market opened, Mr McGuinty said, "My party supports competition in the generation of electricity."

So it's very clear that it wasn't just Conservatives who were all in favour of creating a privatized electricity system; it was Liberals as well. Now, I suppose some are going to argue that they didn't know that as an offshoot of this move to privatization, a whole bunch of people were going to be lined up at the trough hoping to cash in, because that's clearly what happened. If you look at the contract with, for example, Graham Brown, who was the chief operating officer at Ontario Power Generation, part of his contract was that when privatization occurred, he was going to get a whole bunch of shares at a very low price. In other words, he was going to be able to cash in. And if for some reason privatization didn't happen, he would get a \$1-million bonus: very clear. Here was an insider who was all prepared to cash in on the privatization of our hydroelectricity system. Very clear: If you look at some of the memos that were floating around, memos from inside the former government's offices involving some of the consultants, what they were proposing in the privatization was to sell shares in Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One at much below value, so that the insiders who got their hands on it would overnight potentially make millions of dollars, if not tens of millions of dollars, not because they had done anything particularly brilliant but had literally walked in and picked the public's pocket.

1520

I suppose Liberals will say, "Well, we had no idea this might happen." Let me just say that if Liberals had done their research, if they had looked at what happened under the privatizations of Margaret Thatcher in Britain, they would have known immediately this was going to happen.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Maurice Strong.

Hon Mr Duncan: Maurice Strong.

Mr Hampton: The Liberals want to talk about that good Liberal Maurice Strong. Yes, I would be happy to talk about that good Liberal Maurice Strong, who proposed privatization between 1990 and 1995 and was shot down, was told it was not on.

If Liberals had even taken a second to look at what happened with the privatization of hydroelectricity in Great Britain, what they would have found was that as the government of the day there set the British electrical system up for privatization, a whole bunch of insiders, a whole bunch of corporate executives immediately set themselves up to purchase shares at far below their value and overnight became multi-millionaires. That's exactly what happened in Britain. In fact, it was so serious in Britain that when the Labour government was elected, they imposed a \$6-billion excess profit tax on the recently privatized hydroelectric utilities.

What was being lined up here in Ontario, the \$2-million contract, the \$2-million salary for Eleanor Clitheroe—as a publicly owned entity, her salary at Hydro One was \$500,000. As soon as the government said, "Move to privatization," salary and bonuses bumped up to \$2.2 million, plus the \$1-million-a-year

pension, plus the \$6-million severance allowance, plus the \$173,000-a-year car allowance, the \$330,000-a-year limousine allowance, the housing allowance, and oh, yes, the yacht.

That was all expected. If you followed what had happened in Great Britain, if you followed what had happened in New Zealand, this is very much part of what happens when an essential service everyone needs is turned over to profit-driven private corporations that really couldn't care less about the quality of service people get, and frankly, couldn't care less how high the hydro bill is driven up. They simply want to make a lot of money. That's what happened in Britain, what happened in New Zealand, and we see all the evidence now in Ontario.

I just want to remind all the members of the Liberal government, this is as much your action, this is as much your program as it was the program of the previous Conservative government. In this Legislature, when the electricity privatization, the electricity competition act came up for a vote, you voted with the Conservatives. When you were asked for your position, time and time again your position was the same as the Conservatives. You were in favour of privatization, you were in favour of deregulation, and you saw the open electricity market and the privatization that went along with it as an excellent idea.

So if I were you, I would perhaps quiet your voices a bit, as you try to take credit for this salary disclosure bill, because all you are disclosing is in fact the very mistake you made by supporting something that's been a failure in Great Britain, New Zealand, California and Montana, and even creates all kinds of problems in Alberta for Ralph Klein.

I just want to make a couple of further comments. I notice over the past couple of months, as all of the debris of privatization, all of the at-the-trough episodes of hydro privatization, have come before the public, every once in a while somebody puts a microphone in front of the Minister of Energy's face and says to him, "Are you going to stop privatization? Does this rule out further privatization?" And—surprise, surprise—does he say no? Does he say, "There will be no further privatization"? Does he say that any further privatization, any further feeding at the trough, is going to be stopped? No, he doesn't.

In fact, what we saw in the announcement that was made last week by the Minister of Natural Resources—just as the Conservatives were going to take the good potential water hydroelectricity sites on crown land and put them up for privatization, just as the former Conservative government was going to privatize the best wind-power opportunities on public land, on crown land, what did the Liberals announce? They're privatizing it too. Those sites, and especially the water sites, which have the potential to develop hydroelectricity at a very low cost, are going to be turned over to profit-driven corporations—exactly as the Conservatives said, exactly as the Conservatives did and exactly as the Conservatives were prepared to do in the future.

