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(Hansard)**

Thursday 18 November 2004

Jeudi 18 novembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 novembre 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROVINCIAL STATUTORY HOLIDAY

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario shall declare the first Monday in August a provincial statutory holiday to be called Ontario Day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Colle has moved ballot item number 39. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Colle, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr Colle: First of all, Mr Speaker, I just want to inform you and all the members of the House that I've placed on your desks an Ontario road map for your convenience, not only during this debate. I think it's a good resource to have in our desks, because as you know, when issues come up in the Legislature, there are different communities named that we may not be familiar with. So I think it's very good and useful to look up on the map and see where these communities are that are named in the House, because some of us may be from parts of Ontario that are far away from communities named in the Lake of the Woods area. So I think it's a good idea to have one.

By the way, the first thing I noticed on the Ontario map that was given is that it mentions Pancake Bay Provincial Park, and I said, "I don't know where Pancake Bay Provincial Park is. I wonder where it is and if someone can inform me."

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): There's life beyond the GTA.

Mr Colle: Exactly. I think that's what this resolution today is about. It's about making us, as Ontarians, become more aware of the wonderful regions we have in this province—the communities, the cities, the towns, our provincial parks—so that we can celebrate these regions, celebrate the local history, celebrate the local heroes. It's an opportunity, really, for us to complement what exists already in many communities.

As you know, the August 1 long weekend has many names. If you asked people on the street, anywhere in Ontario, you would probably get a variety of different comments on what it's called. To most people it's probably known as the August 1 long weekend. But if you went to Windsor, it's known as Emancipation Day. If you come to Toronto, it's known as Simcoe Day. In

Burlington, it's Joseph Brant Day. In Brantford, it's Founders' Day. In Oshawa, city council passed a resolution to call it McLaughlin Day. In Ottawa, it's Colonel By Day—this is the August 1 long weekend. In Sarnia, it's Alexander Mackenzie Day. In Cobourg, for instance, it's James Cockburn Day. I think that by giving this August long weekend a focus and calling it Ontario Day, we can complement the existing local holidays and give them more profile, and make Ontarians become more involved in celebrating their local history, more involved in inviting people to visit different parts of Ontario during that long weekend in August, not only people from across Ontario, but maybe our visitors to the south or our friends and neighbours in other provinces, who would be welcome to come to Ontario and share in the spectacular parts of Ontario.

Whether you want to experience the majestic beauty of the Muskokas, the Agawa Canyon, the wonderful area in the far eastern part of Ontario, which is bounded by the Ottawa River and the St Lawrence River, the Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry area, which has some of the oldest communities in Ontario, like Alexandria and Hawkesbury, or whether you go to the far north and want to visit the majestic beauty of the James Bay basin, there are limitless opportunities for Ontarians to partake in these wonderful regions. It's not only uplifting as part of the cultural or historical perspective; there's also great economic benefit by promoting visits, by promoting tourism. Because the reality is that if we don't promote Ontario ourselves, if we don't promote our own communities, who will? If we, as a government, or we, as legislators, don't promote the wonderful things that exist in Ontario, there's no way that our children will ever appreciate the beauties of Manitoulin Island, the spectacular Great Lakes, the North Shore of Superior.

The Speaker himself represents maybe one of the most spectacular birdwatching areas in the world: Point Pelee and Pelee Island. People all over the world come to Pelee Island because it has an incredible, spectacular event every year in May when people see birds that are rare, and, again, memorable. In fact, it was mentioned that the fastest-growing recreational activity in Canada is actually birdwatching, believe it or not. So whether you want to be into birdwatching, or into whitewater rafting in the Ottawa Valley up by Killaloe, there are incredible opportunities for Ontarians or visitors to celebrate the wonderful beauties of this province.

1010

In this act, what I'm trying to do is essentially say we have to start to celebrate, promote and bring focus to

these incredible, diverse regions of this province so that they're preserved and protected, but also enjoyed. It brings local economic benefit. It brings, as I say, cultural benefit. It brings a focus. We as Ontarians perhaps don't do enough of that for our own province. Perhaps, during this August 1 long weekend, whether it be with the provincial government or the Ministry of Tourism, we should partner with local communities to undertake exciting events or celebrations of these wonderful component parts of this province.

We hear of all kinds of people, during the summer now, travelling south to Florida. Perhaps we should be saying, "During that August 1 long weekend, stay in Ontario. Travel to different parts of this province and get to know the wonderful people and communities and also the wonders of nature that exist, our provincial parks." Algonquin provincial park is bigger than most European countries. We as Ontarians perhaps take that for granted.

Look at the lake regions, whether it's the Kawarthas, an hour's drive from Toronto. Why go across the border when you can spend a spectacular week or weekend in the Kawarthas, Lake Simcoe region, the Collingwood area or Georgian Bay? Or, if you want, as I've said, travel down to the southernmost part of Canada toward Lake Erie, and you can go to Port Stanley. You can go to the St Catharines area. We hear all kinds of talk about the Napa Valley. We have something comparable in the Niagara region here, some of the finest agricultural lands with spectacular places to visit. Niagara Falls is an international landmark to celebrate.

My attempt here with this resolution is just to say that we have to perhaps be more focused, more aggressive in terms of trying to market, if you like. I know sometimes it's a word we don't like to use with our province, but we've got to market this wonderful legacy we've been left stewards of. I think we owe it to the ones who came before us, whether it was a John Graves Simcoe, the great pioneers who established this wonderful province, to continue to nourish it and appreciate it.

I really think most of us do not appreciate or celebrate the greatness of this province. It's nothing that's man-made, necessarily; it's something that has been given to us by nature. We can stand up to anyone or any part of North America certainly, or the world, in terms of our natural wonders, beauties and recreational pursuits.

So by declaring this day—by the way, the technicality is that it's not even a statutory holiday, and everybody assumes it is, although for the most part, people do get the day off. But it's not a statutory holiday, and we have so few of them to begin with.

Hopefully, we can give it more profile. We can start to become a bit excited about this weekend, and just maybe learn from the Americans. Look what they do with Thanksgiving weekend. It's a huge holiday that not only lets Americans sit down and celebrate their families and give thanks, but it's a great boon to the economy. The greatest shopping weekend of the year is this Thanksgiving weekend in the United States.

I'm not saying we have to copy the Americans, but we have to start to wave our own flag a little bit. We have to

start to celebrate these immensely wonderful communities in this province, and maybe this is the day to do it, on the August 1 long weekend. Why not give it some focus and call it Ontario Day?

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I also, in the past, have called for a provincial statutory holiday and a renaming of the day. My approach is to recognize the history and the heritage and the progress of this great province of Ontario. I will remind members that there is a civic holiday celebrated by many on the date that this motion is proposing, and many refer to that holiday as Simcoe Day, the first Monday in August.

The mid-summer long weekend is a cherished institution for many. The first Monday of August is also known as Civic Holiday. It was instituted in Ontario 20 years ago and, prior to that, the first Monday in August for many had been known as Simcoe Day across much of Ontario. It's still known as that by many in Toronto and, obviously, in Simcoe county, by many in the town of Simcoe, down in Norfolk county, in my riding, again exemplifying the diversity within our province, in contrast to a move here for a one-size-fits-all solution.

In June 2000, I introduced a resolution in this House to reinstate the designation of Simcoe Day in honour of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe and his tremendous contributions to the creation of Ontario. I believed then, and I still believe, that restoring Simcoe Day would be a tribute to this person, one of the founders of Upper Canada.

I tabled my resolution on June 19, a day that seemed fitting. I had just joined a fellow Loyalist who celebrated Ontario's United Empire Loyalist Day here at Queen's Park. Oxford county resident Woody Lambe was seated in the gallery that day. He was dressed as Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe after participating in the UEL celebrations. I took the opportunity to introduce him to the Legislature as I put forward the resolution.

I'll open a few pages in the history books to give an idea of why people have honoured the memory of John Graves Simcoe for so many years on the first Monday of August. John Graves Simcoe was a British military officer appointed the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, in 1790. He was 38 years old at the time. He arrived in Upper Canada two years later. At that time, he was serving as a member of Parliament in the British House of Commons, the member for Cornwall. He'd been to North America previously as a colonel in the British army, fighting the American revolutionaries up until the early 1780s. At that time, he actively lobbied to become Upper Canada's Lieutenant Governor.

This was a man who threw himself into his work to establish Upper Canada. He studied the maps and decided the best site for the capital of Upper Canada would be on the River Thames, present-day London. He had to settle for the temporary capital at Newark—that would be Niagara-on-the-Lake—and eventually, as we know, the British government moved the capital here to York, also known as Toronto.

In Simcoe's six years as Lieutenant Governor, Upper Canada changed a great deal. In 1793, Simcoe brought in the first legislation in the British Empire to abolish slavery. As well, we recognize that Upper Canada only had a population of 10,000, mainly in the Bay of Quinte area, and needed settlers to foster the immigration of thousands of United Empire Loyalists from what is now the United States by ensuring that land was distributed to prospective farmers, cheaply and expeditiously.

Under Simcoe's direction, construction began on Yonge Street, the great link between York and Lake Simcoe. Yonge Street was designed for both commercial and military purposes. Lieutenant Governor Simcoe also established Dundas Street, the road, again, from the head of Lake Ontario to London, designed at that time as a military road.

Though some of his many projects were never realized, Simcoe's tenure as our Lieutenant Governor of the day is universally regarded as a success. He imparted optimism for the potential of Upper Canada, a potential that clearly has been realized today: Streets, bodies of water, a town, a county and many great monuments all bear his name. I believe it's important for us to remember our historical roots and celebrate Simcoe Day the first Monday of August.

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Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to speak on this issue today. First of all, I want to make reference to some of the comments that Mr Colle, in whose name this stands, made earlier. Let me say that for me the issue is not whether we rename what is customarily known as the Civic Holiday, the first Monday of August, as Ontario Day. I don't think that would be the issue for a majority of Ontarians. I think what the majority of Ontarians would indeed want is to have that off as a statutory holiday. Most people find themselves in the modern world today working longer and harder for less, and finding time to be with your family, finding time where you can actually have a weekend, is becoming increasingly a pressing issue for more and more Ontarians.

I want to offer some proposals for Mr Colle that might actually make this more meaningful. If the provincial government said, for example, that on the weekend of Ontario Day, Ontario residents would have free access to the provincial parks of Ontario, that would make this a real celebration. If the goal is to keep more Ontarians in Ontario and to help them celebrate this occasion, then I think two things are necessary: This must be a civic holiday and must be entrenched in the Employment Standards Act as a civic holiday, and the province should promote it further by saying that all Ontarians, regardless of income—Ontarians who live in downtown Toronto and who are struggling on a modest income—will have free access for the weekend to provincial parks. Then we would have real recognition, real celebration. We would really be doing something meaningful.

So I say to the member, I wish him good fortune with this. But I say particularly to government members, if you really want to get behind this, there are two things

that need to happen: This must be entrenched as a real holiday, a statutory holiday—it must be recognized in the Employment Standards Act—and the province will need to take some additional steps to ensure this is not just superficial, that it becomes really meaningful for working families across this province.

But I say to the member, why stop here? I listened very carefully to what you said about the United States. Having gone to school and lived in the United States for a while, I know what a huge holiday Thanksgiving is. In fact, in many American states Thanksgiving is actually a bigger holiday than Christmas. What I want people to note is that it's not just one day for Americans. In fact, they work it so that it is a four- or five-day holiday. When I was going to university in the United States, classes ended on Tuesday afternoon and you were gone Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. That was the Thanksgiving break. So if we really want to make this into something and if we really want to give a sense to people that we take statutory holidays more seriously and we really want to provide people with this opportunity, that's another step that needs to be taken. Let's really turn it into a long weekend. If we're really going to celebrate Ontario's heritage, if we're really going to celebrate Ontario as a place to come to, a place to visit, a place to grow, and if we want to refer to the American experience with Thanksgiving, then I suggest there needs to be a further add-on as well. Then you've got something.

Let me take it one step further. The member referred to the United States, and I listened to and agree with his arguments with respect to the American recognition of statutory holidays. The United States has far more statutory holidays than we have. If you add them up, there's Lincoln's day, Washington's day, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, Independence Day—

Mr Colle: Columbus Day.

Mr Hampton: Yes, and it goes on. My suggestion, because I think part of this—and I heard your words—is that we want people to be able to appreciate what we have to offer here, we should not stop here. We should probably add another statutory holiday. If you want to add that statutory holiday on to the Ontario Day weekend, I think I could support that. If you want to add that statutory holiday into the January-February doldrums, when many working families feel they are especially working longer and harder for less—and if you happen to live in the Toronto area, you don't see the sun for two months; what you see are basically clouds for two months—I would support that, because I think that kind of idea is long overdue.

For those people who say, "Oh, this would be a drag on the economy," go to the United States and try to advance that argument, that it's a drag on the economy that you celebrate these many and diverse statutory holidays. You'd be laughed out of the country.

I say to Mr Colle and to others who have spoken in favour of this, this is an excellent idea, but I think you're being a little too modest. If we really want to do this and

do it right, we need to build in three or four add-ons. Then we'd have something that Ontarians would celebrate. Not only would Ontarians celebrate it, but I think you can make it into the kind of thing where people would want to come from elsewhere to take part.

I speak as someone who lives in a community where half a million Americans cross the border to come to Ontario every year between the months of May and September. Most of them come because they want to catch fish or they want to hunt moose or deer. They used to hunt bear, but that was taken care of by someone a while ago. So I speak as someone who knows that we have a lot here to attract people with, but we have never done enough as a province in terms of selling ourselves. This is an opportunity to sell ourselves. This is an opportunity to say, "Hey, this is the time to celebrate Ontario. This is going to be a four-day weekend. All Ontarians are going to take part, those with the highest incomes and those who are struggling on the lowest incomes. We're going to open up the provincial parks. We're going to have a heck of a celebration. Come on over." In the United States, they say, "Come on down." We should say, "Come on over."

Mr Colle: "Come on up."

Mr Hampton: I say to the member who brought this forward, I'll support this, but I hope you'll recognize in the comments I've made that there are other things we need to do. If we acknowledge that this is something that works in the American culture, we should go further in terms of establishing other statutory holidays in Ontario. It would be good for working families, it would be good for the economy, and it would give us this further sense that we have something to celebrate.

I look forward to some of the further discussions. I know one of my colleagues may want to speak on this a little more in a few minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member from—

Interjection: Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

The Deputy Speaker: Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I couldn't get that started for some reason.

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Yes, a tourist destination.

Let me say it is a great honour for me to stand this morning to speak on this bill in support of the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, Mr Colle. I think he is absolutely right that the Civic Holiday weekend in August should be a statutory holiday. It should contain many of the provisions and many of the items that the honourable member from Kenora-Rainy River just mentioned.

I was sitting here and was looking over to Mr Colle, and I saw Mr Colle shaking his head as words were expressed about making it a full statutory holiday for all Ontarians, making it a chance for all Ontarians to take part in the culture, the heritage, the natural beauty of our province. There are opportunities, and I think this bill will give the Legislature and those who work here the opportunity of pursuing chances to provide for those who want to get out to celebrate.

1030

I want to say too that I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre, my seatmate, and I know she will bring a wonderful perspective to this debate.

I spent many, many years in the riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and in particular my community of South Stormont, formerly the township of Cornwall, working in history and heritage, to the point that this year I had the opportunity of introducing my own bill for another statutory holiday called Heritage Day. I continue to support that. But as a former president of three historical societies in my area, I would promote and hold on a pedestal any opportunities we have in this province of promoting what we have: our natural beauty, our built heritage, our cultural heritage.

I think that's exactly what the member from Eglinton-Lawrence has done here today. He has presented us with the opportunity of declaring that this day in August will be Ontario Day. It will be a statutory holiday, with all the rights and privileges for all Ontarians, and it will also be a chance to get out and celebrate. We had a wonderful ride just a few moments ago by the honourable member of what to see around this province: the beauty, the heritage and whatnot. I've tried to do that in eastern Ontario since I arrived here in the House and in my work previous to arriving here, to let people know that Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and the great Glengarry county have much to offer along the line of tourist attractions, historical sites—the most historic site in Ontario, in my opinion, the inn built by the first Premier of this province at St Andrews West, and also his burial site within close proximity to that first inn he built in our municipality in 1865.

It's an opportunity to give people a chance to get out there to learn about what Ontario has to offer, to first of all explore and then to move around to places such as Pancake Bay Provincial Park. Certainly I have no idea where Pancake Bay Provincial Park is, nor does the honourable member from Eglinton-Lawrence. But when you look at this map and see this beautiful lake—the word "Ontario" celebrates water. When you take a look at the word "Ontario," from the Iroquois words—I discovered there were three words: "kanadario," meaning sparkling or beautiful water, "onitariio," meaning beautiful lake, and "skanadario," meaning very pretty lake. But they all refer back to water. When you look at a mid-summer holiday, what, on a hot summer day, attracts people? A beautiful lake, a beautiful river. Ontario is surrounded by water. When you take a trip around Ontario, down the St Lawrence River, up the Ottawa River, around to James Bay and the basins into James Bay, over to Rainy River, Lake of the Woods, down to Superior, through the Great Lakes back to the St Lawrence, the province is totally surrounded by those beautiful lakes and rivers.

This is what was celebrated by our First Nations community, the opportunity to have a word that relates back to what they saw as beauty in our province, and this

is what we want to do for Ontarians. First of all, we want to create a holiday that is going to be a brand, with that wonderful word “Ontario,” and is going to be an opportunity for every one of us, no matter what walk of life, to take that day off, supported by the rights and privileges of a statutory holiday.

All our communities have much to celebrate. I had some notes here that in 1869, Toronto city council originated a midsummer holiday for a day of recreation. This is what we want. This is exactly what we wish to celebrate with this holiday.

So it's wonderful to have had words here in the House today from the opposition parties saying they will support it but wish us to take a broader look at what we can put into this day, what we can celebrate, what we can provide in opportunities for people. I, too, wish the same thing. I wish the people the opportunity of going out and celebrating beside our lakes and rivers, beside those tourist attractions that have been built on water, coming down to Upper Canada Village and walking through that village and touring those mills powered by water, coming into the city of Toronto and going to Black Creek Pioneer Village, where I've had the opportunity of taking many, many students to visit in my teaching career, to see turbines driven by water and celebrating culture and history and heritage. That's what we want.

I'm delighted today and very pleased that I've had the opportunity to rise and speak on this bill. Some may say it's not the most important bill in the province. Maybe not. But it's going to be important for all Ontarians as we celebrate our wonderful and diverse culture.

Mr Dunlop: I want to begin by thanking the member, Mr Colle, for providing us with these maps. I understand they're now three bucks apiece. I don't know where you got 100 of them, but I'd like to get 100 too, if anybody knows where you get them. They're great maps.

I've got to say up front to Mr Colle that the intent of your bill is great. Anything we can do—we've heard every speaker so far talk about our wonderful province, what a beautiful and wonderful province we have. My friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka and I have this debate about who has the best riding, the nicest riding. Of course the people from Muskoka always think his, and I think mine. We are very proud of our province, and we're proud of the fact that it's so diverse.

I have to tell a little story. The Severn River is in my riding; it's all part of the Trent-Severn system. The part that goes through my riding from Orillia to Georgian Bay is probably the most beautiful part of the Trent-Severn. It butts up against Mr Miller's riding as well. People from all over the world, actually, boat there. It's interesting, because a couple of years ago, when Jerry Ouellette, the member from Oshawa, was the Minister of Natural Resources, he asked me one time if I would like to do a trip to what he called Fort Severn. I called his office back and said, “It's not really important to me, but I think he's referring to Port Severn.” Port Severn is five minutes from my house, and I know Ms Cansfield and her

husband will very shortly be vacationing up there for a weekend.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): At your house?

Mr Dunlop: No, at Port Severn. Ms Cansfield and her husband and some friends are going to Port Severn, to a beautiful place called the Inn at Christie's Mill, which is actually in Mr Miller's riding, right at the borderline.

But the bottom line was that Mr Ouellette called back and said, “No, no. We mean Fort Severn. Get your map out.” Well, there is a Fort Severn, and you find it in either Mr Hampton's riding or Mr Bisson's riding, I think, but it's way, way, way up there. It takes forever to get to Fort Severn. There is a Severn River Provincial Park, I believe, in Mr Hampton's riding as well.

That just shows you—I guess many of us in this House have had the opportunity to travel to the north on committee hearings. Those are really the only opportunities I have had to get to the north. I've been to the Soo and North Bay and Sudbury and those kinds of places. But if you're from the far north, North Bay is considered southern Ontario. We consider it northern Ontario, but people in the north call it southern Ontario. It's just an amazing province, and I think we should all promote it to our friends and family and people who are from out of the country.

However, I know this is not a powerful bill and I think it's a good-intent bill, but I won't support it for a couple of reasons. One, I like the name Simcoe Day. Being from Simcoe county, being a former warden of the county of Simcoe and spending my whole life in Simcoe county, we're very proud of that day, very proud of the fact that Sir John Graves Simcoe was the founding Lieutenant General in our province's history. Up through Simcoe county and in the town of Simcoe, which is in the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant's riding, he has an incredible history. It's amazing, when you talk to historians, how important they believe that is. That's not to take away from the fact that other communities—I heard someone talk about Bytown and the other folks who have been famous throughout Ontario in different parts of the province. I would like to keep that open.

1040

But primarily why I can't support it—this is to Mr Colle—is because it's my understanding that currently it's not a statutory holiday. In the past, I was a small business person—I don't do much business today—and I have a number of colleagues. During the years I spent in business, it's just one more added cost to operating a business. A lot of people already pay for the day. People will pay for what we call a civic holiday or Simcoe Day, but for a lot of people in small business, that's one more cost added to the cost of operating a business. I can't support anything that will add additional costs or taxes to our small business operators in the province.

In a lot of cases, weekends during June, July, August and September are very important for our small business operators right across the province, primarily in central Ontario. In Haliburton and Muskoka, Georgian Bay

township, all through Simcoe county, these are very important weekends. Those are their bread-and-butter weekends of the year. This coming Friday night I'm going to be out with friends I haven't seen in almost nine months, Ron and Cindee Breckbill, the owners of Severn Lodge up in Gloucester Pool. These people work seven days a week, 14 or 15 hours a day, during the summer months, and they don't need anything that would add expense to their businesses.

I can tell you that a lot of the businesses in our part of the province, particularly in the tourism industry, have no money flowing from Thanksgiving weekend to right around May 24. They have to make their money when times are good. I can't support anything that would add expense to that.

However, that being said, the concept is good, other than the fact—we got talking about the Americans. I know this government is on a path of what I call the Americanization of Ontario politics; it started last year or a couple of years back with Greg Sorbara's bill where he talked about four-year terms. Well, we've got that now. The Premier is committed to having four-year terms, at least while he's Premier. When John Tory becomes Premier, I don't know if he'll stick to the four-year terms or not. I consider that the Americanization of politics here in Ontario.

This is democratic renewal day. I'm amazed this has actually come up today. I know that the pit bull terrier Attorney General and democratic renewal minister is out there doing an announcement just this morning on democratic renewal. I'm very, very concerned about where this government is taking the province with the legislation they intend to introduce and what it means for the future of Ontario.

I'm going to say this on the record right now: I think Ontario, this wonderful province, has been served well by the parliamentary system we have today, and that's the British parliamentary system under the current rules, where the Premier in fact does call the election, where there is some questioning around the date of the election. Before we see any kind of democratic renewal in this province, I would like to see the lead be taken from the federal government. The system we have in Ontario has served Ontarians well. It's been a very, very stable system. When we start tinkering with things like the catchy term "democratic renewal," we have to be very careful what path we go down.

With that, I'm winding down. Again, I applaud the member for bringing it forward. The intent of the bill is good, but in my own personal opinion, I can't support it because of the impact it may have on the small business operators of our province.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak today.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I just want to say at the outset that I have no problem supporting this particular initiative. Quite frankly, most people in a unionized environment get the bank holiday or the Civic Holiday, as it's called, as a statutory holiday in their collective agreement. It just makes ultimate sense to me

that all workers in the province get the same opportunity as workers who happen to be lucky enough to have a union and have that in their collective agreement.

But this gives us an opportunity to have a bit of a discussion about the overall issue of how we remunerate workers when it comes to time off, pensions and all that kind of stuff. I've got to say, Canada and the United States are probably some of the worst, least progressive jurisdictions when it comes to how we deal with the whole issue of time off. Look at Europe, for example. In France and Italy, and even in England, which tends to be pretty conservative, Germany, certainly the Scandinavian countries, all the major industrial powers within Europe, if you take a look at their holiday system, they start off with four weeks for the first year of service. Here we are today in Ontario debating a bill that possibly will give non-unionized workers one day off, and we're worried about how it's going to kill business? Come on. Give me a break. The reality is that the largest economic engines in Europe come at this from a totally different perspective. They say, listen, it's to the advantage of the employer, the employee and society if we give people a reasonable amount of time off, a good chunk of time off every year so they can go out and recharge their batteries and come back to work more refreshed and able to do their jobs.

If you talk to industry—I told a story one time here in the Legislature that I thought it was kind of interesting. Some years ago, Trelleborg, a Finnish company, bought out what then was Kidd Creek Mines up in Timmins, and when we were having a discussion with the head of Trelleborg out of Finland, who had come to Timmins to meet with Warren Holmes, then the general manager and vice-president, I guess, of Kidd Creek, he couldn't believe how little holiday time workers were given. He just couldn't understand why management had not done something about making the benefit package more attractive to employees when it came to the issue of time off. It was really interesting to watch, because this guy was going, like, "Why wouldn't you do this? This makes absolutely no sense. Where I come from, this is just the norm." I think it's high time in this province and in this country that we have a discussion about how we deal with this in a statutory way, not that people go off and negotiate these things individually, and how we deal with this in a more progressive way.

For example, there are a number of things I would like to be able to talk about outside of this particular debate at one point if we're able to get into another debate. One is, let's look at statutory holidays that are more in sync with what we're seeing in Europe. It has been working there for many, many years. It's been very well received by both the employer community and certainly the employees. It has also done another thing: It has actually developed a very strong tourism industry in Europe by Europeans themselves travelling within the European continent. If you take a look at France, for example, for the month of July or the month of June—I forget which; I think it's July—basically most of the country is out on

holidays, and they're out holidaying somewhere in Europe.

Mr Colle: It's August, isn't it?

Mr Bisson: Is it August? I can't remember. I've been to Europe a number of times; I just don't remember which one it was. Anyway, the point is that people are out holidaying, which means they save up some dollars and they go travel somewhere, to some destination within Europe of interest to them. They bring their families and spend some money. It creates jobs in the tourism industry. It's not a bad thing, and I think here in Ontario we should be looking at how we are able within our own Ontario economy to encourage people to take holidays within Ontario.

One of the ways you do that is by encouraging people to take holidays, and one of the ways you can obviously do that is by changing the Employment Standards Act to provide for more holidays.

1050

The other issue I think we need to get our heads around is pensions. I realize this is not holidays, but I've got to say, aside from members' pensions—let's not go there. We know we have no pensions, and what a stupid thing Mike Harris did, but that's another story. The issue is that we should be encouraging a debate in this House about how we're able to work toward a defined pension program for all workers in the province. It only makes ultimate sense.

As we get older in our workplaces, especially if you work in a physically hard job, where you're challenged to do physical work—we should be trying to encourage employers, by way of legislation, to put in place defined benefit programs that basically say that at age 55 or age 57 a person is able to retire with an adequate amount of income, so that they can get away from that job that they may not feel like doing any more—or the employer wants to bring somebody new in.

You know, you can socialize the cost of that over a period of 30 years. It's not all that difficult to do. We may not be able to deal with it adequately for a person like me who's 47 years old. But certainly for those who are 20 or 30 years old in the workforce now, and for those coming in future years, you're able to develop, over a relatively short amount of time, a good pension system that would allow people to retire at a reasonable age.

I think that's something we should be striving for. I think the combination of giving people an ability to take a sufficient number of holidays so that they're able to rejuvenate themselves and go back to their employer and be more productive employees, as well as the offset benefit of allowing people to travel and support the tourism industry—then, top that all off by saying, "Let's find a way to get people to retire earlier, so that they're able to go out there and enjoy the latter part of their years"—a good 20 years after age 57, to travel and do the things that we want to do and be productive in our society in different ways—maybe working part-time or volunteering in our communities to do whatever.

I've got 20 seconds, and I've got to say this: I would also encourage all members of the assembly to look at the issue of pensions for members. I want to put it categorically on the record. I think it's nuts that members don't have pensions. Every worker in this province should be entitled to a pension. I don't understand why we take the position that we, because we're legislators, shouldn't have some form of defined benefit program when it comes to pensions. I would argue, put us into the OPS pension plan, along with every other provincial employee.

Interjections.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to be able to stand at this time, although maybe I should sit down until they finish speaking.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs Cansfield: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be able to stand in support of the motion that's been put forward by my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence.

I recently had an opportunity to meet with a friend who, when he first came a couple of years ago to Ontario, got out a map, one similar to the one that was given out this morning, and looked at it and said, "Oh, my heavens. I didn't realize Ontario was so big that it had to be on both sides." Actually, that's part of what we should think about: Ontario is the size of western Europe. It's that large, it's that diverse and it's that extraordinary.

If you've ever seen the picture North of Superior, you have an idea of the extraordinary majesty of the north, the fact that they have clean air and blue skies, the fact that you can actually hear birds and see birds that you can't see in other parts of the world. If you look to Sault Ste Marie, you'd find that there's a desert in the Sault. If you were to go to Tobermory, you'd find that there's a wind turbine. If you look to the hills and the valleys that are in southern Ontario, you would find our farms, the places where we can grow peaches and grapes because our weather is so mild. And then you can go to Kingston and through the Great Lakes, and you can look at Upper and Lower Canada and the history and tradition. That's sort of the physical layout of what we are.

In addition to that, we have a provincial park that's actually larger than a number of countries in the world. It's phenomenal. It's a place that everybody should visit, and you need the opportunity to do that.

Today, most families work 16 hours a day, and many more. They spend less and less time together as families. They find that their weekends are stretched and that there isn't the quality time that we used to spend together as a family. Some people say, "Well, it's not quantity, it's quality." I think it's a little bit of both. In order to appreciate your family, you need to spend some time with them. I think that's particularly so for those folks who live on modest incomes and often have two jobs, not one. And when we look at the opportunity to celebrate not only what we have in this province, its diversity, and at the same time provide an opportunity for those families to do it together, I can't think of a better way,

again, to support something that's just as important as a statutory holiday for Ontarians. That's why it should be called Ontario Day.

We seem to sometimes forget about the extraordinary diversity that we have in Ontario. I'll just give you a little example around Toronto itself. We have, in Toronto, people from virtually every country in the world but two: Antarctica and Greenland. Those children are in our schools. We have over 160 languages and dialects. Just think of the richness of that culture and the diversity of those people as they spread across Ontario. Add that to our aboriginal and our other history and heritages and we have something really worthwhile to celebrate. And how do we build on those celebrations? By recognizing that diversity, both geographically within the province itself and in terms of its people and history.

I recently had the pleasure of being in China, where I looked at 6,000-year-old history. I was blown away by how the people themselves embrace that history. I think that we have an obligation to do exactly the same thing here with our very modest, few-hundred-year-old history. We have a responsibility to our children and to ourselves to know where we came from, to understand it in order to move on and make it better. And what a better way to do that than allow people the opportunity to have a day in which they can actually recognize that Ontario does have a history and therefore has a past, and with a past, obviously has a future.

I think it's a real opportunity, as I said before, for families to work together on one day—a day of rest, if you like—when they can get out and discover Ontario. Years ago we used to have that song—someone alluded to it earlier: Ontari-ari-o; Yours to Discover. But you've got to give people some time to do it, whether they want to go to the zoo one day, to the north or whether they simply want to go for a walk in a park like High Park. Or, if they have the ability, to get in a car and travel with their children to learn something about Sainte-Marie among the Hurons. There are so many places.

I have the pleasure this weekend to go with friends to the Inn at Christie's Mill, and that's thanks to the charity auction that's held every year by the press gallery. This year, it's December 1. What the members have done, historically, is they've gone to their constituency base and they have given us an opportunity to purchase, on behalf of charity, a place that we might be able to go and see. I had never been to Christie's Mill. I had never been to Port Severn. I wanted to go and discover it, and I had that opportunity to do it. Not everybody has that same opportunity, and what my colleague's motion will do is provide that opportunity for people to get out and have a chance to discover what Ontario is all about—to enjoy its richness, to enjoy its people, and to celebrate it.

We often talk about the folks in the south. They wave their flags and they're so excited about who they are, what they are and where they came from. We hear that about Canadians. We're proud to be Canadians, but we're bloody proud as well to be Ontarians. I'd like to think so. That's also a part of our psyche and who we are,

what we want to be, where we want to go and how we want to teach our children. These are the things you do by encouraging that through leadership.

This isn't a trivial bill or motion. It's a very significant one because it says that we celebrate who we are, we celebrate where we want to go, we want to teach our children about our heritage, and we want to give people the opportunity to enjoy that heritage and to do it in such a way that they're not penalized. It won't hurt small business because certainly in my area, small businesses stay open because they are a tourist area. That's just another opportunity, actually, for them to make more money, because more people come up and enjoy that part of Ontario.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Colle, the member for Etobicoke-Lawrence, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Colle: Eglinton-Lawrence.

The Deputy Speaker: Eglinton-Lawrence. Thank you.

Mr Colle: I want to thank everybody who participated in the debate. I think it's an important debate because, essentially, as Ontarians, if we don't promote ourselves, if we don't celebrate this great province, who will? If we, as adults and as legislators, don't stand up and celebrate Ontario, who will?

I find it strange, some comments about, "Well, this is not good for small business." Give your head a shake. If you tell that to the Americans—holidays create all kinds of economic activity. We have to get off our seats and start to promote this province, to promote tourism, because it creates jobs and economic opportunity. We are just too passive. We've got a great product here—it's called Ontario—and we've got to start to market it and celebrate it. We can't expect someone else to do it for us. That's what we're doing right now. We're sort of sitting back and saying, "Oh, someone will market Ontario."

Simcoe Day isn't going to cut it. We need to give it some profile, some excitement, and there's nothing to preclude Simcoe Day from continuing, but we have to go beyond this passive, sit-back attitude. We have an economic imperative here, a cultural imperative and an educational imperative to do something where our young people will be proud of this province. They'll know where Pancake Bay Provincial Park is. Do the kids out there know where Pancake Bay Provincial Park is? They don't, because we don't.

You know where it is? Looking at the map, it's just north of Sault Ste Marie in the eastern shore of Lake Superior and, sadly, it's off where the Edmund Fitzgerald sank. You know the great Ontario folk singer, Gordon Lightfoot, one of the greatest singers in the world? We should be celebrating Gordon Lightfoot, celebrating Pancake Bay Provincial Park. Let's not sit back and whine about it; let's do something for Ontario.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT
(HOSPICES EXEMPTION), 2004
LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS
(EXONÉRATION ACCORDÉE
AUX HOSPICES)

Mr Flynn moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 /
Projet de loi 134, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2001 sur
les municipalités.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Flynn has moved ballot item number 40, pursuant to standing order 96. Mr Flynn, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It certainly is a pleasure to be here today, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to debate this bill, the Municipal Amendment Act (Hospices Exemption), 2004.

Before I start, I have the pleasure of introducing to the House Ms Janet Napper, the executive director of the Hospice Association of Ontario, who is with us in the House today in the members' gallery. Janet, welcome. I'd like to thank Janet for all her support in the preparation of this bill, as well as my own staff.

I'd also like to pay special thanks to a woman by the name of Margaret Anderson. She's the director and founder of Ian Anderson House, which is in my riding of Oakville. Ian Anderson House is a hospice that has been in existence for some time and has done a tremendous job in Oakville and the surrounding area.

The reason that I'm introducing this bill is through my involvement with Ian Anderson House. Ian Anderson House, as I said, is a hospice. It was started by Margaret Anderson in memory of her late spouse, Ian Anderson. Ian Anderson was diagnosed with cancer in 1987, and he died in their home, as he wished, in 1990.

Ian Anderson House is funded entirely with private monies and the work of Margaret and a group of volunteers. It opened seven years ago, on November 15, 1997, and has since provided palliative care without charge for approximately 600 families on its almost two-acre property. The house receives no provincial funding, but runs as a non-profit charitable organization and has provided a much-needed alternative for families who don't want to die in a hospital and aren't able to get the support they need in their own homes.

The gardens of Ian Anderson House, if you ever have the opportunity to pay a visit, have all been funded by volunteer efforts—the private sector has pitched in—companies, and local government. One day, we had all the firefighters out there doing some work on the gardens. So it's a facility that the community has really taken to its heart.

Part of the hospice mandate is to offer environments such as these gardens, and they provide the sort of settings for patients and their families that are spiritually nurturing, physically comfortable and aesthetically pleasing. It's in the spaces in which people spend the

final phase of their lives that they need to be treated with the utmost care.

The Ian Anderson House does not charge any fee for residency inside the hospice. If you're ill, if you're in the final days of your life and you need a place to go, you don't want to die in hospital and you can't be cared for at home, the Ian Anderson House will take you in if they have a space. It's all run entirely by community fundraising. It doesn't matter how rich you are or how poor you are; if there's a spot available, the Ian Anderson House lets you in. They have corporate sponsorship and the services of a tremendous volunteer board. They've got a resource centre in the building that supports members of the community who want to care for dying loved ones in their own homes.

For the Ian Anderson House, what we were able to do when I was a locally elected official is go through a process whereby the property taxes were waived by the region of Halton. What that means in my own community is that over \$7,000 that used to be paid to the municipality can now be used by the Ian Anderson House to provide the services that it was truly set up to provide.

It's important to know that we provide this exemption for a number of other facilities and institutions within the province of Ontario. Ones that come to mind specifically are churches, Legions, the Boy Scouts, bridges, minerals. We exempt a number of organizations. What I'm asking for with this bill is that municipalities be granted the option to provide a tax exemption for a hospice that exists within their own borders.

I've been able to set up a pretty good arrangement for the Ian Anderson House in the region of Halton, and I think that should be extended to the rest of the province. The only downside to the current arrangement that Ian Anderson House has is that they have to raise the funds in the first place to pay the taxes so that they can get a grant from the municipality to pay them back. With such a hard time fundraising these days for any non-profit organization, it seems to me it would be better—and I know in my own community there is sympathy, with support from the town of Oakville and the region of Halton, for providing this exemption.

For those members of the House who are from the GTA, there's also another centre that's trying to be formed in Toronto. It's called the Philip Aziz Centre. Unfortunately, in our modern society, it's not just adults who get HIV/AIDS; it impacts children as well. What this group of people are trying to do is to, in a hospice setting, provide the level of care that is necessary for children who have been infected with HIV/AIDS.

The bill is important not only in the financial relief it provides; it would also encourage the building of other hospices. In our province and around the world, we're coming to realize that how we treat the dying in our communities speaks to who we are as a society. We seem to have done a very good job in how we treat people who are entering their life or entering this world. I think we've been a little reticent in the way we treat people whose time it is to leave this world. This bill reflects my support

for all of the good work being done in the palliative and hospice care movement throughout the province and the difference these institutions make in providing dignity and compassion to people in the last days of their lives. Many people end up in hospital who would really like to be at home during their final days, but they simply don't have the resources at home.

A recent Ipsos-Reid poll found that over 90% of people indicated they would prefer to die with dignity within their own home. Sadly, under current conditions, these people do not have the resources and over 75% of them end up dying in a hospital, which is not the place they want to die.

The Hospice Association of Ontario has grown tremendously. It began with eight members in 1989. Within the first 10 years, the association's membership grew by almost 1,000%, from eight to more than 150 hospices and allied members. It's the largest volunteer hospice organization in Canada. Its members have become the largest direct service providers within Ontario's voluntary health care sector. Today, in more than 400 communities throughout Ontario—so it affects each and every one of us in this House—over 13,000 volunteers dedicate 630,000 hours of volunteer work to Hospice Association of Ontario member hospices. In order for these hospices to provide a full range of physical, emotional and spiritual care, they rely on contributions from the community. It is my opinion that this bill would receive widespread support from both municipalities and citizens of the municipalities. It's another way to assist the hospice organization in providing the type of care it does.

1110

Now a little bit of history. The word "hospice" stems from the Latin word "hospitium," which used to mean guest house. Originally, "hospice" was used to describe a place of shelter for those who were sick or weary, returning from a pilgrimage. During the 1960s, a British physician, Dr Cicely Saunders, began the modern hospice movement with the establishment of St Christopher's Hospice near London. The first US hospice was established in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1974. The first one we had in Canada was established in 1975 in Winnipeg, and also at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal. So hospice is not a place; it is, rather, a philosophy. The focus of hospice care is on caring, not curing, and on life, not death. For the purposes of the bill, hospices are free-standing community facilities that provide a home-like alternative to institutional care for those who require it.

Other government initiatives include the following: The Ministry of Health has placed an emphasis on patient community care; local health integration networks are enshrining principles of patient choice—they are people-centred; Minister Smitherman has spoken at great length about the importance of hospices; and Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre, has also called for a comprehensive palliative care strategy.

We will be able to save tremendous resources by approving this bill. I would urge all members to support

it. In doing so, they will be supporting end-of-life care in their very own communities.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It is my pleasure to speak this morning at private members' business on Bill 134, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001, which has been put forward by the member for Oakville. Basically, what this act does is that a municipality may, by bylaw, exempt from taxation for municipal and school purposes real property owned, used and occupied by an independently managed non-profit hospice engaged in the provision of end-of-life care.

I do believe the hospice sector needs support. Our party has always been a strong proponent of using tax cuts to stimulate the economy and support those in need. As such, I'm very happy to support this, although I believe it needs feedback from municipalities, which are being asked to bear the brunt of the tax cut.

In my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, there are many organizations involved in palliative care and hospice support. They're doing a great job—with the support of a lot of volunteers, I might add.

In the Almaguin area, there's the Almaguin palliative care team—Mary Manuell is the program administrator of that—which covers Novar, Emsdale, Kearney, Sprucedale, Katrine, Burk's Falls, Sundridge, South River, Sand Lake and Ahmic Harbour. They provide some very important services: emotional support, personal care, respite care, support to children, alternative therapies, spiritual support, home care, volunteer care teams, bereavement support for individuals and groups, anticipatory grief, coordination of services, and general domestic support. That's in the Almaguin area.

In West Parry Sound, it's run through West Parry Sound Health Centre—Norm Maciver, the CEO, is the contact—at 10 James St. Their catchment area goes from the French River in the north to Musquash River in the south, east to Magnetawan, and west to the Georgian Bay archipelago.

Then down in South Muskoka we have Hospice Muskoka. Sandra Winspear is the program coordinator. It's run out of Bracebridge Pines Long-Term Care, and it covers the South Muskoka region.

In the Huntsville area, we have Hospice Huntsville—Ms Cindy Susut is the volunteer coordinator—based at 100 Frank Miller Drive in Huntsville. It covers the area from Huntsville south to Port Sydney, north to Melissa, west to Rosseau, and east to Baysville, Dorset and Dwight. So we do have some significant coverage of my riding.

I've had the privilege of attending a number of hospice events in the last year. I was at the Caregivers Voice 10th anniversary at Rogers Cove in Huntsville, where the founder of that organization, Geila Bar-David, participated, and one of the speakers at that event, in talking about the importance of caregivers, used this quote, which I thought was very significant: "There are only four kinds of people in this world: Those who have been caregivers, those who currently are caregivers, those who

will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers.” That pretty much covers all of us, and that was actually from Rosalynn Carter, from the spring of 1995.

Also, I had the privilege of attending a fundraising event for Hospice Muskoka, a gala event in Port Carling on June 25 of this year. It was called Go Mad With Plaid. It was organized by Frances Weir and Muriel Leslie. It was the initial event to raise money for a regional residence hospice. It’s going to be the first one in the whole Parry Sound-Muskoka area, and this was the first event fundraising for it. It was a very well-run event, and a lot of fun, I might add. I participated; I wore my father’s Royal Stuart tartan, hoping I might win the contest for best costume. Unfortunately, my mother beat me out. She had a little more plaid on her and was the grand winner as the best-dressed person at this event. But it was certainly a successful event.

I also participated recently in the opening of a special room at the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital that is being set aside for palliative care. One of the key people involved with that is Owen Mellow, from Bracebridge. He’s an example of the fine volunteers who are really the backbone of many hospice organizations. In fact, across Ontario there are 13,300 volunteers who dedicated 630,000 hours of service in the province in the last year. There’s no doubt that there is a growing need for more and more hospice and palliative care support.

I would have to ask why the provincial government isn’t supporting this directly with funding, or the federal government. The weight is being put on municipal government. That’s why I think municipal input is required. I can’t help but say I think there’s an imbalance between the taxes collected and the services that are offered between the three levels of government—federal, provincial and municipal—especially when we see this week that there was a \$9-billion surplus at the federal level. So I think it’s very important that we get some input from municipalities, because they’re being asked to basically—I mean, the \$7,000 the member from Oakville was talking about that would benefit his local hospice. Unfortunately, it’s the municipal government that would be giving up that tax revenue. So that’s a question that needs to be addressed, and I think that, as usual, we should be bringing the federal government to look at this.

There’s no doubt that there is a need for palliative care services. Some 94% of Canadians feel they cannot adequately care for a dying loved one without outside support, and it’s hospice palliative care that provides that essential support. It’s especially true for Ontarians living in remote and rural areas. When you get into the north—I’m the northern critic—it becomes more and more difficult to access these needed services. I outlined some of the organizations that cover Parry Sound-Muskoka, and I think I’m very fortunate to have these organizations within the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. But more importantly, I and the people of Parry Sound-Muskoka are so lucky to have dedicated volunteers, like Owen Mellow and many others like him, who put in those 13,300 volunteer hours throughout the year.

So I will be supporting this. But I think a key thing is that there especially needs to be municipal input, and we should be trying to get other levels of government to support this.

1120

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I’ll be sharing my time today with the member from Toronto-Danforth.

I want to say that I will be supporting this bill by the member from Oakville. I think it is a good bill to allow the municipalities to exempt non-profit hospices from taxation, because they do good work with so little money. It’s important work that they do, and every spare dollar they can find is good for the services they provide. The member from Parry Sound mentioned a whole long list of things that hospices do, from bereavement support to personal care to respite care, home care, palliative care—the list is endless. These are services that are desperately required and that desperately need provincial and federal support in order to allow individuals to be taken care of in their homes and/or in their communities. But so little comes by way of provincial and federal dollars that it puts tremendous stress on families and hospices to do the work they are doing.

While this bill is a laudable one, and while the province may pass such a bill allowing municipalities to exempt non-profit hospices from paying taxes, the province gets away with having to worry about how the city then does without the money that normally they would be getting from such a service. I’m convinced that every municipality would love to exempt non-profit hospices from taxation. I’m convinced that they do. But the problem is, they argue, “If we do this for one service, who will come next, and how will we deal with the shortfall of municipal dollars that we desperately need to provide the services?” This is the balancing act that we have to worry about.

Understand this: The province goes, as your Premier just did a couple of days ago, saying, “We provide 44% of provincial dollars to federal coffers, and we don’t get the same level of money coming back to the province of Ontario.” They’re right, as we were right when we were in power, when we said, “We’re contributing so much and getting so little from the federal government.” Do you know what the cities are saying? The same thing. The city of Toronto says, “We pay 44% of our taxes in Ontario, and we don’t get a commensurate share of the dollars we put in.” Do you know what? They’re right too. So as McGuinty goes to complain to the federal Liberals that we’re not getting our fair share, the cities are saying, “We’re not getting a fair share from McGuinty,” and they’re right.

Although you have introduced the gas tax dollars that make an important contribution, the city is saying, “It barely balances off the problems we had last year.” And the worries are going to continue for a long, long time, because downloading on the city of Toronto and many other cities has gone on for so long that many of them are literally broke and they need money. A city ought not to

be coming, begging and pleading, to the provincial government to give them the money they desperately need to provide the programs they are providing. They ought not to, but they are, because we have no adequate mechanism to guarantee that cities get the money they need.

In some countries in Europe, there is a proportionate amount of dollars they get from the federal government, where they have a centralized system, based on whatever revenues the federal government has. It's 5% or 10% or 15%—whatever that figure is—but it's always consistent. If that were so, cities would never have to come begging the provincial government or the federal government for the money they ought to be getting. That's not the case in Canada and in Ontario. Every year you have cities worried about whether or not they have enough money to provide the services they should be providing.

So my point is, this is a good measure. It's an important bill that recognizes that non-profit hospices provide incredibly good work for the little money they're getting. But the worry you and I have on both sides is, how are we going to guarantee that cities get the money they need to provide the services they provide, and when they exempt one group, how do they say no to exempting another group? While I agree this group should be exempted, money should come from the provincial government to the cities to make up for what we're doing. That would be my position on this.