I say to people at home, what does this mean for you? There's a very good example with four of the hydro dams that were privatized by the Conservatives. Four hydro dams on the Mississagi River, between Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie, in north-eastern Ontario, were in effect sold by the former Conservative government to a private company, Brascan. They were sold for a price far less than they were worth. Then, when the market was opened, when we moved unfortunately to deregulation, electricity that cost a little more than half a cent a kilowatt hour to produce at those hydro stations—suddenly the public was paying six, seven, eight cents a kilowatt hour. You, the public, were paying 10 times what it cost to produce that electricity. That's how the hydro bill can double. That's how the hydro bill can go through the roof.

One would have thought that if the Liberals were really concerned about protecting the public, about ensuring that the public was not going to be paying 10 and 15 times what it costs to produce the electricity, they would have said, "Not only will no other water sites be privatized, but those four that were sold off for a song will be brought back into public not-for-profit operation." They haven't done any of that.

To put this in context for people—think for a moment—if it cost General Motors \$5,000 to produce a car and then they said to you, "But we'll only sell you the car if you pay \$50,000," just about everyone would say, "That's a rip-off. I shouldn't be paying 10 times what it cost to produce the car." But that is exactly what is happening with a lot of the hydroelectric power that is now being produced in the province since it's been privatized and that's exactly what Liberals are prepared to allow to happen even more.

What does this mean to the average person? It means the hydro bill continues to skyrocket. It means we're being set up for more and more announcements of 10%, 20%, 30% increases in hydroelectricity rates.

1530

I say to the government, I say to the Minister of Energy, while this legislation is needed to repair some of the damage that was done by hydro privatization, some of the damage that you supported, that you voted for, that you spoke in favour of, and some of the damage you're now prepared to be even more complicit in, if you look at the record; while this bill may—may—repair a little bit of the damage, it frankly doesn't go nearly far enough. Simply disclosing that a whole bunch of people were lined up to make a lot of money, a lot of inside money, as a result of the privatization of an essential service that everybody in the province needs and that everybody needs every day, simply disclosing that that was going to happen, isn't enough. If you were truly interested in defending consumers in this province, in ensuring that industry and business have affordable supplies of electricity and sustainable supplies of electricity, you'd be doing much more. You would be stopping the open market; you would be shutting down that open market. You would be saying to the Brascans of Ontario, "Here, we're going to refund the money that you paid for the

four dams on the Mississagi River, but those dams are now coming back under public control and they are going to provide electricity at cost," not at 10 times what it costs, which is what's happening now. You would not be setting up the best remaining hydro sites on crown land for privatization. You would not be taking the best wind power sites on crown land and setting those up for privatization. But that is exactly what is happening.

Just one final point, some at home may be wondering, "Why would so many within OPG and Hydro One be offered such bonuses and such substantial increases in their salaries?" It works like this: There were a lot of people within Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation who said very clearly, "Privatization is wrong; deregulation is wrong. It is going to drive up people's hydro bills. It is going to result in situations where a lot of people won't be able to pay the hydro bill. It is going to cause considerable pain for small businesses and industries that have to have an affordable, reliable supply of electricity." And do you know what those people were told? Again, this was all repeated in Great Britain. They were told, "Keep quiet, don't say anything, don't raise a fuss, and if you don't raise a fuss, there will be some money in it for you."

That's exactly what happened. With some people it happened in terms of lucrative inside contracts. In terms of the Graham Browns of the world, they got contracts which said, "When privatization occurs, you'll get all kinds of stock at a grossly reduced price. You'll be made into a multi-millionaire overnight." Other people who were maybe not in the executive positions were simply told, "If you keep quiet and don't oppose privatization and deregulation, there will be some money in it for you too." That's clearly what was going on. That's what happened in Great Britain, that's what happened in New Zealand, and that's clearly what was scheduled to happen here.

I simply hand a challenge to the Minister of Energy. You've had six months now where you've been able to sort of spin the media by blaming it on the Conservatives, but in the next couple of weeks you have to be very clear about how you're now going to handle the challenge. You have to be very clear on where the new supplies are coming from; you have to be very clear on issues of pricing. You finally have to put forward a plan on how you propose to close the five coal-fired stations, because we haven't heard that plan yet. In fact, what we've seen is a lot of fiddling while coal burns. So while this is a minor step that discloses some of the damage that was done by privatization and much more damage that would happen if privatization continued, it is not nearly enough, not nearly enough to protect the interests of consumers and protect the public of Ontario with this essential service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Mr Duncan has moved second reading of Bill 15, An Act to

amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY DISCLOSURE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA DIVULGATION
DES TRAITEMENTS
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr Duncan moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 15, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate?

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

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

HEALTH INFORMATION
PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information / Projet de loi 31, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la protection des renseignements sur la santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Mr Smitherman has moved second reading of Bill 31.

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

The Acting Speaker: Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the bill be sent to the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker: The bill is referred to the standing committee on general government.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Duncan has move adjournment of the House.

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

This House stands adjourned until Tuesday at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1537.

ERRATA

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