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand in the House and support Bill 134, the Municipal Amendment Act proposed by the member from Oakville.

Our government came to power with a commitment to strengthen local communities. Hospices have played an important role in our local communities, and this bill is aimed at supporting the very important work these organizations do. As I understand it, this legislation will be similar to current enabling legislation that will give municipalities the ability to exempt legion or other veterans' organizations, as well as the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, from paying municipal property taxes, should a municipality so deem.

Ontario hospices are the largest direct service providers within the voluntary care sector. The Hospice Association of Ontario's member agencies have more than 12,000 volunteers, dedicating some 570,000 hours of service every year to more than 400 communities across Ontario. One of the hospices in my riding is the Tullamore Long Term Care Facility.

In my research on hospices, because I haven't had direct contact with them, I learned that the Hospice Association of Ontario created a charter after doing a province-wide consultation for end-of-life care provided by the Hospice Association of Ontario. The charter states: "How we treat those who are dying in our community reflects who we are as a society. All Ontarians have the right to die with dignity, to have access to physical, psychological, bereavement and spiritual care,

and to be granted the respect consistent with other phases of life."

Ontario's hospice palliative care community is committed to providing the best possible quality end-of-life care to Ontario residents and their families. Their goal is to optimize the quality of life and to minimize the physical and emotional suffering associated with this phase of life.

Hospices endorse an integrated approach focused on the individual and their family and caregivers, accessible through hospice palliative care services in the local community and tailored to individual needs. The Hospice Association of Ontario works to increase awareness and availability of quality and integrated end-of-life care. They collaborate with government, social agencies and decision-makers to develop innovative, clinical, community and public policy strategies. Hospices speak with a unified and cohesive voice, share information and resources, and work through a coordinated network of partners from the voluntary, public and professional sectors.

The field of palliative care is poised for growth, impacted by an aging population and by technology keeping people alive. It is a very important quality they need to be doing, and they provide it with increased professionalism every year. As more long-term-care professionals work and educate consumers and families about what they do, there is a recognition of the complexity of providing this sensitive service. Education and research are evolving in response to the pressures of dealing with palliative populations.

I forgot to say at the beginning, Mr Speaker, that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Etobicoke Centre and Scarborough Centre.

The Hospice Association of Ontario is the largest volunteer hospice palliative care organization, made up of 90 hospices and 60 allied associations. They have 13,300 hospice volunteers and dedicate over 600,000 hours of service, as I said, to more than 400 communities.

The emotional, psychological and spiritual support to people who are in the last phases of life are the most important thing we can possibly provide.

I support this legislation because I believe this bill complements our government's announcement of \$73.2 million in July for end-of-life care, and will support local, independent hospice palliative care in Ontario.

1130

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): First of all, I would like to say that I am supporting this bill. I certainly want to underline, though, the points my colleague Rosario Marchese made. Of course we're going to support this bill. Let me say that strongly. Clearly and obviously this is a good, positive move forward. But I concur with my colleague Rosario Marchese, in that municipalities have become so dependent on two things now, and I've been making these points in the debates around the greenbelt. They desperately need their municipal taxes and developers' fees to pay for their services. This happened, in large part, as a result of the down-

loading done by the previous government, and we need to start rebalancing that.

I'm not going to go into the same detail as my colleague did about the kinds of things that need to be done to address that, but I think we would all agree that every time we give an option, and this is a good option to give to municipalities, not taking on the hard responsibility here ourselves, the government not taking it on and saying, "You shall," but leaving it up to the municipality to determine, is a problem for the municipalities. They're going to want to do this and there's going to be pressure on them to do it. But if they're already struggling with keeping a balanced budget, as they are, and not raising property taxes too much, for every single good cause that comes before them, they're in a real quandary. That is what's going to happen with this. I really hate to see our municipalities put in these positions where it becomes almost a moral situation. They can't say no, nor should they.

So I would agree with Mr Marchese that if we're allowing municipalities to do things like this, which I believe we should be, then we need to be looking at the funding structures we have and changing them so that the municipalities, and I mean small and large, are not so entirely dependent just on municipal taxes and developers' fees.

I want to take this opportunity to highlight Casey House. You may all be familiar with Casey House. It was founded by June Callwood, who's just a wonderful woman.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My friend.

Ms Churley: I think June Callwood is actually everybody's friend. She has no political axe to grind. For as long as I've known June Callwood, her goal has been to do good for her community and for all the people. She has her particular causes, and she's been very successful. I knew June for many years, and when her young son, Casey, was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident, and the devastation that caused our good friend June and her family, June then turned that tragedy, in some ways, into a very good cause. She named the hospice she started, for people suffering and dying from HIV/AIDS, after her son, Casey.

It was a real privilege for me. I've toured Casey House on many occasions. I recently attended the 11th annual Art with Heart auction for Casey House hospice. If you've never gone, I recommend you go because the art at these things is just incredible, with donations from some of the top North American artists and top artists here in Toronto. It's a real opportunity to see that art, and if you can afford it—some is higher-priced than others—to buy really good art at reduced prices, given what's there, and to support this really great cause.

June Callwood—the founder, as you know—started Casey House at a time when HIV/AIDS was devastating. Then, life was not being prolonged and, in fact, enhanced. People can live, for a long time, relatively normal lives now with HIV, but at that time, we were seeing mostly young men in the prime of their lives dying with HIV.

I've had friends who've died, and I'm sure everybody in this Legislature has been touched by the devastation of AIDS at that time. It was killing, as I said, many young men in their prime. There was little community support, and a huge stigma and discrimination attached to people with HIV and AIDS.

It was at that time when June Callwood said, "We've got to do something about this. A lot of these young men are dying alone with very little support from the community, not being able to work." She just grabbed the bull by the horns and said, "I'm going to do this," and she did. It's just a wonderful example of a hospice that's working.

As we know, since that time, the population suffering from and living with AIDS has changed. There are far more women now, as well as homeless people, and a bigger section of the population. The waiting lists at times became very long, and the nurses there—a wonderful staff who, over the years, have staffed Casey House—along with many of the families who do become involved, came up with the idea for home hospice so that people could have those kinds of supports in their own homes. Art with Heart—and I'm really promoting this today, because it's a good opportunity to raise money—has raised money. I go often and bid often.

I do recommend that we do everything we can to support, besides this today, the hospices in our ridings and across the province, because we know, just like Casey House, that home hospices and many other hospices do not get any government funding. They are run on private donations, and that's why this exemption today will be very, very important for them.

Obviously municipalities are going to want to do that, and the hospices themselves are very, very much in favour. I've been told by the smaller and medium-sized hospices who own their own offices and land that this is a saving of roughly \$6,000 to \$8,000. This may not be a whole lot in the grand scheme but, operating on a tight budget, it is absolutely critical.

Fundraising has become more and more competitive these days—there are lots and lots of good causes out there—and this fundraising is often from the same sources. To have to fundraise, though, to pay taxes is kind of a difficult feat, and it's not fair to be asking places like this to have to do that. So what this will do is make sure that the fundraising they do, the funds they have, will go directly, flow directly into care for the patients who are dying, and their families.

What I would say in closing is that I can't imagine that there'll be one person in this Legislature today who will vote against this. I'm very pleased that it's before us, and I commend the member for doing so. I do, however, say to be cautious in terms of how the municipalities are going to deal with this as we bring forward more and more good causes that I agree should be exempted.

I know that in the really wonderful notes and backgrounder that Mr Flynn provided for members, and I thank him for that, because it was very good background information, he lists some of the other charities and non-

profits that are already exempted: Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, children's aid societies, large non-profit theatres, veterans' organizations, houses of refuge, and there are more, I believe, and there should be more to come. But as we do this and as we bring under this umbrella these good causes that should not be paying property taxes, we do have to look at the second piece of this and see how we can deal with the revenue that is being lost to the municipalities that count on their property taxes to get them through their budgets every year and to be able to provide so many of the vital services that they are now asked to provide on top of what we normally saw as just municipal hard services. That is the one caution that I would bring forward today.

1140

Mr Baird: I'll just speak briefly to this bill. I want to congratulate the member for Oakville. This is an excellent initiative and one of the more meaningful private members' bills that we've seen. I think there's this view that somehow everyone should get a grant, but the first thing we should do to organizations like hospices is, don't tax them. It's an excellent initiative.

The member for Toronto-Danforth talked about Casey House and June Callwood and the excellent people who make that a reality. I know a number of individuals who are on the board there and do a phenomenal job.

In Ottawa, we have the May Court hospice, which I think is an important community institution that provides palliative care to some really vulnerable people. I visited it not two or three months ago, and the morning that I visited there were two people who had passed away in the evening, one only an hour before I arrived. To see the staff and volunteers at that centre—they do an outstanding job. I know they would benefit from the consideration that I believe the Ottawa city council would provide, should this bill pass. I would certainly be very supportive of it.

There has been a bureaucratic problem that has happened with respect to the May Court hospice. Their funding has been cut off. They were funded by the community care access centre, which was a rather innovative way to provide palliative care. That was cut off. Some members intervened and it's going to continue until the end of March. But they're sitting with a rather uncertain future with respect to their provincial funding.

I know that, to be non-partisan, none of the members in Ottawa—Conservative, Liberal, what have you—would want to see that organization go without funding, whether it's the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh or any of the other Liberal members for Ottawa. I think this was an unintended consequence, but nonetheless is a meaningful problem facing the volunteers who work at the May Court hospice. It has to be addressed. I would use this opportunity, once again—we appreciated the extension until the end of the fiscal year, but we've got to address that. It's too much to ask for the volunteers and staff to take their attention away from those people who are sick and in need of care, some of whom spend nine months at May Court. Others will

spend as little as 15 minutes when they arrive very late in their struggle with cancer or AIDS.

So I would just use this opportunity to encourage the minister and the government to do the right thing on this. I know they want to. I would just encourage them to do it expeditiously so that they can put all of their love and care into dealing with the patients. I was tremendously impressed with the folks there. I look forward to hearing from the members for Etobicoke Centre and Simcoe North. Both members care passionately about these issues.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to rise in support of the member for Oakville's bill dealing with palliative care. One of the things I'd like to mention is that palliative care isn't restricted to the elderly; it's across the whole sector in terms of age. In our communities, a lot of our folks who live there do not have extended families, so often at the end of their life, be they in their 20s, 30s or as infants, they don't have somebody that they can go to and say, "Come and help me," other than their community. That's one of the critical roles that a hospice plays: the community reaching out to people in need within the community, and that's one of the reasons why the member for Oakville's bill is only one piece of that puzzle that will continue to be put together as the strategy is built over the next year—an important and integral part. What it does, again, is recognize the inequities around the province dealing with palliative care, end-of-life care.

The fact that you can have a member—thank heavens that he's there—who went out and supported a particular hospice and enabled them to get back their taxes is phenomenal. Maybe we could duplicate him and send him around the province so he can do it for each. There's another member who says that, in fact, the community care access centre has withdrawn funds, when in other cases they're supporting it. It that inequity that is occurring right now across the province in our palliative care, and that's why this type of bill will make a and will make those changes happen.

One of the reasons that it's enabling as well—that's the part I like. It's time that municipalities sit down with their hospices and develop strategies for their community to meet their communities' needs. A hospice cannot work in isolation from its municipality, nor should it work in isolation from its provincial government or, for that matter, in isolation from its federal government. If you'd like to get down to the crass reason why, it's because the person requiring palliative care is a member of each of those governments in terms of participation and voting as a constituent. So all levels have the responsibility to develop that comprehensive strategy for end-of-life care. Nobody is immune to that.

I recognize the challenges, but at the same time, there are opportunities. Currently a hospital bed costs anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,200. Emergency wards are lined up with people trying to get in, and yet we know that well-managed palliative pain care, for example, can withdraw the need for that person to go to an emergency

service in a hospital and thereby eliminate part of that lineup. But that pain care has to be managed, and managed well, and the place to do it is in a palliative care centre.

We know we can do it, and we know we can do it at about a third to two thirds of the cost, depending on the region. That's phenomenal. We also know that it's not restricted in terms of geography, because palliative care centres are in 400 communities across this province. Think about that: 400 communities are served by 90 palliative care centres. Obviously, the need is there; it has been identified. We have something that enables us to put another piece of that puzzle together on how we develop that strategy. We need to engage everybody in that discussion, because you're right: As you download, where do costs come from in terms of trading off the cost for the property? But at the same time, we also know on the plus side that you're going to reduce costs in your hospitals, either through the beds or through the emergency wards.

I go back and state again—I don't know if you remember—that there are actually hospitals in this province that charge you a surcharge if you do not die in time, if you're a palliative care patient. I find that outrageous. It's just another reason why palliative care hospice centres must be an integral part of our health system in Ontario. It was recognized federally through the Romanow report; our own Minister of Health, George Smitherman, has identified home care and palliative end-of-life care as an integral part of what he's talking about; now we need to engage those municipalities in that same discussion, and we need to put that strategy together sooner rather than later. Although I indicated it is not restricted to the elderly, there is no question that a proportionate number of people requiring that service are elderly, and a lot of them would like to die in their own homes. I would like to again support my colleague and commend him for bringing this forward.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise in support of this legislation. Again, I'm going to say what I've said before in this House: Sometimes the private members' bills that come forward are, I think, more valuable to the citizens of the province than the government legislation, and this is a good example right here. The short title is the Municipal Amendment Act (Hospices Exemption), 2004. The bill proposes to grant municipalities the capacity to exempt independently managed, not-for-profit hospices from property taxes. I couldn't agree more with this, because I think that the hospices we have in our province do absolutely fantastic, valuable work, and again, it's all volunteer. That's what is so important about it.

I would like to speak for a couple of minutes about the two hospices I have in my riding. First of all, Hospice Orillia—and I have a little more detail on it—is run by executive director Bonnie Jerney, and Jeff Smith is the president. All the volunteers on Hospice Orillia work up to 30 hours of training. There is a total of 85 volunteers in the Hospice Orillia alone, providing almost 2,000

hours of volunteer services a year to the citizens of Orillia and district, which includes the three or four townships around Orillia and the First Nations.

1150

They work of course with palliative care and in a lot of cases the end-of-life circumstances in homes, at the hospital and in our long-term-care facilities. As well, they do a lot of fundraising on their own. This coming winter, there's a gala evening out at Geneva Park. It's one of the largest fundraisers they have, and that gala evening will be on March 5 of this year. If any of my colleagues in the House would like to buy tickets and come up for a beautiful weekend in Simcoe North, I can make sure you attend this gala evening with me because I will be there.

As well, I have an organization started by a lovely person by the name of Bev Geroux, and it's called Hospice Huronia. It works with the two hospitals in the Midland-Penetanguishene area, the Huronia District Hospital and the Penetanguishene General Hospital. They call themselves today the North Simcoe Hospital Alliance because they've done some neat things around the coordination of the administration of the two hospitals, and the boards work together as well.

The president of Hospice Huronia is another gentleman who does a lot of volunteer work in the Midland-Penetanguishene area, a gentleman by the name of Jim Malcolm. His two managers at Hospice Huronia are Heather Graham and Kathy Gordon. Again, they do all kinds of work with assorted long-term-care facilities and the two hospitals, and a lot of work with people in their homes with palliative care and near-the-end-of-life circumstances.

Anything we can do for our volunteers and our health care system that would be of any kind of benefit at all, and that would mean tax relief on property they own or encouragement for volunteers, I think is a step in the right direction at any time, by any political party, in any province or country.

I don't know how we'd perform without volunteers in our great province, especially in the health care sector, where not only the hospice folks work day in and day out with thousands of volunteer hours, but also the volunteer auxiliaries we have in all of the hospitals across our province where folks spend tens of thousands of hours a year providing volunteer services to our hospitals.

With that, I will be supporting Mr Flynn on this bill. I wish you good luck in this private members' time. I think a lot more private members' bills should be going through and becoming law instead of playing around with some of these pit bull and bring-your-own-wine junk bills. This is the kind of thing we should be debating.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to participate in this debate as well. I've been listening carefully to the excellent comments from members from all sides of the House on this.

The days of treating municipalities like mere creatures of the province are over. That ended over a year ago

when this government took office. The McGuinty government is forging ahead with an effective relationship with municipalities that, frankly, is probably more effective than we have seen not only in the last number of years, but probably more effective than we've seen in generations.

We understand that municipalities are a bona fide level or order of government, and they should be treated as such. We recognize that they're elected and have just as much legitimacy as we do here at Queen's Park or as they do up on Parliament Hill. This bill is in keeping with the spirit of that approach. It's time to start treating municipalities like they deserve to be treated. It's time to give municipalities the respect they've earned. This bill, as I said, is in keeping with this approach. That's why I am absolutely pleased to lend my support to it.

I want to commend the member from Oakville. This is a member who has been here for over a year now. This is a terrific initiative that he's moved forward on. In the short period of a year, this member has also helped preserve 1,300 acres of environmentally sensitive land in his Oakville community. He was also a key player in the very important deal that was made with Ford Canada in Oakville, where something like 4,500 jobs have been secured, and in terms of spinoff jobs, probably 20,000 to 30,000 spinoff jobs. So I just want to take this opportunity to thank the people of Oakville for sending Kevin Flynn to us here in the Legislature. He's my seatmate. His Irish sense of humour keeps us in the back row here very engaged throughout, and he has had an incredible impact here in a short year at Queen's Park.

Every Ontarian, every human being deserves to be treated with dignity when they are going through their last days. Nobody deserves to die alone. Nobody deserves to die in squalor. The number of hospices in this province is growing. Most of the facilities are run through charitable donations, with the help of volunteers.

Our health care system as a whole is already growing at an unsustainable rate. The prospect of finding additional funding—some members opposite are suggesting trying to expand the hospice system. At this point in time, that's probably not terribly realistic, so I think it's important that we move forward with an initiative that will provide some assistance, that will at least provide municipalities with the ability to, if they so choose, provide some property tax relief to hospices. We're not saying they have to do it; we're saying that if they choose to do it, we're giving them permission or the ability to do these kinds of things.

That, I think, is important. Why would we want municipalities—and some are—why would we force them to have to provide municipal grants to hospices rather than waive or exempt them from property tax? Why would we make them go through that red tape? It just doesn't make sense. The member from Oakville recognizes this through his experiences as a regional councillor, and I am very happy that he has brought those experiences here today and brought this bill here before us today.

The McGuinty government respects the ability of our municipal councils to make their own minds up on these kinds of issues. At the same time, we are doing our share as well to ensure that these communities continue to fulfill their potential. Look at the two cents of the gas tax that's beginning to flow now. Look at the partnering that we've had with the federal, provincial and municipal governments for the \$1 billion in public transit that's going to the TTC.

Minister Kwinter recently announced an initiative to put 1,000 more police constables on our streets in partnership with the municipalities. My own minister, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, recently signed an agreement with AMO to ensure that whenever we're making decisions here at the province, whenever we're getting engaged in federal-provincial decisions that impact municipalities, the municipalities will be consulted. We believe that municipalities should have the ability to make these kinds of decisions.

I'm delighted to have an opportunity to speak to this very important bill here today and to commend Mr Flynn for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Flynn, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Flynn: I certainly did appreciate all the comments from all of the members, those being from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Trinity-Spadina, Toronto-Danforth, Brampton Centre, Etobicoke Centre, Scarborough Centre, Nepean-Carleton and Simcoe North. I hope I didn't leave anybody out.

I want to summarize by making sure, as I try to make you this offer you can't refuse in supporting my bill, that you understand that this is about choice. It's not compelling a municipality, it's not forcing a municipality to exempt a hospice from property tax; it's giving the option to provide that exemption to the municipality. The decision would be made by a duly-elected council of that town, city or region.

When you talk about the financial aspects of this bill, and you look around the province—take a look at the Hospice of London. It is going to owe about \$16,000 this year in property taxes. There is another project called the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County, and it's considering what's called a hospice village. Its property tax bill for this could exceed \$100,000 a year. We're saying that at this current point in time, should the municipalities choose to do so, they could save up to \$60,000 annually at the hospice level, and leave that \$60,000 with the hospices and allow them to do the good work that they are intending to do, and perhaps even grow the system a little bit.

It costs about \$200 a day to run a residential hospice bed; at a non-teaching hospital, \$647. In a teaching hospital, that figure rises to \$907 a day. There's some economic sense in supporting this bill as well. I would urge all members to support it. I'm sure by doing so, you will tell all those volunteers in the hospice sector how much you appreciate the work they do.

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

PROVINCIAL STATUTORY HOLIDAY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We'll deal first with ballot item number 39, standing in the name of Mr Colle. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (HOSPICES EXEMPTION), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (EXONÉRATION ACCORDÉE AUX HOSPICES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item 40. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): Mr Speaker, I'd ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 144, I'd like to take this opportunity to send a message to my wife, who is at home on this day, our 43rd wedding anniversary. I love you, dear. Happy anniversary.

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

The House recessed from 1202 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANNETTE LISABETH

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I rise today to tell the tale of Norfolk's golden girl, Annette Lisabeth. Annette is 20 years old and is legally blind. However, over the past few years she has not allowed her impairment to stand in the way of her dream, and that was to compete in Athens at the Paralympics.

Not only did Annette earn her way to Athens as a member of Canada's goalball team, but she also managed to bring home a gold medal. While Annette is a natural athlete and comes from a family of athletes, she still dedicated much of her time—six days a week—to working out in the gym practising over the past year.

Norfolk county is certainly proud of this young lady, who has captured the hearts of many with her humble attitude and positive outlook on life. Just recently, the community of Langton threw an open house in Annette's

honour. She was escorted to the community centre in a fire truck and was given a true heroine's welcome.

Annette's family and the entire community will be able to reflect on this athlete's accomplishments for many years to come, as her name and accomplishments will be memorialized on signs entering Langton.

On behalf of this House and on behalf of my constituents in Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, I congratulate Annette on her gold medal and I wish her well for the future.

MARLENE STEWART STREIT

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): It is with great pride that I rise today to acknowledge and congratulate the achievements of a great Canadian and a resident of Unionville in my riding of Markham. This past Monday, Marlene Stewart Streit was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame. In addition to this great achievement and honour, I would like to note that Marlene Stewart Streit is the first Canadian to receive such an honour.

In 1953, at only 19 years of age, Marlene Stewart Streit won the British Women's Amateur. This great Canadian, whose contribution to the world of golf spans six decades, is the only golfer to have won the Canadian, Australian, British and US women's championships. Just last year, she won the US senior women's amateur for the third time.

Ms Marlene Stewart Streit is a wonderful role model for all Ontarians and Markham residents alike. Her career demonstrates how a commitment to physical activity, hard work and dedication can result in great things. Today this trailblazer continues to contribute to the world of golf as a mentor encouraging and supporting young people, particularly young women, in improving their skills. Forty years ago, Ms Streit had the foresight and generosity to establish the Marlene Stewart Streit Awards.

Once again, in recognition of this historic event, I congratulate this amazing woman who is a trailblazer not only for women golfers, but for all Canadians. It is my privilege to salute Marlene Stewart Streit as the first Canadian to be inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame. I certainly know who to ask for advice now when on the greens of York Downs golf course in Markham.

PIT BULLS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Yesterday I was pleased to join with the members of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club of Canada on the front lawn of Queen's Park. I enjoyed the chance to meet with the owners and breeders, and especially with many of their friendly and talented dogs.

Owners and breeders know that a safe dog is one that grew up in a responsible home. It is a dog that was trained to respect people and other animals. Dogs that bite or attack usually come from homes where they themselves have been abused or mistreated.

This government will not prevent dog attacks by passing breed-specific legislation. Breed-specific legislation has been tried elsewhere and failed. In fact, there are now 12 American states that specifically forbid breed-specific legislation from an unhappy experience at attempting to do the kind of thing that this government is trying to do now.

Who else is against this bill? Here is the list: the Humane Society of Canada, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, the Canadian Kennel Club, the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the Toronto Humane Society, the Winnipeg Humane Society, the Canada Safety Council, the Dog Legislation Council of Canada, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council.

What this government should do is pass reasonable and enforceable dangerous dog legislation, not outlaw specific breeds. Ban the deed, not the breed.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): There's a jobs crisis in the film and television industry in this province. Over 50,000 jobs depend upon this industry, and most of them are in Toronto and area. Liberals had promised to boost the Ontario film and television tax credit from 20% to 33%. They also said they would increase this credit for feature films from 20% to 40%. We have yet to see the benefits of this promise. The film industry is suffering.

Foreign-project filming in Ontario declined a stunning 36%, or \$200 million, in 2003. Film Ontario stated that the Ontario film and television industry is extremely concerned about the lack of competitiveness in Ontario's domestic and service tax credits, and it's only going to get worse. The US will soon have new lucrative tax credits. Manitoba has tax credits of 35% or more. In contrast, Ontario's incentive is only about 11%.

When we asked for support for one of the most important industries in Ontario, the finance minister said his government will help generate a skilled labour and talent pool and will build infrastructure.

Minister, I want to let you in on a secret everyone knows: Ontario already has the talent and the skill, and one of the best infrastructures in the world. What production companies need is a reason to come to the Toronto region.

Your investment of \$1 creates a return of \$2. This is not support; it's investment. You should do this for the economy, for performers, for the industry and for Toronto. The film industry needs your help, Premier. Keep your promise.

FOSTER AND ADOPTION FAMILIES

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I would like to say a special thank you to a group of people I view as unsung heroes in this province. They are the natural and adopted children of foster parents.

When adults make a decision to foster, the family automatically becomes part of the team. But for the children, it means that they now have to share their room, their toys; they have to share their friends. They have to share the family secrets that tend to become part of the community. But even more importantly, they have to share their parents.

As I believe most people know, the most valuable thing we own is time. So the foster children will take the time that could have gone to the others, and they do it wonderfully. I consider them heroes, because they are very much part of the fostering team. They experience the joys of sharing with the foster children, and they share the sorrow when the foster children move on to another home or return home. I believe we owe a great thank you to them.

I also would like to say a special thank you to Anne and Gerald Dafoe, foster parents in my community who have fostered for over 30 years. I cannot imagine or count the number of children whose lives they have positively affected. Yet in spite of their commitment to children, Anne finds time to be a trainer for the agency, to serve as an advocate for foster parents, to be involved provincially with the Foster Parents Society of Ontario—a wonderful family that is a role model for everyone in our community and this province.

So, on behalf of, not just this Legislature, but the people of Ontario, I would like to say thank you to Anne and Gerald Dafoe.

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today and make a few comments on Mr McGuinty. I want to begin by congratulating him on placing a bet with Mr Gordon Campbell, hoping that the Argos will beat the BC Lions.

I thought what was really important about that bet was that we're so fortunate to have a Canadian Football League. Why? Because under the guidance of a gentleman by the name of John Tory, he rebuilt that league and revitalized it to what it is today: sellouts. We're very proud of the CFL.

Guess what's happened? Although we have a good relationship with BC this week, what's happening to the eastern coast? Mr McGuinty is doing a number on another Premier, Mr Danny. I'll read from this morning's Globe and Mail:

“Williams's Oil Fight Hits McGuinty.

“Danny Williams's fight to hold on to resource revenues took another bizarre twist yesterday when the Newfoundland Premier vowed he had a handwritten letter of support from Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, only to have Mr McGuinty's office deny they had ever heard of such a thing.”

What good is a handwritten letter from Dalton McGuinty anyway? I have this handwritten letter from Dalton McGuinty, the taxpayer protection pledge. This man said he would not raise taxes. Guess what? He

signed it during the election campaign and broke his promise. He will create deficits and increase taxes. Thank you, Mr Speaker, and good luck to the Argonauts.

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PUBLIC INQUIRY

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): It gives me great pleasure to rise today and, first, welcome page Laura St Marseille from my riding, and speak on an issue that is of utmost importance to my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

On November 4, 2004, the Premier stood before this House and committed to the people of my riding that a full public inquiry would be called in the Project Truth investigations once all criminal proceedings were concluded.

I'm happy to announce today that on Monday, November 15, 2004, the last of the criminal proceedings were concluded, and yesterday the Premier, myself and the Attorney General, Michael Bryant, committed to holding a full public inquiry in this case. Thank you, Minister Bryant.

The Project Truth investigations and subsequent criminal proceedings have clouded over the Cornwall area for the past decade. With the announcement of this public inquiry, the truth of allegations of misconduct and alleged cover-ups will be able to come to light. The people of Cornwall and area will be able to lift this cloud of allegations and have these investigations come to a conclusion.

I look forward to working with the Attorney General's office to ensure we get the terms of reference right for this inquiry. I will welcome Minister Bryant to my riding in the near future to meet with the victims' groups and stakeholders to ensure that justice is served for the people of Cornwall.

As a candidate in the 2003 election, I championed this issue. During the past year, I worked tirelessly with the Attorney General's office to ensure this issue was constantly on the agenda. I applaud the victims' groups and both Alain Seguin and Paul Scott for their determination in this cause, and am proud to be part of a government that has respected and supported the concerns of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Waiting times for surgery and MRIs are of great concern to the people of this province. Ontario wants and needs a health care system that can deliver timely access to crucial procedures such as MRIs, hip and knee replacements, cancer surgery, cataract operations and cardiac surgeries.

Yesterday, the McGuinty government announced new funding of \$107 million to reduce wait times. That's \$107 million. In fact, this money will take a one-year bite out of waiting lists for Ontarians. This money comes from the recently negotiated federal-provincial accord on

medicare, and unlike the previous government, we are actually going to spend this money on health care.

Interjection: What a novel concept.

Mr Duguid: A novel concept.

With this investment, we will see 1,680 more hip and knee replacements, 805 more cardiac surgeries and 2,000 more cataract operations, as well as more cancer surgeries and longer hours of operation for MRIs.

Not only will this money go to reducing waiting times; it will also go toward building a waiting list registry, which will, for the first time, give Ontarians a reliable measure of how long waiting lists are. For the first time in a long time, the people of Ontario have a government that is committed to improving health care in this province through meaningful investments in areas that matter to average citizens.

Transforming the health care system in this province is a formidable challenge, but with the leadership of our Premier and our Minister of Health and with the leadership and dedication of our caucus, we are going to get this job done.

GREY CUP

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This Sunday, all eyes will be on the nation's capital, Ottawa, because it is the 95th year that the Grey Cup will be celebrated. We've got two great teams, one from the west coast, British Columbia, versus our own Toronto Argos, representing this great province of Ontario.

As you know, Mr Speaker, this spectacle that brings Canadians together will bring tens of millions of dollars into the Ottawa economy. It is also a great celebration of an historic Canadian event that brings players from across Canada to demonstrate that we in Canada have something distinctive, something to be very proud of, something that is uniquely Canadian and something that hopefully our young people will continue to appreciate and be part of.

So we invite everybody from across Ontario to get together at family parties, to visit their local restaurants, to be in Ottawa at the game, and to celebrate not only football, not only the Grey Cup, but two different parts of the country coming together not in controversy, not bashing each other, but in good, clean competition at the Grey Cup. This Sunday hopefully we'll all partake in this great Canadian event called the Grey Cup. Go, Argos, go.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following resolutions:

Resolved, that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Dispense? Thank you.

VISITOR

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome His Worship the mayor of the spectacular city of Hawkesbury on the eastern border of the great empire of Ontario, Mayor Jacques Héту.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order, but we certainly welcome you, sir.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to tonight's sitting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated Monday, November 15, 2004, when the House adjourns today at 6 pm, it stand adjourned until Monday, November 22, at 1:30 pm.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated Monday, November 15, 2004, when the House adjourns today at 6 pm, it stand adjourned until Monday, November 22, at 1:30 pm.

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

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 18

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting Bill 18.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that the order referring Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor, to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly be discharged and the bill instead be ordered for third reading, and that the order for third reading of Bill 18 may be called today.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved that the order referring Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor, to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly be discharged and the bill instead be ordered for third reading, and that the order for third reading of Bill 18 may be called today.

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

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL RENOUVEAU DÉMOCRATIQUE

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I rise today to tell this House of an important step in advancing the most ambitious democratic renewal agenda in Ontario's history. We are taking the necessary steps that will renew Ontario's democracy and make it stronger.

I will remind members of this House that we have introduced bills to fix election dates on the first Thursday of October on a four-year cycle, a bill to mandate attendance at question period, we're expanding the Provincial Auditor's powers—

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm reading the statement provided to me and required to be provided to me by the minister, and it's not included in this statement, sir. Could I have a copy of the statement? I'm not hearing what's in the statement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Perhaps you could arrange for him to have what's necessary, and we'll all listen to the statement.

Hon Mr Bryant: We will be having pre-election audits, a ban on partisan government advertising, and this House, of course, now has a bill that, for the first time, was introduced in the House by a committee.

1350

This morning, I joined the Premier in launching the next step in our government's ambitious democratic renewal agenda—paragraph 4.

We announced historic measures that will give citizens a stronger voice in shaping Ontario's democracy than ever before.

The first is a citizens' jury on political finance. We'll be setting up that jury to find ways to reduce the influence of money in politics in Ontario and give people more confidence in our democratic system. The citizens' jury will be a deliberative body made up of ordinary citizens. It will look at a range of issues, including expense and contribution levels, reporting requirements, leadership contests and pre-election periods. It will make recommendations on the future of Ontario's political finance system after considering a draft bill on the subject.

Secondly, we will also establish a citizens' assembly on electoral reform. The assembly will look at how Ontarians elect their representatives, the most wide-ranging and comprehensive examination of our electoral system since Confederation.

C'est la première fois en Ontario qu'un gouvernement donne aux citoyens un rôle aussi important dans l'élaboration de notre processus politique et de son fonctionnement.

We kicked it off with a launch of a public dialogue on democracy, which is going on here today at Queen's Park. I know that some members have been over to participate in some of the sessions. Everyone has been invited to attend, and I know some have been there. I know everybody is very busy here in the Legislature today, but I welcome all members to come and attend. Of course, there will be a reception at the end of the afternoon as well. I have to say, I think it's going very well.

Today's dialogue begins this important conversation with Ontarians. It's the first of many we'll be having with Ontarians across the province about improving the quality of our democracy, modernizing our political institutions and diversifying political participation. We must modernize our democracy in Ontario; there is no doubt. I think we all agree and understand that there is a malaise that the people expect us to do something about. This is an important step in that direction.

The Deputy Speaker: Responses?

Mr Sterling: It's odd, as we go down this path, that the announcement for this initiative in terms of democratic renewal is made outside the Legislature, that there is no opportunity within this Legislature to debate this important matter—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Sterling:—nor is there any motion on the floor for us to consider how this should be done. We are the elected representatives of the people of Ontario, and I believe the elected representatives of Ontario should have some say about how this particular democratic renewal process goes forward. It is not within the realm of the Liberal Party of Ontario to decide how the next 100 years of our history are going to be shaped. It is up to, first, our elected representatives of this Legislative Assembly to at least have some input as to how this democratic renewal process should take place.

I have not been consulted with regard to today's announcement. I am not aware of any other member of the opposition who has been consulted with regard to this. The public should know that this is a partisan exercise.

I want the government to be straight with the people of Ontario. Today, the Liberal Party of Ontario is setting us on an irrevocable course toward proportional representation. The government knows full well that it is likely damning the people of Ontario to perpetual minority Parliaments, coalition governments and long-term instability.

I can't think of anything more undemocratic than the way this government has set forth on this process. If we're looking seriously as to how we can improve our democratic system, we should start with a completely different attitude on how we conduct ourselves in this

place. This must start with having the Premier and his ministers making better use of government backbenchers and opposition MPPs. It should start with having ministers or their parliamentary assistants being in the Legislature when bills they introduced are being debated. It's all too common during debate to look across the floor and see no ministry representative. It means that an MPP's input will never be considered because we know it never will be heard.

During the last election campaign, the government talked about some of these things. The Premier even made promises to change the way business was going to be conducted here. Unfortunately, nothing has happened. If this government doesn't start to act on its promises it made to fix this place, it won't matter who gets elected or how we get elected. The Premier doesn't understand that democratic renewal is about regaining the respect of the people in our politicians and the institution of Parliament.

Unfortunately, this government has contributed more to public cynicism in a single year than any other administration in the history of this place.

Let's look at your record on reform in this legislature. You promised, "We will live within our means by balancing the budget and not adding to the debt. We will comply with the Taxpayer Protection Act and balanced budget legislation."

The Premier broke his signed pledge to hold a referendum before raising taxes. The Premier continues to refuse to take the tax increase to a province-wide vote, in accordance with the law.

The Premier vowed to "make sure all non-cabinet MPPs are free to criticize and vote against government legislation." We've had 40 government bills and we haven't had one government backbencher stand up in opposition to any of the 40 government bills.

Our leader, John Tory, believes that the best way to fix this place is for politicians to keep their campaign promises to respect the role of MPPs, fix the lack of productivity in this Legislature, improve the decorum in this House and improve the flow of information to the public and the opposition. We have to start inside before looking outside.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I've got to say that I think this is the shortest minister's statement the Attorney General has ever made. He went on much longer about pit bulls, and I'm surprised that on such an important announcement as this today, there were not more details given.

I have some comfort for the member for Lanark-Carleton when he complained about not being consulted about this. I went to the announcement, and the problem was, there wasn't much detail. There wasn't much of an announcement today in terms of where this is going, and that's why I believe the minister's statement was so very short today in the Legislature.

This is an important issue to a lot of people in Ontario. Equal Voice, the organization that I've been working with, and women from your party and the Conservatives are looking forward to the democratic renewal process,

and in fact we want to make sure that this process that is put in place is reflective of all in our society and is truly non-partisan. We make no bones about it. New Democrats have been advocating for proportional representation for a long time, and that's why it's so critically important that it be done right. We need to see even more pressing reforms in campaign financing and enumeration if we're really going to fix the system in Ontario. The minister mentioned all of these today in those little fact sheets and questionnaires for people who were at the meeting today, but there are really not a lot of details.

1400

I was surprised in the scrum that the Premier, when asked about proportional representation and his views on it, almost treated it like a dirty word. He didn't want to go there. I believe that it's really important that we understand that there are different forms of proportional representation and that, in order to change the system so we have more women and more visible minorities and representation from our communities, that's where we have to go. We're confident that if the right kind of citizens' forum is put together that is truly independent, that reports to this assembly, not to the Attorney General's office, which is what they did in British Columbia—there are all kinds of conditions. We want to work with the government to make sure this would be a truly—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): We want to help.

Ms Churley: Yes, we want to help—a truly independent process that reports to the Legislative Assembly, not to the Attorney General. That is critical.

I want to see principles and terms of reference in place that we all agree on so we can make sure that the direction the citizens' committee deals with is truly non-partisan and something that is agreed upon by all the members in this House.

The other thing that struck me today, which really concerned me, was some cherry-picking by the government in terms of which reforms they promised in the election that they would do early and which ones they seem to be hiding behind the citizens' jury on today. For instance, early on, the government announced with great fanfare that they're cherry-picking fixed dates for elections. That, in my view, should be part of the jury, if this is where you're going with all those promises. It should be part of the whole package. Why pick that one out and deal with it separately when you're looking at a bigger, comprehensive reform?

At the same time, a very important issue that I've raised many times in this House is real-time disclosure—financing, all those dinners with multi-thousands of dollars to buy influence with the government. The government promised real-time disclosure and won't do it. Why not do that one right away? Why send stuff like that to a citizens' jury? Just do it. That's a no-brainer. Why pick out certain parts of it that suit you now and leave things like real-time disclosure on donations to a

later date? Those are the kinds of things that can be dealt with right away.

So I say to the minister today that we didn't get very much detail at all about where this is going and what they're thinking. We need to make sure that some of these issues like real-time disclosure are dealt with now—why wait; just do it—and that a citizens' assembly and all those other things vaguely referred to today are very much part of a non-partisan legislative process so we can be sure there is not in any way political influence. Let me tell you: It's just human nature, when a government is in power, to sort of want to look at what kind of system might suit them and work best for them. It may even be subconscious; I'm not suggesting otherwise. But we have to watch out for those kinds of things.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): A question for the Premier: Yesterday, I raised the issue of Toronto school board trustees backrooming a 200% pay increase for themselves. You responded that the policy was never approved or endorsed by any representative of the government. You also said that you didn't approve of the policy and that it was unacceptable.

Board trustees continue to stand by their assertion that Minister Kennedy had given tacit, if not direct, approval to this no-receipts-necessary slush fund. Yesterday, the minister, unlike you, was not prepared to condemn this unseemly practice.

Premier, who is speaking for the government on this? Who is telling the truth?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Obviously the Leader of the Opposition is entitled to choose the subject matter of his questions, but I'm not sure what more I can add today to what I provided by way of information and commitment yesterday. I gather he is attempting today to introduce some daylight between me and the minister, for obvious purposes.

Let me speak on behalf of the government once again. What the trustees did is unacceptable. It is not something we support. I've asked the trustees to reconsider this. I've also asked the minister to consider our options in the face of their decision.

Mr Runciman: It sounds like Minister Kennedy is marching to his own drummer. This policy has been in place for over seven months, it has cost taxpayers over \$200,000 and has now spread to the Peel public school board. Your minister clearly has a different view than you. He's not prepared to condemn trustees tripling their pay through the back door—no receipts wanted, no proof needed, no questions asked. That's apparently OK with Mr Kennedy. This is public money, Premier. Your

minister stood by, apparently, for seven months as trustees skirted the law and abused public funds.

Premier, will you now exercise some leadership, rein in your rogue minister and demand that trustees in Toronto, Peel and any other board engaged in this kind of inappropriate activity refund these ill-gotten monies to taxpayers?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Obviously I do not share the assessment of our Minister of Education, who has been working extremely hard on behalf of Ontario students and on behalf of the bright future of public education. I have nothing further to add to the statements I made yesterday and the one that I made just a moment ago.

Mr Runciman: The Premier is adopting the David Peterson strategy of speaking very quietly or mumbling when they have a difficult time responding.

At the Toronto board alone, it works out to \$204,000 in taxpayer-funded slush funds that trustees gave themselves, no strings attached. You have a responsibility to stand up for taxpayers, Premier, and order this money to be repaid.

This raises more serious questions, I believe, and I'm reminded of how your Minister of Finance did not disclose to you details of the securities commission investigation into a company he was formerly involved with. Now we have a Minister of Education who is openly and directly contradicting you. This raises serious questions about leadership, and I challenge you to start showing leadership today by immediately ordering the trustees in Toronto to repay all monies received from this fund and immediately order all other school boards to do the same. Stand up for taxpayers, Premier; do the right thing.

Hon Mr McGuinty: What we are witnessing is a tremendous effort to make something out of nothing. I have indicated already where we stand with respect to this action that was taken on the part of the Toronto District School Board. We do not approve of that. We do not condone that. I've asked the members of the board to reconsider that. My minister is here, I see, and I've asked him to review our options in light of the position that they have taken.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Premier. Right across Ontario, nurses and other health care workers are worried about their future, their families and, most importantly, their patients. Hospitals collectively around Ontario are experiencing budget shortfalls of some \$600 million. Just this past month, hospitals right across the province had to submit proposals on cutting beds, on increasing waiting times and on laying off nurses and health care workers.

Premier, on October 16, one day after these transition plans were due, Tom Closson, the president of Toronto's University Health Network, said, "How do you make the trade-off between hip and knee replacements or hyster-

ectomies?" Can you explain how the hospitals are to make those choices?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member will know that, by the process we've established, the choices, especially in the earliest stages of the process, which is where we're at, are not the choices that the honourable member referenced from Mr Closson's quote. The choices, very clearly, are between our dedication to patient care and our concern about not paying any more for administrative costs than is necessary in the Ontario health care system. The earliest steps in the process we've established with Ontario's hospitals direct them very clearly to areas the furthest away in hospitals from any involvement with patients or clinical care.

As a result of the efforts we made yesterday, in a speech to the Ontario Hospital Association, a breakfast that I had with the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association this morning, there's plenty of evidence that the hospitals, nurses and the government are working together with a view toward enhancing the quality of patient care and making sure that we're not spending any more in administration than is necessary.

1410

Mr Baird: That answer will be cold comfort to the nurses and health care workers at the London Health Sciences Centre, at the Ottawa Hospital or in Northumberland county.

The London Health Sciences Centre is projecting a \$38-million deficit. Their overall reduction is going to be 580 nurses and health care workers. They are going to have to close 130 beds. I want to ask you very directly, Minister: How should they have to make the choices between providing hip and knee replacements and cancer care for people in southwestern Ontario? I ask you very directly: How are they to make those choices?

Hon Mr Smitherman: As a result of the investments we made yesterday, hospitals all across the province are going to have additional resources to do both hips and knees and cancer treatments.

The honourable member, in his question, referenced the London Health Sciences Centre, one of the best hospitals we have in Ontario, deeply valued. "The head of London's largest hospital says he is optimistic massive staff cuts can be avoided." The headline was "Dagnone Optimistic Cuts Won't Be Needed." The London Health Sciences Centre president says he hopes to find "some creative ways to avoid layoffs."

What Mr Dagnone recognized and what others in the Ontario Hospital Association recognize, and the honourable member fails to—I made it much clearer in our speech yesterday—is that we are going to work with Ontario hospitals to get them into balance over a period of time with a process that is established. And the process that is established is clear: to drive resources to patient care and to save every penny possible from adminis-

trative costs because we know that at the end of the day Ontarians support that very principle.

Mr Baird: Patients and nurses and health care workers in Ontario see cold comfort from these expressions of feigned support from this Minister of Health. They saw his entire caucus, the entire government caucus, vote against a plan to put a moratorium on the layoff of nurses, a moratorium on the closure of beds in Ontario.

I want to bring up the case of Joseph Brant hospital, where the chief of staff, Dr Ben Carruthers, said, "Our surgeons are often forced to delay critical cancer surgery."

Minister, you are cutting beds, you are firing nurses with your plan to underfund hospitals, and now you take away \$600 million on October 15 and try to put in \$107 million on November 15. How can you possibly expect health care to improve and waiting lists to decline when even your own senior bureaucrat acknowledges that won't even happen until 2006?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I don't know what the honourable member's difficulties are with numbers, but let me just refresh his memory with a few. You want to hear about cold comfort? Cold comfort was the days when that party was the government in Ontario. Cold comfort was the \$557-million cut they inflicted on Ontario's hospitals as they closed 5,000 beds and many institutions across Ontario. Cold comfort is the \$721 million they left behind in unpaid bills buried in the books of Ontario hospitals. Cold comfort is the reality that that party projected to spend \$700 million less this year than we are. Every hospital in the province of Ontario got more money this year. And yesterday we made a \$107-million investment to address the priorities of Ontarians: wait times in five key areas.

The part that must really be cold comfort to the honourable member is the reality that the Ontario Hospital Association and Ontario's nurses are willing to work with the government to solve these challenges.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, last night your government choked off debate on Bill 100, your law to privatize Ontario's hydro electricity.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr Hampton: We think this is an important issue to debate. We think it's an important issue and that people across Ontario ought to be involved in the debate.

Even the chair of Ontario Power Generation thinks there is an important debate. He says that Ontario Power Generation is still waiting for the provincial government, the company's sole shareholder, to define its likely role in the years ahead. He said he should have been able to present a five-year plan on hydro supply, but he can't, because the provincial government isn't giving the company any guidance on what needs to happen.

Premier, when the chair of Ontario Power Generation says there needs to be some clarity, some discussion and some debate, why is your government in such a hurry to shut down debate?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I would remind the member opposite that the opposition parties weren't able to keep the debate going last night. There wasn't a member here to speak to the time allocation motion. While we were all here and ready to go and used up all but eight minutes of our time, the debate collapsed when both opposition parties had 30 minutes each on their hands. They couldn't sustain debate for an hour on something that's that important.

Moreover, this government has set a clear direction on energy policy for the entire sector, and when Bill 100 is passed and we have created the Ontario Power Authority, we have the request for proposals on renewable energy that's coming out, probably next week, with announcements, and 2,500 megawatts on other power sources in January.

We have taken decisive action quickly to move things forward. The results have been lower wholesale market prices. The results have been a new conservation effort. The results are there and we're moving forward.

Bill 100 is the right bill. It had over 100 delegations at committee hearings all across the province—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr Hampton: What the Premier and the Minister of Energy wanted last night was for members to debate closure. People don't want to debate your pork chop of democracy. People want to debate the issues.

This is what Jake Epp says: "There are a lot of issues that need to be taken care of, whether you're talking about supply, you're talking about the market, whether you're talking about OPG's role," in the private market. But what is he saying? No direction. No five-year plan. Not even a one-year plan."

Premier, people don't want to debate closure. They don't want to debate your hatchet effort at democracy. These are real issues. Why are you so afraid of debating the issues that your own chair of Ontario Power Generation has raised?

Hon Mr Duncan: The members opposite didn't show up to talk about Bill 100 last night. It's that simple. The debate collapsed. You weren't here. You missed the debate.

Now, this government has put a new board and chair in place at OPG. We have made decisions about the future of the company, and we'll make them according to our timetable. Remember, when we came to office we inherited a company that was in complete disarray. We have to be deliberate and careful in the decisions we make. It would be impossible to turn OPG around in 10 months. The last thing we need to do is make knee-jerk decisions that result in flip-flops like we saw under the

previous government, because it creates even further instability. I'm the first energy minister in almost a decade to give clear and consistent direction to the sector. Given the strong response we've received to our RFPs, I believe the industry recognizes this.

We're moving forward in a deliberate and positive fashion. When Bill 100 passes, we will have a new power authority and conservation bureau. We believe these are the right steps to ensure a reliable, affordable, safe supply of electricity for the people of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: What a switch for the McGuinty government, who just this morning had this to say: "To me, democracy is precious, too precious to be taken for granted, too precious to be left to atrophy." Here, we've got the chairman of Ontario Power Generation, which provides two thirds of the electricity in Ontario, saying that there are important issues to be debated: whether there's adequate supply; he says they need a five-year plan. What's the answer of the McGuinty government? Chop off debate. No discussion allowed. No debate allowed.

Premier, I ask you, how can you talk about how precious democracy is in the morning and, at the very same time, chop off debate on one of the most important public issues that affects virtually everyone in Ontario? How can you talk about democracy and then do that?

1420

Hon Mr Duncan: The member probably hasn't read Bill 100. It deals with a limited set of variables. Unlike the member opposite, when his party tore up collective agreements across Ontario and had no public hearings, we had eight days of travelling public hearings across the province. We heard from 100 delegations. We received more than 600 written responses. We had eight hours of debate in the House on this bill. I'll remind the member that this is only the second time this government has used time allocation; we take its usage very seriously. That's far lower than the previous Tory government and, I remind the member, far fewer times than your government used time allocation in its history.

This bill has had public hearings across the province; it's had debate in this House. The opposition couldn't sustain the debate for even an hour last night. It's time to get on with the business of repairing Ontario's electricity sector. That's what we're doing, responsibly and deliberately, in the best interests of the ratepayers of Ontario.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The national child benefit supplement is a federal strategy aimed at preventing and reducing child poverty. But your government, like the Conservative government before you, claws back this supplement from recipients of Ontario Works and the Ontario disability support program.

During the election you said, "We will end the claw-back of the national child benefit supplement. The claw-

back is wrong, and we will end it." After the election you changed your mind; you haven't ended it.

Premier, will you end the regressive clawback of the national child benefit supplement for Ontario's poorest families, or was this just another broken promise?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): We do appreciate the question, because there are many poverty advocates who have been working with us to help us determine and do the very best we can for the families in Ontario who are our most vulnerable people. I know those advocates who were here today will appreciate the goodwill that we're showing on this issue of the national child benefit, because this year's amount that came from the federal government was left with families, and that was to the tune of \$7 million. Next year that amount will be even greater.

What we understand, and what they know too, is that what we currently do, decisions that were made back in 1997 with a quarter of a billion dollars, does roll in to help working families with child care. It does develop and has developed programs that help the most vulnerable in Ontario. We have very serious decisions that we have to make. I appreciate that the NDP may want to do that on the fly, but we can't. We have to do the responsible thing, and we are reviewing all of those programs. So we hope they know that the goodwill is there.

Mr Hampton: The minister talks about doing the responsible thing. I quote: "We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The clawback is wrong, and we will end it." Apparently, it was irresponsible to say that, because you haven't ended it.

Minister, representatives from the Income Security Advocacy Centre, along with the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation and the Charter Committee on Poverty Issues, were here today to launch a legal challenge against the clawback. They say the clawback is discriminatory and unconstitutional. They say you should do what New Brunswick and Manitoba have done: end the clawback. They have to bring their challenge now because poor families can't wait. They can't wait for you to dither on the promise the Premier made.

So I ask the Premier again, will you keep your election promise and stop clawing back the national child benefit supplement from the poorest families in Ontario?

Hon Ms Pupatello: We do appreciate the people who were here in the House today. We meet with them on a regular basis, and it is always around how we can better help our most vulnerable people. We appreciate the efforts they make on a daily basis, as do several ministers in our cabinet who work with poverty issues.

Let me say this: What we wish had happened in 1997 is that they had come forward like this to stop that clawback that did happen in eight out of 10 provinces across the country. We understood that we want more money to be in the hands of our most poor in this province, and to

show our goodwill, immediately upon forming government we stopped that clawback. All of the money that has come in addition to that since we've been the government has been left with families. Next year the amount is going to grow again.

The people across the way, the people on our side of the House, understand that the money that came from the national child benefit goes to determine very great programs. We've got big decisions to make. We're reviewing those programs and hope we can find a solution to this.

Mr Hampton: The minister talks about 1997. This isn't about 1997. This is about Dalton McGuinty, who said a year ago, "The clawback is wrong, and we will end it." That's what it's about.

I want to talk about some of the people who are here, people like Dave Lance, a 24-year-old single father of twin two-year-old boys, who knows that after the clawback, single-parent families live 48% below the poverty line. Paula Fillion, a mother of two, tries to survive on her husband's disability allowance. She knows that at the end of the month, you have clawed back from her and her family \$1,500 every month.

These are people who are trying to survive. You're taking money out of their pocket. You're taking money out of their pocket, when you said you'd end that. Are you going to end the clawback of the national child benefit, or is this just another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon Ms Papatello: We really are proud of the fact that the moment we took office, we stopped clawing back all of the new monies that the federal government has been pouring into the national child benefit. This year, that's \$7 million. Next year, it's going to be many more tens of millions, and that's going to continue.

What I can tell this House, and in particular the NDP, is that when we had financial troubles, when we discovered the \$5.5 billion worth that that last government left us, despite starting that clawback in 1997, we didn't do across-the-board cuts to the agencies that helped the most vulnerable like the NDP did during the social contract. We didn't go willy-nilly and just say, "Cuts to all of you, even though you do the work for the most vulnerable in this province."

We will be responsible about this. We understand that \$160 million of that money helps the working poor with child care. We also know that \$42 million funds programs that help our most poor. We have big decisions to make. This review is underway of how that money is being spent, and we are hearing from all of the people who run those programs to tell us of their value—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Thank you, Minister. New question.

LABOUR RELATIONS

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Your government stood up in this House earlier today and talked about advancing the most ambitious democratic renewal agenda

in Ontario's history. You talked about giving citizens a stronger voice.

Well, I would say to you, Minister, your Bill 144 is completely contrary to giving any citizen in this province a stronger voice. It does not advance the democratic renewal agenda because, in your bill, you have completely undermined the most fundamental democratic right of a worker to a secret ballot vote by granting the OLRB the power to automatically certify unions where they determine the employer to be in violation of the act.

I ask you, Minister, how does giving the OLRB, as you know, an un-elected group—how does this provide a strong voice for workers in this province, and how does it increase their democratic rights?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I do appreciate you talking about a power that existed in various forms in this province since 1950 and, in fact, existed while the honourable member was the Minister of Labour, until it was eliminated by the previous administration in 1998. It's a power that existed in the Ontario Labour Relations Board—the labour equivalent of a court—to deal with the worst labour relations abuses in the worst cases, where there was no other remedy. That's what we've introduced.

We've made it balanced by making sure that not only would the board have the power to certify, but they would have the power to stop a union certification drive if the union engaged in the worst abuses, where no other remedy is available. Interestingly, of 12,000 certification applications in the 20 years up to 1999, the power was used in 82 cases—less than 1%.

Mrs Witmer: I find it unbelievable that this minister is not prepared to allow workers to exercise their democratic right to a secret ballot vote. This is not democratic renewal. This country sends observers everywhere in the world in order to make sure that people have the opportunity to exercise a free, democratic and secret ballot vote, and yet you do this.

In fact, you've gone one step further. You have moved forward in a way that you have stripped construction workers totally of their right to a secret ballot vote. I ask you, do you not remember the intimidation of the past? Do you not remember the lack of fairness? Why are you stripping workers in this province of their right to a democratic, secret ballot vote?

1430

Hon Mr Bentley: First of all, with respect to the section 11 power the member spoke about a few moments ago, in fact, every other jurisdiction in Canada has that power. It was only under the Tories that we were deprived of it for the worst abuses and the worst cases. With respect to card-based certification, the member will remember that it was part of the labour relations landscape under Leslie Frost, under John Robarts, under Bill Davis. It's been part of the labour relations landscape for decades.

Construction is different from the other sectors. We want to ensure that the workers have an effective right to decide whether they wish to be part of a union or not. We

haven't ended the vote; the vote is still an option in construction, as it was before. So we now have two options in construction. The goal is not to favour one side or the other; the goal is to ensure that workers can effectively choose whether they wish to be part of a union or not, and that is the essence of democracy.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On behalf of our caucus, I'd like to congratulate Paul Martin on kicking Carolyn Parrish out of caucus.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order. New question.

AUTISM SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. There are a number of parents of autistic children who were at the public accounts committee meeting this morning, and they are in the gallery right now. They are very concerned with the number of lost hours of IBI treatment that the auditor identified in his report.

Brendan Barger waited one and a half years for treatment. He was promised one year of treatment at 25 hours a week. He actually ended up receiving eight and a half months of service at 15 hours a week. It's a small wonder he was still non-verbal when he was cut off IBI at the age of six.

Jordan Boufford, whose parents, Brad and Cindy, are in the gallery today, was cut off IBI treatment in May by your government, despite your Premier's promise not to discriminate against autistic children over the age of six. He lost 570 hours of treatment, all at the hands of the service provider.

Minister, it's grossly unfair that this could happen, especially when the agency gets paid for this treatment. Can you guarantee that all hours of treatment lost at the hands of service providers will be provided to all those children who were promised those hours?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for the question, and I thank her for her ongoing concern for these children. We've also thanked the auditor for his work.

We knew there were problems in the program, and that's why we fully supported the audit of this program. We appreciate the recommendations and are looking very hard at them. But we didn't wait for this report to begin to improve the system. We increased spending by \$40 million, \$10 million towards the IBI, or under six, program. We have reached more than 20% more children with the changes we've made. We have also created guidelines so that children don't languish on the waiting list—children that aged out before they even got an assessment to see if they would qualify for IBI.

We are streamlining the system; we can't clean this up overnight. I understand the parents' concern; we're working as fast as we can. We hired 40 new IBI therapists;

we're training them as fast as we can. The work is hard, and it's ongoing work. I can assure the honourable member opposite that we will meet these challenges.

Ms Martel: Minister, the question was, will you guarantee that all those hours of service that were promised and lost at the hands of service providers will, in fact, be given to these children? That's a question you have to respond to.

The auditor also noted that there are huge cost discrepancies between the direct service model and the direct treatment funding model for IBI. He noted that if the direct treatment model for IBI were used more often—he didn't note that; he said the direct funding model seems to be much more cost-effective, and many parents believe that if it were used more often, many more autistic children would actually get the IBI treatment they need.

The problem is that too many parents are never even given the option of direct funding. Too many more parents couldn't afford it, even if they were given the option, because they have to pay out of their own pockets to top up the salaries of therapists and other health care providers. It's not fair that parents who receive direct service get all their costs covered, and parents who get a direct funding model have to pay out of their own pocket.

Will you guarantee that you will revise the direct funding model as soon as possible so that no parent will have to pay out of their pocket for services your government should be paying for?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Again, I thank the honourable member for her question. Indeed, we are taking that particular recommendation very seriously. I have directed my ministry to look at different funding models, including the one the auditor believes may be more cost-efficient and better for the parents. I can assure the member opposite we are looking at that very seriously.

SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, the Premier has shown leadership in asking the Toronto District School Board to reconsider their decision on expense accounts. Earlier today, the Premier said he has asked you to look into the issue further and follow up with the school board. Can you tell me what is being done about this to ensure that all the proper rules are followed?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): Thank you very much for the question. I would like the members of the House to know, quite contrary to some of the comments made earlier by the members of the opposition, that, in fact, under the Education Act the only expenses that can be claimed are those that are out-of-pocket expenses. After a discussion I had last night with the chair of the Toronto District School Board, they have willingly agreed to observe that practice. In future, they will only have expenses that will have out-of-pocket receipts collected.

I think it's very important for people to know that we did not rush to judgment on the part of the board, and we will continue to treat them and every trustee in this province with the respect that they deserve but, it seems, did not get from the now opposition party.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Supplementary?

Mr Berardinetti: No supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: New question. The member for Haliburton—I'm going to get you in Haliburton yet today—Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

COMPOSTING FACILITY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of the Environment: Minister, I want to bring to your attention today a serious situation with respect to a composting facility at Newmarket. It's not operating within its own guidelines. I don't need to remind you of the recent garbage fire in York region. You were unable to bring that situation under control.

Now we have a similar situation smouldering. Leaves are piled 20 or 30 feet high at this site. They go not only beyond the proper storage area but beyond the ring road of this site. That would hinder fire trucks from getting into the site, and as well, these leaves are piled dangerously close to live power lines.

People are growing nervous given the recent garbage-fuelled fire in York. What are you doing to bring this facility into compliance?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to report that upon the report of the fire at this location, Ministry of the Environment staff were deployed there. They work with the municipal fire-fighting folks to ensure that, in the execution of putting out the fire, the environment is protected, that any water that would result from that activity does not get into the waterways of that community.

We will continue to be on-site as long as we need to be to protect the environment and to ensure the people in that area are not in jeopardy either.

Mr Barrett: Look, Minister, there are serious concerns. I do remind you of at least two major dump fires that I am aware of under Liberal governments, the Hagersville tire fire in my area, and as I mentioned, the recent York region fire—both right under the nose of a Liberal government minister.

This mountain of leaves is in danger of spontaneous combustion. The risk grows as the pile grows. It grows closer to live power lines, as I mentioned. Emergency vehicles would be unable to get to this site. People's homes could be endangered, and these people want an answer. Minister, will your ministry put a stop to this unsafe situation now, or are you waiting for another fire?

1440

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Certainly there's no question that landfills have the potential for this. There are certificates of approval that guide the owners of these facilities in terms of how they should be operated so that

they present the least amount of risk. I'm sure that as we speak, the Ministry of the Environment is working to ensure that this operation is following its certificate of approval.

When you talk about the fire at the facility in Vaughan, I'm very pleased to report that we had issued orders and, in fact, that facility is in a court process. So the Ministry of the Environment has been active, has been diligent in ensuring that when facilities do not comply with their certificates of approval, they are held to account.

Once the fire broke out, we had SWAT folks at the gate making sure there was no other garbage going in. We've issued orders to ensure that no garbage is going in. We've also required the site to demonstrate that they will be complying with their certificate of approval by December.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Boards in Ontario are smarting from an underhanded Liberal move that clawed back their special education funds to the tune of \$100 million. Yesterday in estimates, you claimed that school boards weren't using the money you took from them. This is simply not true.

As an example, the Sudbury French Catholic board had \$384,000 on their books on August 31, 2003, and spent it during the 2003-04 school year on special education programs. But you declared those funds to be surplus and demanded the money back. Now these boards are cutting special education services. You promised to deliver change, and you are taking away funding from special-needs kids. How can you defend such an odious move?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): The only thing that is odious in this room is this member opposite trying to allege a reduction in special education services. We in this government are funding \$163 million more for ISA services for children who were left to wait by the previous government. In fact, what we have said to boards is that they must spend money the previous government let them park in bank accounts. The \$76 million they put in the bank has to be out there in favour of students.

What the member brings up is part of a discussion we're just about to conclude with the school boards' association, so that boards that spent money in good conscience before the rules were applied will certainly not have it taken back from them, and there will be a fund, not one dime of which is coming back to the province, all of which will be available to be spent by the boards on the new needs they have. So more money will be spent this year than the \$163 million we've already distributed.

Mr Marchese: Every time I hear a promise of money, I hear more clawbacks.

I want to give more examples. The Durham District School Board lost \$1.5 million. That means 46 casual

educational assistants' assignments will not be renewed. The Rainbow District School Board lost \$2.2 million. That means no money for special education teachers or educational assistants and the number of early reading intervention teachers cut in half. The Waterloo Catholic District School Board lost \$880,500. They won't be able to rehire 20 teaching assistants for special education students who were laid off in the spring.

Minister, yesterday you told us this: School boards that had plans to spend special education funds on special education programs could do so. You said those funds won't be considered surplus. The boards that had their funds labelled surplus and clawed back will be happy to hear this. When are you going to call them and tell them their money will be returned?

Hon Mr Kennedy: Again, we have a member opposite with a very flimsy grasp of the facts. But unfortunately, it's not without consequence, because he is perpetrating some uncertainty for parents out there who need to know that in fact the dollars are out there and at work. There were submissions from boards for 2,500 additional education assistants and 1,200 additional teachers. In fact, one of the boards that he mentions, the Sudbury board—their plan submitted to us was to keep the \$2 million they had in surplus for the entire year, to spend none of it. Those dollars will now, instead, be available, and the Sudbury board and every board that wants to expand beyond the already large expansion we funded will be able to apply for them, and they will be out there where they should be, helping these kids get the education that they deserve—finally.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Biodiesel is a non-toxic, biodegradable, sulphur-free, clean-burning diesel replacement fuel made from natural, renewable sources such as any agricultural seed oil, recycled cooking grease and even rendered waste animal fats. In fact, this alternative fuel has proven to be so viable that Biox Corp announced its intention to construct a 60-million litre biodiesel facility in Hamilton, with additional buildings being planned in Ontario.

During the last election, we pledged to implement a renewable fuels policy for Ontario, and there has been much media speculation recently concerning such environmental initiatives. Does this government intend to move aggressively on the implementation of a renewable fuels policy comparable to ethanol that would ensure the use of biodiesel?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Often we hear of Premier McGuinty and his commitment to health care and education, but there's a little-known fact about Premier McGuinty and it's his commitment to a renewable fuels strategy in the province. We're moving forward on an ethanol strategy. We're very proud of the fact that we are going to have a comprehensive renewable fuels strategy in place. Part of that strategy is

going to include biodiesel, because biodiesel is something that we recognize has many benefits for the farmers of this province. We have a serious challenge as a result of BSE and dealing with dead stock. Biodiesel can help us deal with that. We need to find add value for the commodities that our farmers produce in this province. Biodiesel has a great benefit for the soybean growers in this province as well.

We're proud of the work that Biox has done in the Hamilton area. I'm proud that this member is advocating for Biox, because we see a company like Biox and the initiative that's taking place in Sudbury from that partnership as something that's going to benefit agriculture—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms Marsales: Further to that question, some have criticized our renewable fuels strategy because there are not sufficient technologies out there now to provide everything we need. How would you address those concerns, please?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): You're diverting attention from BSE.

Hon Mr Peters: I think we should be worried about BSE, because there's the potential of another case that's just been announced in Washington. You should be standing up and worrying about BSE.

The renewable fuels strategy is important for this province. Renewable fuels are important because these are clean fuels. These are fuels that we can derive from renewable sources. This is a renewable fuel strategy that not only helps the farmers of this province, it helps the health of this province, it helps the environment of this province and more importantly, it helps rural economies. It's very important that we move forward.

There are some great initiatives such as Biox, such as Sudbury, such as the Brant county partnership for the new ethanol project, and Cornwall and the new ethanol project. As well, there are a number of other initiatives such as Iogen in Ottawa, who are prepared to use corn stover and wheat stover and turn that into energy as well. This renewable fuels strategy that we're going to be bringing forward is going to be comprehensive and it's going to make Ontario a leader when it comes to renewable fuels.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): My question is for the Premier. Democratic renewal has a lot to do with this institution, it has to do with how we divide up powers under our constitution and it has to do with our electoral process. I want to talk a little bit about this place, how it's run and the promises you made in the last election to make this place run better.

In the election, you talked about allowing government MPPs to vote their conscience in this place so they could represent their constituents. We've had over 40 government bills voted on in this Legislature and not one of your backbenchers voted to oppose government legis-

lation. That's some 1,600 votes counted amongst all of your people. No one believes that in all of the cases, all of the members could have been in favour. Will you free your members, as promised in the election, to vote their conscience?

1450

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Let me just say that I am very proud to lead a government that's bringing about the most far-reaching democratic reforms ever seen in this province. Let me take the opportunity as well to say, unequivocally, that we have today the best minister for democratic renewal this province has ever had.

We have put forward a number of initiatives and I'm hopeful they will be supported by members opposite. Bill 86, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, will ensure that we set fixed election dates. Ontarians are wondering, why won't the opposition support it? Bill 17, the Executive Council Amendment Act, requires that cabinet ministers attend question period at least two thirds of the time. Again, Ontarians are wondering, why won't the opposition members support that bill?

Mr Sterling: Premier, you do have support from the opposition on many of these matters. We only want you to live up to the spirit of those bills before they're passed, because you're not doing that at the present time.

Today the Premier and his minister announced, outside this Legislature, their role for democratic renewal. There seems to be no role for the existing elected representatives to participate in this process. This is not the right of the Ontario Liberal Party, to make a decision as to where we're going in the next 100 years with regard to our democratic institutions. All parties must have a say as to how this process goes forward.

I ask you, Premier, in the spirit of non-partisanship in this democratic renewal debate, will you set up an equal, representative, all-party committee of this Legislature to make recommendations on the process we go forward with?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We're doing something much better than that. We're going to the citizens of Ontario. We believe the issue of electoral reform is so fundamental, so basic, that we're asking the people of Ontario for their judgment in this matter. But in the interim, again, there are a number of bills before this Legislature that I believe are supported by the people of Ontario, and they continue to ask, why is it that members of the opposition will not support these bills?

For example, Bill 84, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, will prevent any government from ever again hiding a deficit from the people of Ontario. Why won't the members of the opposition support that bill? Bill 18, the Audit Statute Law Amendment Act, will allow for value-for-money audits of institutions. Why won't they support that one? We also have Bill 25, a bill that will end partisan government advertising. Why won't the members opposite support those bills? We have many of those kinds of initiatives. We would like to

get them through, but for some reason, members of the opposition won't support it.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Today is international Transgender Day of Remembrance, the day that calls for an end to the hatred and discrimination transgendered people confront every day. You are now also guilty of discriminating against this minority, because you decided not to relist sex reassignment surgery. This decision perpetuates the misconception that this kind of surgery is not a medical procedure. Most other provinces, including British Columbia and even Alberta, fund it. You were about to relist and then you chose not to.

Some members from the community are here in the public gallery. Will you tell them and this House why you changed your mind and why you're denying them access to the health care they need?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The Attorney General.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): The matter the member is speaking of is currently before the human rights tribunal. There is also a publication ban that has been implemented with respect to the human rights tribunal. We will obviously respect and accept the decision of the tribunal. Other than that, it is before the tribunal right now.

Ms Churley: I say shame on you, Minister of Health, for not answering this question and taking a position on this. It shouldn't have to be before the human rights commission. You can stop that right now by relisting, as you promised to do. What your decision says about your commitment to help stop the discrimination faced by a marginalized group is disgraceful. You are violating—he has already said that you are violating the Ontario Human Rights Code by choosing to deny this.

Keith Norton has called on you to relist it, because the Human Rights Code forbids discrimination in health care based on gender identity. He has also echoed that you are sending the wrong message of intolerance by choosing not to.

Minister, SRS funding had been available in Ontario from 1970 until 1998, when the Harris Tories got rid of it, delisted it, and you promised to reinstate it. Will you stand up today and say that you will keep your promise? You ran on "Choose change." This is your opportunity to live up to that commitment.

Hon Mr Bryant: I say to the member, she knows that this is a matter before the tribunal. I respect the question, and I understand that. It in fact is being heard by the tribunal right now. There are going to be hearings again next week, as I understand it, and it just would not be appropriate for me to speak to it in this Legislature. We will respect and accept the decision of the tribunal.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): My question is directed to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, last month, you introduced legislation that would make Ontario accessible for all citizens. I certainly believe that this legislation is necessary, and I think everyone in the House would agree. You and I heard this morning at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind how important it is for people for whom going to work or going to the grocery store is difficult, and so that is why this legislation is critical.

Upon reading the act, I note that a central piece of your proposed legislation would see accessibility standards developed, standards that would set out requirements that would need to be adopted or implemented by persons or organizations, and these standards are critical to the legislation.

My question is, how will the accessibility standards be developed under the proposed new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for her question. It was a pleasure to be with her in her riding at the CNIB this morning, announcing some very important measures that will approach the accessibility act very soon.

This afternoon, we will be beginning debate on second reading of this very important bill, and I want—on behalf of all of the Legislature, I'm sure—to welcome our special guests from the disability community for this historic event this afternoon.

One of the things I heard over the consultations over the last month with Dr Kular, my former parliamentary assistant, was that there were no standards. Many public and private companies would ask, "How do you expect us to abide by and to make life more accessible for people with disabilities if we don't have the standards?" In other words, "Tell us what we need to do." So the development of standards is crucial to the success of this new act, if it passes. If this act passes, we will begin developing sectoral tables immediately, and we will have people from the disability communities and the appropriate ministries as well as from the appropriate stakeholder groups developing standards immediately.

Ms Wynne: I think it's important that these standards be established to ensure that people with disabilities, no matter where they live or work, can expect the same level of quality and service.

I'm regularly contacted by constituents concerned about their ability or the ability of members of their family to access the kind of services that many of us take for granted. You know that in my riding in Don Valley West, the CNIB is not the only institution, but we have the Bob Rumble Centre for the Deaf, the Common Ground Co-op and the March of Dimes. It's really a centre for institutions and services across the country. My constituents and the advocates for people with disabilities

in the riding and outside will be encouraged to hear that we're working to establish these standards.

How does the government intend to enforce these standards? Should persons and organizations not comply, what are the consequences and ramifications?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Thank you for this important question. One of the other things we heard in our consultations was that there were no compliance and enforcement measures. For those few who would not comply, those were necessary. So we included that in our legislation. Organizations to which an accessibility standard applies must comply within the time period set out in the standard by filing an accessibility report and making that report available to the public. The report may be viewed to ensure compliance, and inspections and audits may also be carried out. Organizations and individuals may be liable, on conviction, for a fine up to \$50,000 for a person and \$100,000 for a company if they do not comply with the standards or if they provide false or misleading information in the accessibility report. This new act, if it passes, will have teeth. That is what the disability community asked for, and that is what we are delivering.

1500

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. A review of the Hansard record will show that you don't answer questions and that, when you do, most of the time you're arrogant and evasive. Let's see if you can answer this question in a way that honours your position and respects parents across the province, who are very concerned that you are stripping them of the control over the funds that they raise in their own communities for purposes within their own schools.

You insist that nothing has changed and, somehow, that control will still be there, yet there is confusion in every school board and every school council in this province. Parents are saying that they have stopped raising money in their own communities until they can be assured in a very clear directive from you that they have direct control over how those funds are spent. Minister, what will you do to send out that directive? When can we expect that to come from your office?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): Well, I will respond, but not with the same graciousness and class that was exhibited by the member opposite. The fact is that all across the province there are engagements taking place now with parents with schools that are properly funded for the first time in many years. This question is coming from the member of a government who voted, time and time again, to take the resources away that made fundraising a necessity to convey education. I dare say, this member didn't have to fundraise for his education because his parents and grandparents sacrificed in a way that his government wasn't prepared, when they were in power, to actually ensure that public education could be done. I'm proud to

say that our government has put, with the support of the Premier and the Minister of Finance, \$1.1 billion back, and made it less necessary to have fundraising chocolate bar sales door-to-door as a way of entitling civic education in this province.

Mr Klees: Again, the Hansard record will show that this minister did not answer the question. He was sarcastic, he was evasive, and it is not at all honouring of the position of the Minister of Education. The fact is, Minister, the Niagara Catholic District School Board has ordered all bank accounts for parent purposes closed. The Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of Catholic School Councils has asked school councils to respectfully decline to comply with the policy, and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has ordered all parent bank accounts closed, the balances rolled into the school's general accounts, and school principals to be given signing authority.

Minister, you didn't answer the question when I first asked it. I'm going to give you one more opportunity to confirm for us that, in fact, school councils will retain control over the spending of those funds; that they cannot be vetoed by principals, and if you'll wipe that smirk off your face and answer it, I would appreciate it.

Hon Gerard Kennedy: If I could respond to the critic for parliamentary comportment across and simply say, the reason I'm not answering his direct question about when we're sending a letter to school councils is because we sent a letter to school boards and school councils in April of last year. In that letter—and we made this information available to the member opposite—we made it extremely clear that there was no change in the management. We will follow up with several initiatives, as many as necessary, to make absolutely sure there is no impact on fundraising.

This is an initiative that comes from the Institute of Chartered Accountants. It's about finally putting the books of this province in order, which I can appreciate the member opposite would only have a passing notion of. We're going to get the finances of this government and of school boards in order. This is a small part of that, which will not impact negatively on the efforts of parents.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “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 the 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 water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under 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 my name to that.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a petition here brought forward by the university affairs coordinator of LGBTOUT, and I'm happy to read this on their behalf. It says:

“Reinstate funding for sexual reassignment surgery for trans-gendered individuals.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the previous Conservative provincial government removed OHIP funding for sexual reassignment surgery on October 1, 1998, without consultation with medical professionals or the trans-gendered community;

“Whereas Ontario is one of the only provinces in Canada that does not fund SRS;

“Whereas trans-gendered people in Ontario have the right to equality in health care;

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

“Reinstate OHIP funding for sexual reassignment surgery (SRS) for trans-gendered individuals.”

I support this petition, and will affix my signature.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

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

SPORT PARACHUTING

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

I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the lives of student and novice sport parachutists have been and continue to be lost to a systemic lack of regulation or accountability on the part of any currently governing bodies;

“Whereas inconsistent monitoring, a serious disregard for, or inability to responsibly and competently police adherence to rules, regulations and manufacturer specifications on the part of the skydiving schools and the Canadian Sport Parachuting Association creates unnecessary risk to human life;

“Whereas evidence presented at the coroner's inquest of Gareth Rodgers suggests that the current regulatory body has no desire for accountability or means of enforcing rules and regulations in the sport of parachuting;

“Whereas a system of teaching standards and regulations to safeguard novice and student sport parachutists is grossly deficient;

“Whereas Joe Tascona, MPP Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, has introduced a private member's bill, the Gareth Rodgers Act for Sport Parachuting, to regulate sport parachuting activities for the safety of student and novice skydivers;

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

“(1) That the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government immediately pass and implement Joe Tascona's bill;

“(2) That the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government petition the federal Liberal government to act in a swift—”

Interjections.

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Mr Tascona: Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We're running out of time, so come on.

Mr Tascona: “—and responsible manner in order to ensure that the lives and safety of sport parachutists, especially student and novice jumpers, are protected by law and that the skydiving industry operates in a responsible, competent and transparent manner;

“(3) That the federal Liberal government consider immediate and responsible interim measures to suspend

these activities until a viable solution to this matter may be attained;

“(4) That the federal Liberal government seriously consider the 12 sound recommendations submitted by the jury in the coroner's inquest of the skydiving fatality of Gareth Rodgers;

“(5) That the federal Liberal government make the industry both responsible and accountable for its actions and omissions, within strict standards of safety that must be governed by a competent body whose paramount mandate must be to maintain current equipment, thorough and competent record-keeping, and to ensure that manufacturer specifications are strictly adhered to and that appropriate safety standards are being observed at all times for student/novice skydivers and the equipment that they use.”

I support the petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public”—none whatsoever—“on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

Page Eric is going to deliver this to the Clerks' table.

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a

cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I send this to you via page Daniel.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the federal Income Tax Act at present has a minimum amount of medical expenses for which a taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit;

“Whereas the health and medical expenses of every citizen in the province of Ontario, great or small, affect their overall net income;

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government moved in their 2004 budget on May 18, 2004, to delist publicly funded medical services such as chiropractic services, optometry examinations and physiotherapy services;

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

“That the Income Tax Act remove the present minimum amount of medical expenses for which an Ontario taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit” on health care expenses.

I’m pleased to support this in respect to the recent changes in the health funding.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

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

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened ... physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of

the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to these.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that I’m pleased to read on behalf of my colleague from Brant.

“Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

As I agree with this petition, I’ll affix my signature to it and ask Ellen to carry it.

PIT BULLS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas,

“Aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

“Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

“The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training, and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds.”

I affix my signature to this as I am in agreement.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that comes from my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

“Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out of their own pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's ... regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care ... in Ontario;

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

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree with the petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

CARDIAC CARE

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Niagara region has a population of over 430,000 people and has the highest 30-day death rate in Ontario for heart failure, has the second-highest one-year death rate in Ontario for heart failure, has the second-highest heart failure readmission rates in Ontario, has the third-highest post-heart-attack one-year death rate, and is 25% higher than the Ontario average for ischemic heart disease deaths; and

"Whereas in fiscal year 2002-03, Niagara region residents had 1,230 admissions to hospital for heart failure, 1,150 patients admitted to hospital for acute heart attack, 862 admissions to hospital for ischemic heart disease, 93 admissions to hospital for cardiomyopathy, a repatriation population of 458 post-angioplasty patients, 341 admissions to out-of-region hospitals for coronary artery disease, 328 post-coronary artery bypass patients, 92 heart valve replacement patients and three heart transplant patients; and

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"Whereas all of the above-mentioned 4,503 heart patients are eligible for cardiac rehab in Niagara, which translates to 1,500 new patients who would access Niagara cardiac rehab services every year; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds cardiac rehabilitation in 24 communities but does not fund cardiac rehabilitation services anywhere in Niagara. Heart Niagara, a registered non-profit corporation, provides services in one of the largest cardiac rehab programs in Ontario at no charge to the patient but relies on funding through donations and special events;

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

"That cardiac rehabilitation services in Niagara be funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as they are in 24 other Ontario communities, and made comprehensive and accessible."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AUDIT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Sorbara moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor /
Projet de loi 18, Loi concernant le vérificateur provincial.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Sorbara has moved third reading of Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor. Mr Sorbara?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on the motion by Mr Sorbara for third reading of Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor, be deferred until deferred votes November 22, 2004. It's been signed by the chief government whip.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2004 LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ACCESSIBILITÉ POUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs Bountrogianni moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act respecting the development, implementation and enforcement of standards relating to accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings and all other things specified in the Act for persons with disabilities / Projet de loi 118, Loi traitant de l'élaboration, de la mise en oeuvre et de l'application de normes concernant l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées en ce qui concerne les biens, les services, les installations, l'emploi, le logement, les bâtiments et toutes les autres choses qu'elle précise.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mrs Bountrogianni has moved second reading of Bill 118. Minister?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from London-Fanshawe, Mr Khalil Ramal.

This bill, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, is about fairness. It's about opportunity, inclusion and empowerment. It's about the ability to pursue

dreams, the chance to be a full partner in society and make a full contribution to society. This bill is about building a better Ontario, tapping the full potential of Ontario, making Ontario the place to live.

In this Legislature, day after day, we engage in vigorous, tough, partisan debate. There are strong clashes of heartfelt but opposing philosophies. When it comes to the issue of disability, however, there's a great deal about which we agree. This is a profoundly important matter that touches each person here, regardless of political affiliation. It is an issue that touches every person, every family, every circle of friends, every neighbourhood in Ontario. Most of us may have a relative who has trouble getting around physically, or we may have someone we love who has a serious learning disability or who deals with mental health challenges. We may know someone whose eyesight or hearing is failing, or someone who copes daily with the impairments of a chronic ailment.

One thing is certain: We all agree that discrimination against people with disabilities is wrong; accessibility for people with disabilities is right. And like it or not, we can agree that we are all getting older. As our society ages, so does the number of Ontarians with disabilities. Every member knows that by providing full accessibility for people with disabilities, Ontario will benefit enormously: more participation in the workforce by Ontarians with disabilities, more consumer spending, greater educational achievement by thousands of young people, and a shining reputation across Canada and around the world.

Providing accessibility is fundamental to reaching the full economic, social, cultural and human potential of our province. It is fundamental to embracing and celebrating our common humanity. It was exactly a decade ago this month when a handful of pragmatic, thoughtful Ontarians with disabilities came together with the explicit goal of making this legislation a reality. Some of these people are in the gallery today, and, on behalf of the Legislature, I welcome you.

They were frustrated that the provincial government of the day thought that the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms were sufficient to make Ontario more accessible. As someone who, at the time, worked with children with disabilities, I understood that those laws forced people to fight barriers one at a time and required costly, lengthy legal battles.

The legislation before us today is a priority for the Premier. He campaigned on this. He made a commitment to bring this bill forward. The Premier instructed me to make it my priority—something I was more than happy and honoured to do. One of my reasons for getting into politics was to do something about this issue. But if this is a watershed piece of legislation for our province, the credit does not go to the Premier or to me; the credit goes to those Ontarians with disabilities who have been pushing so hard for so long. For 10 years they would not give up. They will not give up.

In the past year, my former parliamentary assistant, Dr Kuldip Kular, and I travelled Ontario listening to people with disabilities and their families. Thousands of citizens

offered intelligent, practical ideas. And everywhere in the province there were certain themes repeated over and over. Those themes are reflected in this legislation: the role of both the public and private sectors, accountability, planning, standards, public awareness, best practices, accessible transportation, building codes, municipal services, partnerships, the broad range of disabilities—visible and invisible, the broad range of barriers to accessibility, compliance and enforcement, and leadership.

There were two points that struck me clearly at meeting after meeting. The first was the desire for legislation that encompasses action in the short run, action over the medium term, and long-term action. This legislation would reflect that clearly expressed desire. The second point was the determination of those with disabilities to be as fair as possible to business. What those with disabilities asked for was the opportunity to sit down with various business sectors and the public sector to negotiate standards that are both world-leading and fair to everybody. This legislation would reflect that express desire too.

As we met with communities around Ontario, I tried to make a point of having local business people at the table. I wanted everyone to hear what everyone else had to say. In fact, we were the first government to have people with disabilities and the business community sit down together and discuss a vision of accessibility. The result was positive. Business people from every industry take this issue very seriously. What I heard over and over was why it was good for business to be far more accessible. What I also heard from business leaders were their own personal experiences, stories about parents with disabilities, or children, or grandchildren, or brothers or sisters, or employees, or stories about themselves. There comes a time when we simply have to move forward: a time to move forward on rights for people with disabilities, just as we move forward on rights for women, on rights for a range of citizens.

My 13-year-old daughter just cannot imagine that there was a time not so long ago when she wouldn't have had the same rights and opportunities as her 16-year-old brother. She couldn't imagine a world in which boys grow up and have the ability to hold particular jobs but girls don't, a world in which boys get every opportunity for a thorough education but girls don't. We all want our children and grandchildren to grow up in a province where they can't imagine that accessibility for people with disabilities was ever at question. We want them to grow up thinking, "Why did people back in 2004 even have to debate this issue?"

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In building on the work of people with disabilities and the goodwill of many in the private sector, this legislation also implements principles introduced in the Legislature by the honourable member for Windsor, now the Minister of Energy and government House leader. On October 29, 1998, the Legislature voted unanimously to adopt the 11 principles of what is now called the Duncan resolution. It was quite a moment, because it was the rare

occasion when a private member, let alone one from the opposition, had a motion accepted. Three years later, in 2001, the Harris government passed the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. That act put into place some, but not all, of the principles previously agreed to by the Legislature.

Our party felt strongly that the 2001 legislation did not go far enough. But I saw then, as I do now, that there are many Progressive Conservative members who care deeply about advancing accessibility for people with disabilities. Indeed, I want to point out that when I brought this new bill forward some weeks ago, the approach of the Tory members for Burlington and Nepean-Carleton was extremely constructive, and that is really saying something. It is only once in a blue moon when either one of those members actually has something positive to say about a Liberal initiative.

Two NDP members have also spoken about this bill since it was introduced: the member for Niagara Centre and the member for Beaches-East York. I respect the commitment of those members to the issue of accessibility. I have listened carefully to the concerns of the two members. They have raised questions about the timing of regulations and long-term objectives. In turn, I hope the NDP members will agree that it would be wrong to set all the rules in stone before people with disabilities have an opportunity to negotiate the standards they want for themselves. Ontarians with disabilities have asked for that right to negotiate, and I am committed to giving it to them.

As I have indicated, I want to be as non-partisan as possible. If a member from any of our three parties has a workable suggestion for improving the bill, I am more than prepared to listen.

I reiterate that I recognize how passionately and personally everyone in the province feels about the issues covered in this bill. The truth is that the member for Burlington struck a chord with many of us when he said, on October 12, "I say in all fairness, like many members of this Legislature who have ever grown up in a house with a disabled member, they know how important this legislation is."

The member is right. This legislation is important. It would provide for solid action on all 11 principles of the Duncan resolution.

First, the legislation would call for the creation of a barrier-free Ontario, with removal of current barriers and the prevention of future barriers. This bill would call for action on goods, services, facilities, accommodation and employment, and would call for people with disabilities to be partners in setting the rules.

Second, the legislation would call for a broad approach; a broad approach across every part of the provincial government; a broad approach that, for the first time, fully covers the private sector.

Third, the legislation would call for the establishment of time lines.

Fourth, the bill would set in motion the establishment of mandatory standards, from transportation to the built environment to communications.

The fifth principle of the Duncan resolution encompasses active measures to achieve barrier-free workplaces. In that regard, there would be new obligations.

Number six—and this is key—is enforcement, including the power to audit, inspect and impose sanctions.

Seventh: regulations. There would be an inclusive process for developing standards, including public comment on draft standards. The government could then give those standards the force of law through regulation.

The next principle: public education. This area is my passion. I will use every tool available to help shape a change in attitude, a change in values. Over and over again, people with disabilities have told me that the biggest barrier of all is one of attitude. On this score, I look forward to working closely with every MPP to help foster a true culture of inclusion for people with disabilities.

Issue number nine: adaptive technologies. This is a field in which the previous government took a serious lead. The challenge remains, in a high-tech world, to make certain that technology serves rather than frustrates the needs of people with disabilities.

The 10th principle is contract compliance. What's required are clear rules for the procurement and funding practices of the public sector. As large purchasers, governments have the power to bring about change that would make goods, services and facilities more accessible for people with disabilities.

The 11th principle adopted unanimously by MPPs is that legislation must be more than window dressing. Nice phrases are no substitute for action: short-term, medium-term and long-term action. That is precisely why this legislation would address the full range of disabilities and barriers. It is why, if it is passed, there would be mandatory standards, timelines, compliance and enforcement, and it is why more than 300,000 public and private organizations would be covered by the legislation.

As was said six years ago, "...what it's all about is access: access to employment, a meaningful way of life; access to public services ... access to buying a product to carry on their life; access to transportation. These things are basic."

This legislation would make Ontario the leader in Canada. We would become the first Canadian jurisdiction to have a comprehensive approach, covering all spheres of government and business, all disabilities and all major aspects of daily life in the province.

As the Premier said, "Together, we can get the results Ontarians want and deserve. Together, we can build a quality of life that's second to none."

I ask for the support of the Legislature in thoughtful but swift action on this bill. This is a vitally important bill. It will advance our shared values of fairness, opportunity, inclusion and human rights. This is about empowering Ontarians with disabilities to pursue their dreams.

Let us tap the full potential of every Ontarian. Let us tap the full potential of this great province.

I now leave it to Khalil Ramal, my parliamentary assistant.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I am honoured to have been named parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration just a few weeks ago. I'm delighted to speak to the proposed Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004, as one of my first tasks in this job.

October 12 was a great day for Ontario. The minister, Dr Marie Bountrogianni, introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004, as the first order of business in this fall sitting of the Legislature. If this bill is passed, there will be even greater days ahead. I share Dr Bountrogianni's passion and determination to build an accessible society.

With this legislation, the government proposes to take action to remove the barriers facing Ontarians with disabilities, whether those disabilities are visible or invisible.

I gained some understanding of these barriers while working for several years at Community Living London. I am proud of the work Community Living has done, and continues to do, to help everyone participate in all aspects of daily life. Community Living supports men, women and children with intellectual disabilities in their efforts to live as independently as possible. This group helps individuals and their families make their own choices in work, leisure, recreation and lifelong learning, and it assists people with intellectual disabilities to be heard, to participate in their communities, support each other and be involved in decision-making.

This is the true spirit behind our proposed legislation. Accessibility is the right thing to do.

The roots of this legislation now before us can be traced back to 10 years ago. That's when one small band of 20 Ontarians with disabilities formed a committee for the purpose of making Ontario barrier-free.

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During the 1995 election campaign, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee—the ODA committee—asked all three parties to pass this kind of legislation. When the Tory government came to power, they said they would do it in their first term. They did nothing. When their first term was drawing to a close, this House prodded the Tory government to take action. I'm referring, of course, to the resolution introduced six years ago on October 29, 1998, by my colleague Minister Dwight Duncan. This resolution called on the government to enact disability legislation based on 11 principles that had been articulated by the ODA Committee. This House unanimously adopted the resolution.

A few weeks later, in November 1998, the government tabled the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 1998. This bill was not well received, to say the least. When the Legislature adjourned in December, it died on the order paper.

In the throne speech in the spring of 1999, the government announced it would gather additional input before reintroducing the bill. It was back to the drawing board.

After the election, the opposition again put pressure on the government. In November 1999, the current Minister of Agriculture and Food, Steve Peters, brought forward a motion calling for the government to keep its commitment to pass legislation consistent with the 1998 principles.

Finally, in November 2001, after more than six years in office, the former government introduced the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. The disability community was not impressed.

David Lepofsky, chair of the ODA committee, gave a TV interview the other day and explained what was wrong with the ODA, 2001. "[I]t was toothless," he said. "It didn't apply to the private sector where we shop or most of us want to work and so on. And it didn't have any enforcement. None at all. It basically said please remove barriers if you want."

In spite of objections like these, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act passed in December 2001, but the disabled community continued to press for change.

On April 7, 2003, with another election in the air, Dalton McGuinty, as Leader of the Opposition, wrote a letter to the ODA committee. Mr McGuinty said that if we formed the government, we would enact a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Just how well have we kept this commitment? Here is what David Lepofsky has to say: "Mr McGuinty has made a series of promises and with this bill he's kept them all. He promised he would work with the disability community, the business community and the municipalities to develop the law. He did that.... He said he'd introduce a bill within the first year. He did that.... He said the bill would fix the major problems with the Conservatives' weak bill, and it does."

I believe our government has done an exemplary job in developing this legislation. We listened. We were thorough. We did our homework. We began by reiterating our commitment to a strong and effective bill in the first throne speech last November 20. We said we would work with Ontarians with disabilities on meaningful legislation that would allow them to participate fully in building a stronger province. And that's exactly what we did. Just a couple of weeks later, on December 3, the minister, Dr Marie Bountrogianni, marked the International Day of Disabled Persons by announcing our plans to hold consultations on strengthening the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

From January through March this year, Dr Bountrogianni and my predecessor as parliamentary assistant, Dr Kuldip Kular, undertook a series of seven regional public meetings, 14 round table meetings and a live Webcast for students with disabilities. More than 1,000 individuals participated in the public meetings, 246 stakeholder representatives took part in the round table, and the Webcast registered about 2,000 viewer hits.

Ces consultations ont été pleinement accessibles aux personnes handicapées. Par exemple, la diffusion sur le Web destinée aux étudiantes et étudiants a permis aux participants de choisir une interprétation en temps réel,

en ASL et LSQ, une piste sonore en français ou en anglais, et un sous-titrage codé en temps réel pour malentendants, en français et en anglais. En fait, la diffusion sur le Web a reçu une médaille d'argent à la récente Foire de la qualité dans le secteur public pour l'accessibilité qu'elle offrait à tous les participants.

J'aimerais ajouter que des services d'interprétation simultanée en français et en anglais ont également été offerts lors des consultations organisées dans des régions désignées.

Les commentaires nous ont permis d'élaborer notre projet de loi. En fait, ce projet de loi n'aurait pas vu le jour sans la contribution généreuse en temps et en efforts des très nombreuses personnes qui ont partagé leurs points de vue avec nous. Nous avons aussi fait des recherches exhaustives sur la façon dont les compétences qui sont des chefs de file de par le monde ont abordé le sujet de l'accessibilité.

Finally, on October 12, 2004, we introduced the proposed Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004, truly groundbreaking legislation that would make Ontario a world leader in this field.

The proposed act would improve on the ODA in key ways:

It would focus on action, not just planning. Mandatory standards and real results would be achieved every five years or less, moving toward an accessible Ontario in 20 years.

It would encompass not only the provincial government and the broader public sector, as the ODA does, but also fully cover the private sector.

Our legislation would have teeth, with tough penalties for violators.

If passed, this legislation would make a real difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

For example, it would mean that a person with a learning disability who takes a prescription to a pharmacy would receive a clear, understandable explanation for how to use the medication; a parent who uses a wheelchair and attends a school play could sit in the main seating area to watch his or her children perform; a teenager who uses an ambulatory device could take a regular bus with a friend to go to a movie at the local mall; or an elderly patient who has diminished vision and uses a scooter could make his way into a medical building through a ramp and an automatic door that are clearly marked with large-print signs and then take an elevator with voice commands and a lowered button panel as he goes to have an X-ray.

Let me add that, apart from introducing this groundbreaking legislation, the government is already moving forward with complementary measures for people with disabilities, including the expansion of funding for mental health services; major reinvestments in children's health programs; new housing for Ontarians with developmental disabilities; the first increase in Ontario disability support payments in 11 years; increased funding for the home and vehicle modification program to quadruple the number of people who benefit and, for the first

time, including children with disabilities; a policy that any bus purchases for public transportation with provincial funding, including funding from the provincial gas tax, must be accessible to people with disabilities; and the new Active 2010 strategy that will help remove barriers that prevent people from participating in sport and recreation programs, particularly low-income children, elderly adults and people with disabilities.

I am proud of our role, now in the government and earlier in opposition, in bringing this historic proposed legislation from concept to introduction. But no one deserves more credit for this bill than the disability organizations across Ontario that have demanded action. Championed by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, and with the support of many other groups, the campaign for strong and effective legislation has steadily gained momentum over the past decade. The steadfast determination of the disability community has brought accessibility to the top of the public agenda.

We believe every Ontarian should have the opportunity to learn, work, play and otherwise participate in society to their fullest potential. Our proposed legislation would bring this day closer. It's a goal I know every member of this House would support.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): It's time for questions and comments.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I will be speaking to this bill myself in just a few moments, but I would like to begin by thanking the minister and the member from London-Fanshawe for their comments.

There has been some very positive movement with this particular piece of legislation. As we move forward as a province into the 21st century, we will be requiring more and more help from the private sector and from the public in general to help people with disabilities. I think this bill moves forward in that direction very well.

It's timely that the bill was brought forward at this point, early in the mandate. It's not going to be as easy as you might think to implement it. It sounds good today when we're doing our leadoffs and we're sort of patting each other on the back, but the bottom line is that there are going to be some difficult times ahead, particularly with funding. That's why I believe the 20-year window is good, and I understand there will be a number of phase-ins over a five-year period.

I'd like to say that we as a society have to use all Ontarians to help build a stronger Ontario—I think every member in this House would probably agree with that—and to take full advantage of all the wonderful people who make up this great province makes Ontario the leader in our Confederation as well.

With that, I just want to bring my comments to a close at this point. I'll be asking in a few minutes to carry on with some further debate in the House.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say on behalf of New Democrats that we will be supporting this bill. However, we are going to argue very strongly that there are some serious weaknesses, and we will

speak to that as best we can. We hope that the committee hearings will speak to what might be good in this bill, that they like, and we'll expect a lot of the deputants to talk about some of the deficiencies and the weaknesses of this bill. So while it is a step in the right direction, given that people with disabilities have waited a long time for accessibility, I think this bill will leave them waiting a lot longer than many of them would have wished.

This bill, as some might know, almost leaves everything, from timelines to incentives to enforcement, at the discretion of the minister. That may, in the minds of some, be good or not so good. In my mind, I have some doubts about what it means, unless you make it clear in your bill how you would deal with this issue specifically, by way of timelines that are a bit tighter than what they propose, by incentives and what it is that you propose to do. What specifically are you going to do, by way of enforcement, given that the government doesn't have the money to be able to deliver on many of the promises they have made, let alone promises they're about to make? It worries me profoundly about how much we can leave to the minister to deliver on the promises that they're making in this bill. I will have an opportunity to speak to it later on, and hopefully some of these issues will come out more clearly.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): It's my pleasure to rise in support of Bill 118, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I would like to, first of all, pay tribute to Minister Bountrogianni and to her tenacity—long before she came to this House—for her work with children with special needs, but also for her commitment to the community and for her ability to teach all of us the things that we needed to know to move forward.

I think it's also really important to acknowledge that for me one of the more crucial elements to the speech the minister gave was education and outreach. If we know we're going to change how people think, their concepts and their behaviour, we start where we should, and that's with our children. We're going to begin to make sure that children know and understand that each and every person in Ontario is deserving of the same respect and dignity. That's the tenacity that the minister has brought forward in respect of this bill that I think, in particular, deserves a great deal of credit.

Yes, it will be an ongoing process. This is the beginning—a long time in coming, there's no question, and we have lots of room with which to move. We will have the opportunity to continue to talk to people, to have discussions that are meaningful and will make a difference as those regulations are implemented. I have great faith in the commitment of Minister Bountrogianni to follow through, regardless. I say that because of her commitment that she has made in this particular file right from the beginning, and kudos to you, remarkable lady.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I too wish to commend Minister Bountrogianni for the bill that she's brought forward and welcome the discussion there.

I'd like to say hello to the deaf people in the audience, and relate some of my experiences. I know a little of the sign language from my family who are hearing impaired, and the challenges certainly that are faced by them in their day-to-day lives, in their working lives and in their education. I know I've spoken many times with Mr Parsons about the deaf and the hard-of-hearing, and what changes we need to make in our communities to have them more accepted and offer them more opportunities. There are going to be challenges out there, certainly, for the implementation of the bill.

I'm happy that the minister has commended some of the members from the other parties and their contributions. It is difficult for society to accept some of the changes, but I think that we've made great strides in the previous governments, and I hope that we continue to make those strides with this government, and all parties, to contribute to the changes that need to be made.

So I'd like to thank the people in the gallery who have come today. I know it does take an extra effort, and I hope you appreciate that we're all going to try to work together on this bill. I just wanted to say that we certainly will give consideration to any input that members may have, and I look forward to further debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'd like to thank the members from Simcoe North, Trinity-Spadina, Etobicoke Centre and Haliburton-Victoria-Brock for their comments and their support of various kinds.

The member from Simcoe North talked about the challenges of business. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Retail Council and other business organizations have supported this legislation. Our timelines are reasonable, and I believe that is going to be a major factor in working together to implement this.

The member from Trinity-Spadina has the opposite problem with the timelines; he wants to go quicker. We'll talk about that in public hearings, but I'd like to remind the member from Trinity-Spadina that standards will be developed in five-year increments or less so that we will be meeting these goals as quickly as possible, as reasonably as possible.

1600

Our 20-year timeline is a 20-year end point where Ontario will be fully accessible for people with all disabilities. In comparison to Australia, which has a 30-year timeline for one standard alone—transportation—and to the United States, which has a 25-year timeline, I think that is making us the leading jurisdiction in the world.

I'd like to thank warmly my friend and colleague from Etobicoke Centre. I share her passion—and I know she's very passionate and has a long history in education—on the educational component of this. There can be nothing more important than educating the public along the way. We don't want anything to backfire. We don't want to hurt the very people we're trying to help. Education and public outreach are key here. We know that when people

are educated of the issues, they want to do the right thing. It's the ignorance that often gets in the way.

The member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock: very impressive with your American sign language. I speak that much slower, and I only know two sentences. I really look forward to your input and your expertise, as well as the expertise of all members of the House. There will be passionate partisan arguments. That's part of the nature of this place, but I do know that I will be receiving support from all members of the House in making this a strong piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dunlop: I ask this House if we could have unanimous consent to defer our leadoff on this bill until Monday evening. I believe it's Monday evening when Cam Jackson will be commenting.

The Acting Speaker: The member is moving unanimous consent to consider a motion for laying down their lead. Is there unanimous consent? Is there unanimous consent to have the lead for the official opposition put off? Agreed? OK. The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: I'm very pleased to be able to rise today and make a few comments on Bill 118. I want to begin by welcoming everyone in the audience who's here to participate in this debate. It's a very important debate. I understand we'll be debating not only this afternoon but also next Monday evening and next Thursday evening. So for other folks who are wanting to take part in this and join us here at the Legislature, I welcome you. I want to also welcome the interpreters for the hearing-impaired who are here today. It's good to see you in the audience, and I welcome you here as well.

Because I'm doing this 20-minute comment on behalf of our caucus right now, I would like to read into the record the reasons that Mr Jackson is not here today. He wanted to be here, and he will be here Monday and Thursday of next week, but I would like to inform all members of the House that my colleague Cam Jackson, the member for Burlington and the PC advocate for persons with disabilities, could not be here today. Mr Jackson is in Quebec City for the Ontario-Québec Parliamentary Association meeting to present an important paper on the delivery of health care services to seniors.

Mr Jackson will participate in the debate next week. In his absence, I would like to recognize his contributions on behalf of persons with disabilities in Ontario as the PC minister who developed Canada's most comprehensive disabilities legislation, Bill 125, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, which was mentioned earlier, of course. I would call the attention of all members to the fact that the current bill before the House is based on the legislation, or a lot of the legislation, that was first delivered and implemented by the member from Burlington back in 2001.

I have to tell you that Cam Jackson is a strong advocate not only for people with disabilities, but he's a very active member for the seniors in our province. I think each and every week, Mr Jackson gives a radio

broadcast on seniors' issues in the province and has just literally hundreds of thousands of fans out there that he brings with his comments.

Bill 118, the legislation we're debating here today, as Minister Bountrogianni had mentioned, is an important piece of legislation, and it's the next step as we proceed in building Ontario and dealing with the people who have disabilities.

In my comments in the next 17 minutes, I'd like to talk about a few individuals who were born many years ago but overcame disabilities. They are some of the people I like to think about whenever I think of people with disabilities because they are very strong citizens who overcame their disabilities and became very active members of their communities.

I want to compliment the minister on bringing forth the bill. When you're debating legislation in this House, there's so much to bring forward all the time. All the ministers battle for space on the legislative table here so they can debate their pieces of legislation, but this bill, again, is a giant stepping stone in moving forward as a province. I'm going to tell you right up front that I have some concerns, particularly—I'll refer to them in a few minutes. My concerns involve how we're going to implement it with some of the small businesses around without putting them out of business.

Before I get off the subject of the minister, I do want to thank her for complimenting some of our members, Mr Jackson and Mr Baird. I don't think we have a lot of people on this side of the House who are opposed to moving forward with this next step. If you look back in history, you'll see that we've come a long way in this province, but we've got a long way to go. I'm hoping that with this piece of legislation we can move forward in a very positive manner, looking for amendments where they're required at committee, and really and truly looking out for the fairness that people who have handicaps face, and looking for opportunities that we can address as well as we try to build a better province.

There are three individuals I've dealt with up to this point in my life whom I want to mention a little bit today. A couple of them aren't with us any longer. One is a gentleman from up in the Coldwater area by the name of Frank Gleadall, and I want to put this on the record. Frank passed away a few years ago. Frank was a little bit older than my mother, and my mother would be 72 or 73 years old today, so probably if Frank were alive he'd be 75 or 76. Frank was born with one arm and one leg. He was never injured, he was just born that way. At that time, if you go back 75 years ago, a lot of people were put in institutions, or they certainly weren't handled the way we would treat people today. Frank's father made him a little sort of peg leg to give him balance. He never had crutches or anything like that. Frank had such a desire to live and excel in so many things. His strength was in his personality, and his strength was that he just wanted to excel in everything he did.

I'm telling you, as I grew up in this small community named Coldwater, Frank did everything that everybody

else could possibly do. He played hockey—he was actually the goaltender; he played different sports. Frank worked at numerous jobs. He put in hay on the farm, the parents' farm; he worked all of the equipment; he drove a bulldozer for construction companies, and he did this with one arm and one leg. He was an exceptional human being and never, ever had any kind of assistance because we never had any programs in place to even offer Frank. But along with his mom and dad and family members, and the whole community that accepted him, he made sure that he fulfilled a life. He had two daughters and a wife, and they had a great life together. I can just say that in my time he was really the first handicapped person I ever knew, and yet he really wasn't considered handicapped because he was such an exceptional person in the fact that he made himself fit in and he had this burning desire to fit into the community.

1610

The second gentleman I have to mention is a fellow by the name of Tom O'Hara. Tom is living today in Wauhaushene. He was a very active person in the construction community and built a number of large buildings. Then one evening, around 1970, Tom was in a snowmobile accident. His spinal cord was ruptured or severed and Tom could never walk again. He spent the next few years of his life in a wheelchair.

I've been in a number of the buildings that Tom O'Hara constructed, and it's amazing that a lot of them were commercial buildings but none of them had elevators, because in the early 1970s we didn't treat buildings with that kind of respect. I'm talking about two- and three-storey buildings. Today those buildings, of course, all have elevators.

Tom went on and spent a lot of years on council. He was a deputy fire chief up in the township of Tay, and I can tell you, he has never let his handicap, in the wheelchair, get in his way.

The third person I want to talk about is a fellow by the name of Wally Higgins. Wally is a guy who was also in an accident. He was from Nova Scotia and moved up to the Orillia area. I believe he was in an accident involving—he was a mechanic, and in the accident a car came down on his legs and he lost the use of his legs. In fact, I think both of his legs had to be severed.

I was the reeve in the village of Coldwater council, and our council meetings were held on the second floor of the building. I can remember as though it were yesterday—and this is going back between 1985 and 1995—Wally coming to our council meetings. If he didn't have his wheelchair, he'd climb up the stairs and work his way, without any legs, across the floor. It was actually embarrassing to think that we never had any kind of access. At other times, Wally would come to the meetings and we would carry him up this little set of skinny stairways so that he could attend the meeting.

I look back, and of course today we don't have council chambers like that. We don't have fire halls or hardly any public facilities like that. But I can remember, as though it were yesterday, how he wanted to be part of the

community. Wally never came to the council meetings to complain about his handicap. He was always concerned about a drainage ditch or the condition of a road or something like that. He held an active part in the community. He still worked on cars, even though he had lost the use of his legs, and was just a great, wonderful person in our community.

Those are three gentlemen who overcame their disabilities and were active members of the community. Today, they would certainly be treated differently in the kind of lifestyle we expect people with handicaps to have.

I'd also like to mention seniors for a couple of minutes, because the seniors are such an important part of the people. Because there are older citizens, many of them of course have disabilities today. I think we've done a fairly good job in this province, particularly in our nursing homes. My mother-in-law is in a nursing home today. One of the reasons she's in this particular home is the fact that it's got a great elevator system, and great guardrails around, because so many people who are seniors today have had problems because of falls. Thank God we have these facilities today where people aren't worried about climbing up and down stairs, like in a home. That's why I wanted to bring up seniors in this one way here today.

In my riding of Simcoe North, I have two constituency offices. We have a lot of walk-in traffic. One of the key things I've always maintained is that no matter where my offices were in Midland and Orillia, they had to be handicapped-accessible, to have access for people with wheelchairs. I can tell you, it's amazing, even to this day, how many people have come into my office voicing concerns. Again, they don't come in concerned about accessibility; they're concerned about other issues they face in the community. But if it's something that members in this House have a problem with, if you don't have accessibility, that's one thing I think we all should do: Make sure that all 103 members' constituency offices have access for people with wheelchairs and with disabilities. It's very, very important to have that giant step taken forward.

There are a couple of other positive things I want to mention before I go on to a couple of negative things, and I know I'm running out of time really quickly. The Ontario Provincial Police—I was at a function just a week ago, and one of the recipients of an honours award was a gentleman working with the OPP. He was receiving an award, and he is hearing-impaired. I was so pleased that the Ontario Provincial Police at the honours awards night at Hawk Ridge Golf and Country Club made sure they had an interpreter for his hearing impairment. She was at that event and did the whole event for him. I complimented the commissioner on the fact that she cared so much that this actually happened.

I just wanted to say one other thing here very briefly, to compliment an individual, Mr Albert Stein, chair of the board of directors for the Simcoe County Association for the Physically Disabled. I want to compliment him on

the good work he has done in the region of Simcoe county.

I only have five minutes left and I want to get down to a couple of quick points. My concerns with the bill—even on the phase-in, there are a few places where I think we're going to have trouble. If we phase in the private sector over the next 20 years, there are still businesses, even after 20 years, where there may be problems. I'm thinking of things like bed and breakfasts. There are literally thousands of bed and breakfasts throughout our province. Many of them are old, old homes, and it would be very, very expensive to add elevators—not necessarily ramps, but the elevators will be very expensive to add to some of these homes.

I think one of the things we have to look at is that if we're expecting the private sector to adhere to all the laws for the physically disabled, there's going to have to be some assistance from the government—some grants, some loans, you name it—because in some cases, the cost of an elevator, for example, to go from the ground level to the second floor is \$25,000 or \$30,000. They just don't make enough money to ever pay for that with a two-bedroom or a four-bedroom bed and breakfast. And yet we don't want to lose those people in our province either. So that's the type of concern I've got to begin with on that.

On the other hand, I hope that the one thing the government could do, and the minister can lead with this in her comments—things like the Ontario Trillium Foundation, a great program. We've had a lot of assistance to some of our facilities, and I'm really hoping that as we implement Bill 118, programs like the Trillium Foundation can actually be expanded and possibly have a specific area or a specific programming portion of the foundation that we could use just for assistance for different buildings and different organizations that are non-profit—maybe more for churches, community halls, so they could take advantage of money to help them replace barriers that are there for the people with disabilities.

This bill is a giant step. I'm not saying for one second that it's going to be an easy step. I'm pretty sure I'm going to be supporting the bill all the way through. There are too many people whose lives can be improved upon by making this bill law and making sure that the government and governments of the future will provide assistance so that we can make sure that a lot of the buildings across our province are fit physically for handling people who have disabilities.

1620

One area I was going to get into, and I think it can be addressed, is a lot of the fancy restaurants and dining rooms we have that are on second and third floors of old houses and that sort of thing. There are going to be some real challenges as we try to move forward. But the minister has assured us that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and I'm guessing a lot of the smaller chambers of commerce, would want to support this.

As Ontario citizens, we're a caring people. I think we want to move forward in a positive manner, and possibly, between the government and municipalities and private sector associations, we can help each other over the next 20 years remove most of the barriers that are in place now so that we can move ahead in the future.

So again, Mr Speaker, my time is winding down here. I thank you, first of all, for allowing Mr Jackson's time to be put off until Monday night. I know he's passionate about this. Again, I apologize to the stakeholders here today that Mr Jackson couldn't be the leadoff, but if you can make it back on Monday night, he'll want to talk to you. He'll give a better speech than I did, because he knows a lot more about this particular program.

I thank everyone for listening to me today. I hope you've got some positive responses to my comments. Again, I look forward to debate in the House. I look forward to what committee hearings we have on it and any amendments the opposition parties or the government may bring forth on this legislation.

With that, I thank you, and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): It's my pleasure to stand and respond to the comments made by the member for Simcoe North.

Not only is this Bill 118 a historic piece of legislation—I think we will all look back at the time that we've spent in the Legislature and be very proud of the implementation of such historic legislation that will make Ontario, as it should be, a world leader on this front—but I also think the coming together of all parties is reflective of a consultation process that has brought all the communities together: the business community, the community of advocates, of people who work in our communities each and every day and have worked for many years to make sure that our communities are accessible and barrier-free.

Looking at the language that's contained in the legislation, I was very proud and am very proud to be talking about something like preventing barriers which prevent a person from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability. That is very inclusive language, and I think it's language that we will see, if we all work together—as is apparent from the discussion today, yes, there are going to be issues that we need to resolve, and yes, there are going to be those small businesses that we need to work with, but the consultation process, where we're bringing communities together to establish those standards, will at the end of the day make all of us, in all of Ontario, feel very proud and feel part of this process. My colleague from Etobicoke Centre talked about the need to educate, as did the minister who is bringing forward this legislation. A consultation process, an inclusion process, will make all Ontarians feel proud to be a world leader and feel that they have been part of this historic progression in our province.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member for Simcoe North's remarks regarding Bill 118. Of course, he mentioned some aspect of the Trillium fund. In our local riding, the Trillium fund has been very successful in upgrading particularly a lot of service clubs or organizations as such for either ramps or elevators. I know locally the 420 Wing is currently in the process of utilizing Trillium funds, or trying to, to make washrooms accessible. But this is something that we as a community need to focus on and move forward on.

I sat in on a vision plan locally with the community of Oshawa, where I was with Mr Pigden. His job is to go around to the various parts of the city, identifying curbs. This is quite extensive when you look at even curbs as being accessible for scooters in that aspect. Every year, the city of Oshawa expands the number of curbs that are scooter accessible. They go into the great details about the angles and the ramps and those sorts of things.

I know that groups like the Masons are very active in Oshawa in providing guide dogs in a number of aspects for individuals with vision-impaired disabilities. In my own family tree, a lot of our family members, including a great-uncle and an aunt of mine, lost their vision through genetics. I know that shortly I'll have to take care to make sure that it doesn't hit me or my family.

Aspects of this are very important to the community in moving forward in a very positive way, and I commend the minister for moving forward with this, and the member from Simcoe North for his comments.

There are certain aspects about the 20-year phase-in plan. What about when the change of ownership takes place with facilities, and any possibility for upgrades at that time, as part of the conditions of sales and other things that could be looked at? I know that there will be a lot further debate, and I look forward to committee on this very important bill.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments about Bill 118.

I suspect many of us know persons who can avail themselves of an enhanced Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I have an aunt who neither hears nor speaks, and I am so very proud of her. I will be kind and just say that she's into her 70s now, but it was a different day for her some time ago. We didn't have the learning tools that we have now. Imagine someone who neither hears nor speaks, but her grammar, her writing, her English is perfect. I've proofread her letters for her on occasions, and her enunciation and her prose are better than mine.

My Aunt Loretta took care of me as a youth. She kept house, and I think she did an excellent job. At least with me, she had a real challenge there, trying to ensure that this young rascal did indeed make something of himself in the future. I asked her one time, how is it that people who are hearing-impaired know when their children are crying, their young babes are crying at night? This is what they had to do years ago. They slept with their arms in the bed, and when the crib would shake with that

crying, they realized that the babe needed help. Now we have devices that do that—electronic devices, doorbells that turn lights on in the home—but it was much different then, my point here being that we moved from a time of sleeping with one's hand in the bed to having devices that alert us to a crying babe.

Surely, this bill should move all Ontarians, businesses, communities around the province into a new age, a modern age of the 21st century. I'm pleased that the minister has introduced Bill 118.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to add my voice in this debate. It recalls to me the election of 1999 when a gentleman drove up in a van and introduced himself. His name was Chris Portelli, and if he's watching, I send Chris Portelli my greetings. Chris was the man who first introduced me to the issue of Ontarians with disabilities.

As a government, it's important that those of us who routinely take for granted our ability simply to get out of our cars, walk into the building, go upstairs and then walk down here, realize how much those who can't do these things rely upon us to give them a hand to participate as full equals in our society. Although one may not be able to get around or may not have the use of their sight or their hearing, in many cases we're dealing with people who have an active mind and a terrific imagination.

This act, if passed—and I hope this sentiment echoes as "once passed"—extends, to the ladies and gentlemen who represent Ontarians with disabilities, a chance to join our society in many more ways than they have now as full and equal partners.

I know that I'll be supporting this particular bill. I urge my colleagues to do the same. This is the act that will allow people to participate at work, to participate in recreation, and to join those who are fortunate enough to have been born of sound bodies, and to consider themselves full Ontarians in every way.

1630

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe North in response.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Oshawa, Chatham-Kent-Essex and Mississauga West for their comments on my little speech.

The minister mentioned in her remarks looking back in the future and what an important piece of legislation this would be. I really hope that as we get older—and many of us won't be here—if we look back in 20 or 25 years, we will say that this was really a no-brainer at that time; that we needed this legislation and it was done, and we can hardly believe society existed without this legislation previous to that. That way, we will know we got this legislation right.

As I said earlier, I don't know if this is the final step in making this a barrier-free or completely accessible province, but my guess is that if it's implemented properly, if it's phased in properly, if there's proper assistance for, in some cases, the private sector and, in other cases, non-profit and also public facilities, it should go a long way to

helping the people with physical disabilities in our province. I think that's our role in Parliament. If we don't do it here, if we can't make it a success here, then who is going to do it?

With that, I thank all the people who responded to my 20-minute speech. I look forward to listening to the NDP and their comments following me.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: I'll be speaking for a little while on Bill 118. I'm happy to have this time.

New Democrats support this bill, but I've got to tell you, it's with robust reservations that we do it. When the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore says, "This is an historic piece of legislation," I don't know if I would say "historic." To say "historic," it sounds like it's really, really big. It sounds like you have really solved the problems of people with disabilities. And I've got to tell you, I'm sorry, the bill doesn't do that. So I wouldn't call it historic. I would see it as a modest bill that some people will like and that some people who come from the disability movement will criticize. I happen to be one who says that this is an OK bill, but it doesn't go as far as I certainly would like and as far as many with disabilities would like.

We know that about 15% of the population here in Ontario has a disability of sorts, and we know that they face numerous barriers in gaining access to and fully participating in important activities such as jobs, access to information, communication, education at all levels, public transit, and the use of goods, services and facilities that the general public usually enjoys.

We understand those challenges, because when we introduced employment equity in the early 1990s, we faced tremendous opposition. That was historic. When you have so many people challenging you, including the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, and many, many people in the community saying, "This is wrong"—that was an historic bill. That tells you how controversial the measures were that we introduced and why many were challenging it.

Why did we introduce employment equity at the time? We knew there were target groups that faced discrimination on a regular basis. We had established, as is common knowledge in the field of discrimination, that there were four groups that had to deal with issues of discrimination: There were women, people of colour, aboriginal people and people with disabilities.

I think it was a fact. I think most people understand that it is a fact. Maybe many might not want to understand it, might want to pretend it's not an issue that we have to deal with, or that those groups are dealing with or would have to deal with or will have to deal with for an eternity. Many would rather hide from facing this issue, but we dealt with it.

We know aboriginal people face discrimination daily and have faced it historically, and they will continue to have to deal with discrimination for a long, long time. I don't know how they suffer the issues of poverty and the

issues of disabilities and the issues of having to deal with a legacy of alcoholism that we, as Europeans, passed on to them. That's one tough legacy to leave. It is one tough problem to escape. It is something you deal with day in and day out, year in and year out, decade after decade.

People of colour face this issue all the time. Many politicians would prefer not to talk about the issue of racism and about the issue of discrimination, but we know that they face it, and people of colour know that they face it daily. While it might be comfortable for those of us who don't face similar discrimination to simply pretend we are all equal, that is not the case.

The Conservative Party used to say that we were all equal and that we didn't need employment equity. The Conservative Party at the time called employment equity measures "quotas," as a way of mobilizing opposition against it. They were very effective and it worked.

We know that people with disabilities face discrimination daily, regularly, everywhere. What we tried to do through employment equity was to provide a measure of redress in law, because we knew that voluntary measures do not work, did not work and will not work.

But having to face the attacks from the Conservative Party that we were dealing with a quota bill, that we shouldn't be introducing these Big Brother kinds of measures, that we are all equal under the law, and that if anybody had any problem they could go to the human rights commission and deal with it—that's not the way to deal with issues of discrimination. We all know how hard it is to take an issue to the human rights commission, and I will speak to that in a few moments.

But many argued, as we introduced this bill into the Legislature, in committee that we should be dealing with issues of hiring practices on the basis of merit and nothing else. I remember the Liberals arguing that as well. I remember the Tories arguing that. In my view that was code for saying we can continue to discriminate, that when you base hiring on the basis of merit it's code for saying that, all things being equal, we will hire someone who is white over someone who is black, as opposed to all things being equal, we should hire someone who is a person of colour because we know discrimination exists.

We had one heck of a time. That was historic: facing Liberals daily here in the Legislature, facing Tories daily in this Legislature, facing communities out there that believed the message from the Conservative Party that we were dealing with quotas—ie, they were going to hire people on the basis of how many people of colour there are, how many aboriginal people of colour there are—and that all of a sudden people of colour will get the jobs and other white people will not get the jobs; aboriginal people will get the jobs and other white able-bodied people will not; people with disabilities will get the jobs and other white able-bodied people will not. We had to deal with that daily.

1640

It didn't make the Liberals flinch at the time; it didn't make the Tories flinch at the time. No, we had to do it alone. Not one Liberal at the time stood beside us and

with us to defend it—not one Liberal. It was tough. That was the time that we could have used a modest alliance from Liberals, who, from time to time, claim they have a heart on these matters, as they do today. Boy, could we have used them then. When the onslaught came on a regular basis, we couldn't turn to one of them to say, "Help us out"—no siree.

Today we have introduction of a bill from the Liberals, and so proudly they say, "Oh, so historic. Oh, aren't we so happy. Oh, aren't we doing the best thing that we could do," and on and on. It's tiring. It exhausts me, I've got to tell you, just to listen to it.

If I hadn't had that experience of dealing with employment equity, I might have felt differently, and I might have said, "This is a good thing; this is really good." But having had the experience of introducing employment equity in this place and having had not one Liberal stand up to defend it—because why? They were afraid? Because why? At the time they couldn't defend the issue of employment equity? Because why? They wanted to defend the Conservative message on hiring on the basis of merit? They couldn't stand up on the issue of the whole matter when we were saying, "If you've got in one community these kinds of employers and you have this kind of a makeup or a distribution of a community that represents"—I don't know; people of colour are in the order of 15% to 20% to 30% of them living in that community. What we were saying then was that employers should hire the makeup of that community, and not on the basis of quota but on the basis of targets that one can move in, that we could defend, that were defensible, that allowed the employer to move in that direction and that allowed a modicum of respect and a modicum of respite for those who face the challenges of getting into that workplace.

As we know, these target groups—people with disabilities, aboriginal people, people of colour—are the last ones to be hired and the first to be fired. That's the reality. And while it is true that women have made tremendous gains in the last 20, 30, 40 years, they still make 70% of wages of men. Many women are still behind men in terms of who gets hired in many of the workplaces. That is still the case. Yes, they made gains, but not as far as they can and as they should, based on their abilities.

So yes, we felt it a duty as a government to introduce legislation, because we knew that voluntary measures do not work. Try as you might with the legislation that the Tories introduced many, many years ago, it was all too voluntary, lacking in enforcement mechanisms. No one was obliged to do anything. What kind of a bill was that to present to people with disabilities?

People with disabilities face tremendous barriers. Yes, we know that. So the point for me is, does this bill go far enough? Disabled Ontarians have waited a long time for accessibility, and this bill will leave them waiting even longer. Will they accept that? I suspect there will be some people with disabilities who will say, "This is better than a kick in the teeth. Let's accept it, because it moves us in the right direction." But I am one who says,

this is not a bold step; this is not a bold action. This is a very cautious bill designed not to offend the general public, not to offend employers, and one that tries not to offend people with disabilities in a way that would turn them against this government. I am sure government members are calling people they know, where there are organizations of people with disabilities, saying, "Work with us. Try not to criticize us. We know this is not a great bill." I suspect this is being said: "We know it's not a great bill, but work with us. We're going to try to make it the best we possibly can." I know this is what's happening, and I know that a lot of organizations are going to buy into that. What else can they do?

So we are presented with this bill that attempts to build on the 11 principles that were adopted by this Legislature in 1998. I want to try to review some of those principles, state what was said in 1998, and speak to, as briefly as I can, where I believe the failings of this bill are as they are premised on those 11 principles.

In 1998, the Legislature adopted a resolution on the principles that would be embodied in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and one of them was that, "in the opinion of this House, since persons with disabilities in Ontario face systemic barriers in access to employment, services, goods, facilities and accommodation; and since all Ontarians will benefit from the removal of these barriers," this House resolves that "the Ontarians with Disabilities Act should embody the following principles:

"The purpose of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act should be to effectively ensure to persons with disabilities in Ontario the equal opportunity to fully and meaningfully participate in all aspects of life in Ontario based on their individual merit, by removing existing barriers confronting them and by preventing the creation of new barriers. It should seek to achieve a barrier-free Ontario for persons with disabilities within as short a time as is reasonably possible, with implementation to begin immediately upon proclamation."

The current legislation sets a goal of a barrier-free Ontario within 20 years. That's what this legislation does; that's what this legislation says. Is this really as short a time as possible?

1650

Linda Crabtree, co-chair of the mayor's advisory committee on accessibility for the city of St Catharines, says the following: "A lot of us will be dead in 20 years—most of us will be dead. We can't wait 20 years. It's better than nothing, that's for sure. But to phase it in over 20 years—we need some real action now."

Do you understand the problem? I understand what she's saying. Liberals say that this is an historic document. Linda Crabtree says, "You're going to implement this bill and it's going to take 20 years to implement it? Twenty years? If I'm 60, I'll be 80, and if I'm 50, I'll be 70. If I'm 70, I'll be 90. Maybe I'll be able to benefit from this; I don't know." What Linda is saying is, "I might be dead in 20 years."

The Liberals are saying, "We understand that nature will take its course and that some people, quite inexor-

ably, will die. There's nothing we can do about it. And sorry, yes, you have to wait 20 years because that's what we say. We can't do it any better, we can't go any faster, because that's just the Liberal way. We need to take a whole lot of time to do this, and no, we can't do it any faster because we just don't know how to do it any faster. Yes, it takes 20 years to consult with people because, as the minister said, standards must be negotiated, and the partners will set the standards."

I thought it was the job of governments to set the standards. I thought it was the job of governments to be bold and not hide, in my humble view, from the notion that we are doing this together, and that those people with disabilities have to help to create the standards. It seems to me that the minister is hiding behind some process in order to achieve a goal that could be set by government. In my view, this is a failure to act. In my view, this is a fear of acting. So when Liberals stand up to say that this is historical, I don't want to crack up, obviously, because this is a serious issue, but it's hard to contain myself. Speaker, you understand. I'm trying to contain myself because you've got to be respectful, as best as you can. This bill doesn't do it.

It says that the current legislation sets a goal of a barrier-free Ontario within 20 years. Is this really as short a time as possible? No, it's not. This is not right. And why is it that we want it to go to committee? We want it to go to committee so we can see whether Linda Crabtree is correct in her assessment of this bill; whether she and others have the view that we can't wait 20 years or whether people with disabilities are saying, "That's OK. That's as best as we can accomplish. We'll work with what we've got."

If, at the end of it, people say that's OK, then in spite of the criticisms we have, which are rather robust, we will submit to it and wait, like them. It's hard for me to adjudicate or judge their opinions on the basis that, if they are suffering a disability, I should say it's not good that they should wait 20 years. But if they're willing to wait 20 years, I'm willing to work with that. So we want hearings, and I'll speak to that in a little while.

"The Ontarians with Disabilities Act's requirements should supersede"—that's another one of the 11 principles—"all other legislation, regulations or policies which either conflict with it, or which provide lesser protections and entitlements to persons with disabilities." Speaker, you're a lawyer; you understand this. Some people don't. This act would supersede anything else that is currently in place in any other legislation or bill. That's what one of the 11 principles states. The government, however, is doing the following. Section 3 of the bill states that this is not the case for this bill: "Nothing in this act"—meaning Bill 118—"or in the regulations diminishes in any way the legal obligations of the government of Ontario or of any person or organization with respect to persons with disabilities that are imposed under any other act or otherwise imposed by law."

It's all legal stuff. It's all legal stuff saying that, in spite of that principle that I enumerated, we go on as we

always did; that this act will not override other acts, will not supersede them; that we will continue as we always have. Even if there are problems, challenges, discrimination and the like, we go on.

Mr Ramal: That's not correct, Mr Marchese.

Mr Marchese: The parliamentary assistant says what I'm saying is not correct, although I just read for him what his bill says. He's saying, "That's not correct." But I stand to be corrected; there's no doubt about it. I'm not a lawyer. I know there are some members on the other side who are, and they'll be able to speak to that. That's OK.

I go on. Another one of the 11 principles articulated in 1998: "The Ontarians with Disabilities Act should require government entities, public premises, companies and organizations to be made fully accessible to all persons with disabilities through the removal of existing barriers and the prevention of the creation of new barriers, within strict time frames to be prescribed in the legislation or regulations."

While the bill does promise time frames to be established by regulation, we don't know what those regulations will be, whether they will be truly strict or not, or real guarantees about what they will be at all. We have no clue. We are only left with the government saying, "This is historic"; we're only left with government saying, "We're doing this in partnership." What those time frames will be, we don't have a clue. We can only wait and hope for the best.

Is that good enough? I don't know. Maybe it's good for organizations who are dealing with these issues, but at the moment, in terms of our reading of this bill, we've got some serious concerns.

I go on to speak about other principles articulated in 1998: "The Ontarians with Disabilities Act should require the providers of goods, services and facilities to the public to ensure that their goods, services and facilities are fully usable by persons with disabilities and that they are designed to reasonably accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities. Included among services, goods and facilities, among other things, are all aspects of education including primary, secondary and post-secondary education, as well as providers of transportation and communication facilities (to the extent that Ontario can regulate these) and public sector providers of information to the public, eg, governments. Providers of these goods, services and facilities should be required to devise and implement detailed plans to remove existing barriers within legislated timetables."

The government, it is true, has put out, ministry by ministry, accessibility plans in anticipation of this bill, but a quick look at them shows that they are far from being "detailed plans to remove existing barriers within legislated timetables."

For example, we observed the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities say that its 2003-04 commitment to review the youth marketing initiative for their recruitment of young people into the Ontario public service to identify any barriers has been deferred. I'm telling

you, this is going to take a whole long time, it seems. Unless you truly commit to dealing with barriers, it's going to take forever. When they are virtually voluntary, it's going to take a long time. That's why Linda Crabtree is so worried that she says, "People like me might be dead by the time something happens."

We've got to push this. If we are not committed to seriously pushing it to make it happen, it will be delayed for a long time and it will languish.

1700

Another principle: "The Ontarians with Disabilities Act should require public and private sector employers to take proactive steps to achieve barrier-free workplaces within prescribed time limits. Among other things, employers should be required to identify existing barriers which impede persons with disabilities, and then to devise and implement plans for the removal of these barriers, and for the prevention of new barriers in the workplace."

Yes, we think the act may do this, but it may not. It depends on the regulations set by the minister. We are not convinced that these things will happen as they appear. All things are not as they seem. So much will depend on regulation, based on what the minister of the day may or may not want to achieve, or by a change of government that may or may not deal with this in a more timely way. So much depends on the minister deciding to push the elephant a little bit or not to push it.

Continuing a little bit with the principles agreed in 1998: "The Ontarians with Disabilities Act should provide for a prompt and effective process for enforcement. It should not simply incorporate the existing procedures for filing discrimination complaints with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, as these are too slow and cumbersome, and yield inadequate remedies."

Boy, is that ever true. Just speaking to that briefly, how many individuals do we know who have tried to take on the Ontario Human Rights Commission on an issue of discrimination? We have known and know today that it takes anywhere from six months to a year to two years to three years to never solving the problem. How well we know how ineffective this is.

The requirement to file is so cumbersome and so involving that individuals simply do not have the strength or the resources to take their matter of discrimination to the human rights commission. That is why so many of them fail. So while the Tories used to say, "If you feel discriminated against, you can take it to the human rights commission," it doesn't work because it relies on individuals to take the initiative. How many individuals out there have the strength, the wherewithal, the money to be able to take something like that on? They don't.

We are not equal in society. We are not all equal. We are not all born with equal conditions, though we all should be entitled to. We are literally born unequal in so many ways, because if you don't have a disability, you're a little more equal than somebody else. If you have some money or a lot of money, you're a lot more equal than many others, and boy, there are a lot of billionaires in this

country, there are a lot of billionaires in the US, and we're producing more and more billionaires. They are more equal than me, more equal than people with disabilities, more equal than aboriginal peoples, more equal than people of colour, because with money you can do so much and you can buy so much. We are not all equal.

While obviously we support the human rights commission as an institution, we decry the cuts the Conservative Party made and the cuts the Liberals have made here as well in this regard. We need more people at the human rights commission to deal with issues, not fewer people, and we need to deal with systemic problems, not individual problems. You cannot solve issues that have a huge impact on people's lives on a one-to-one basis. We need to tackle this systemically.

I know the Liberals are proud of this initiative. They think this is one of the ways they're dealing with it, and I'm saying it falls, oh, so short.

The act succeeds in this in part, but it relies heavily on inspectors—speaking to one of those principles—hired by the ministry to enforce this law. Given the cuts faced by ministries under this government, it remains to be seen whether there will be enough inspectors to enforce the law.

We are profoundly worried every time this government says, "We will enforce it by hiring more inspectors." This government claims they have two priorities, and those are health and education. Then they say, "Because we're so concerned about these two particular ones, we may have to and we will engage in cutting money from other ministries." Many of you are familiar with the fact that when people apply for a marriage certificate, it takes months. It could take a year. If you're applying for a birth certificate, it takes months. In most cases it takes a year.

Mr Ramal: We fixed it.

Mr Marchese: The parliamentary assistant to this minister says, "We fixed it." He doesn't have a clue about this, otherwise he wouldn't say it because the problem is not fixed; the problem continues. The waiting lists are as long as they were six months ago. People languish waiting. If we're going to wait for enforcement to happen by this government by hiring more inspectors, I don't think it's coming. It won't be there because this government is modernizing, which is a euphemism for cutting a lot more programs that so many people rely on.

Ministries are going to have to face 5% to 10% to 15% cuts in order for the government to be able to manage their promises. I remind people that if you believe this government has solved the issues of education and health, you have another think coming, because they haven't solved them. The problems are huge.

I've tried to show some of the inadequacies of what this government is doing as it relates to education, and my colleague, Shelley Martel, is doing it with health. As we show that there are tremendous inadequacies in what this government is doing in terms of dealing with their priorities, imagine what will happen with all those other

ministries that are not their priority. Their modernization, which means cutting, will be felt by many people expecting services that were cut tremendously by the former government, in the last regime, over eight years. It's going to get worse.

While some people hope that this economy will continue to go on at its rosy pace, my view is that the next recession is going to be ugly. If some of you were around when we were in government and witnessed the devastation on people's lives of the recession we had, the next recession will be brutal.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Don't be so doom and gloom.

Mr Marchese: My colleague the member from Eglinton-Lawrence thinks this is a gloomy picture to predict. It's nice to be realistic or pragmatic, as some Liberals would say, from time to time. A pragmatic view from time to time would show a recognition that we've got to anticipate the best and the worst, wouldn't you say, Mike?

Mr Colle: Yes, but you always give the worst. Give some of the good stuff.

Mr Marchese: Michael's going to stand up soon and give us a rosy picture of how beautiful things are.

1710

Mr Colle: You ought to give some balance.

Mr Marchese: I know, but it's not for me to give the balance. My role—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Not for me, no. This is a territory occupied fully by Liberals. It's hard to displace you from that role. You guys are so rooted on that fence, it's hard for me to tip you off that fence. I understand that. I know that some of you are smiling. The smile is a reflection of a reality and a truth: that you guys occupy this fence and you're rooted there all the time. That's why you can't go here or there at any one particular time. That's why you've got to sort of address all sides and hope that people will think this bill is historic.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): It is.

Mr Marchese: It is, yes. You've got to stand up and say that because you've got your lines written up. Most of you have your lines written up. It tells you, "It's historic—just say that. Paint a rosy picture so everybody out there will be happy. The people we want most to be happy are people with disabilities. We do not want them to believe this bill is anything but great and historic."

Those are the people they're reaching out to, that they need on their side, because if they don't have them on their side, this bill doesn't go anywhere.

With respect to employers, I don't see employers knocking on our door saying, "We won't be able to deal with this. This is going to kill us. This is going to kill our economy." While some Conservatives are raising this issue, in terms of "We've got to work with employers to address some of their concerns," it's all very polite, you'll notice. I noticed that the member from Simcoe North talked about the fact that some employers may

have some concerns, some financial needs in order to deal with some of the issues presented in this bill, but it was presented in a very modest sort of way. It wasn't really fearful or frightening. It was a rather rosy picture.

I tell you this, if the Conservatives speak of this in terms of, "You know, there might be some challenges. We've got to deal with this. We've got to address them," then this bill hardly goes to the extremes that the Liberals claim. If it was as radical and historic as they say, you'd have the Conservative Party members, through the business voice out there, which they represent rather strongly—they would be here saying, "You've got to oppose this bill and oppose it strongly," and that's what they would be doing. Well, they're not doing that. They are all very gentle supporters of this bill. If they are gentle supporters of this bill, it means the business community is happy, which means this bill is very modest in terms of the approach they take to dealing with these issues.

So I have spoken to some of the 11 principles that were adopted in 1998 and to at least five of them as a way of showing that there are some serious concerns.

We believe this needs a public debate. We support it, indeed, and we will not be obstructing it in any way. We have no interest in obstructing, and we have an interest in making sure it gets passed if this is a priority of the government. What we do want are hearings. This bill cannot pass in this way without hearing from those who have the expertise, from those who have been victims of discrimination for a long, long time. We want to hear from organizations, and from individuals in particular, about how they feel about Bill 118. At the end of the day, based on what they say, we will be guided by them.

This is a modest measure, a modest bill. It would be very difficult for me to oppose it, but we have introduced robust reservations. I have put them on the record, and we will do so when this bill gets into committee. Thank you for your attention.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I have just a couple of minutes or so to make a couple of comments. I think there are some important elements. I think to take action immediately upon proclamation is important. I think it's a reference point. It's not proclamation and kind of get around to it. In spite of the long time frame for implementation for all elements, public and private sector engagement in all facets, given its magnitude, will take a considerable amount of time, probably longer, I suspect, at the end of the day than any of us in this Legislature would like to see happen. But nonetheless, there is a certain urgency expressed in the legislation once proclamation occurs.

I have to reflect for a moment on the time it takes on occasion to identify issues and find strategies to fix them. I had the pleasure in 1990 as a mayor to open a new city hall and library complex. After we were in there, we found things within the first six months that rather surprised and shocked us. I'm just going to talk about the physical disability, the mobility issues, as opposed to all the other challenges that people with disabilities face.

We couldn't get in the library with a wheelchair through the front doors effectively, because the doors pulled open. They weren't electrified to slide open, and someone in a wheelchair couldn't possibly manage those doors. You couldn't get in the washrooms, because the washroom doors had been built too small. Around the building you couldn't get on the sidewalk, because in the overall design and finalizing of sidewalk construction—the contractors—there were no provisions for any slopes from the corner of the sidewalk down to the roadway. That was a municipal building with all of these challenges, and those got resolved, but they didn't get resolved on day one; they got resolved over a year or so. That is an example of why it will take some time for the private sector to respond effectively well.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise again this afternoon to make a few comments. I'm hearing from the member for Trinity-Spadina, who is looking at this in a—I guess I'm a little more positive about the bill right now. I think he maybe has some reservations about the bill at this point, and he may well be right on with this. I'm hoping we can work together, whatever governments are in power over the next 20 years, to try to get this phased in. I think it really is important that we work in a non-partisan manner to make sure this legislation is implemented in a timely manner.

That may mean, as I said earlier, some opportunities to work with some of the grant programs we have even today to enhance them even more. That would be things like the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which has already done some great work out there in some of our community halls and non-profit organizations in terms of making things better in those areas. There may also be some assistance required by the chambers of commerce, or economic development. I don't know what those programs would be right now. I want to make sure that we make sure that for the people who have disabilities, we as a society treat them properly and make sure the access they have is clear and fair.

I know there are going to be some areas when very small businesses are going to have a difficult time, and that's where I think we may need some assistance from the government. Maybe, in this case, even the federal government can support some of the actions of a province that's taking what I would consider to be a leading role in this cause.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It is always a pleasure to hear my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. Let me reinforce what he said, and I guess I want to put it in this context. A couple of years ago there were a number of disabled folks in my community who were in wheelchairs. They staged a bit of a demonstration out in front of one of the local theatres. It was one of the theatres that was being used for the Cinefest that now occurs in our community in September. They were out there making it very clear to the media and to the public generally that they didn't think it was very fair that they couldn't come and access the Cinefest festival because this particular theatre that was being used was not accessible.

1720

What is interesting is that what has changed here is that the theatre has actually closed, so now they don't have to worry about it any more. I raise that because, another 20 years—please. I say to the government members, I just find it hard to define this as a historic day when essentially what we're saying to people is, "It's going to be another 20 years before you can expect to participate fully in the economic and social fabric of Ontario." I've got to tell you, I think 20 years is too long to ask people who have waited for a long time already to wait to be able to participate fully in the social and economic fabric of Ontario.

I think of those folks sitting outside that theatre with their placards who were unable to participate in this event because the theatre was not wheelchair accessible. What are we doing telling them, "Wait another 20 years and maybe another theatre will be accessible"? I hope we have public hearings and I hope that through the public hearings we'll hear from people who will say, "We can do better than 20 years." That's what I really hope is going to happen here.

Mr Ramal: I have the pleasure and honour to stand up again and speak about this very important issue. I want to repeat, it is a very historic day for all the people in this province, especially for the people with disabilities.

I was listening to the members from Trinity-Spadina and Nickel Belt when they were talking about and minimizing the power of this bill. I believe it is insulting for the ODA committee, who worked for the last 10 years. We had many of them present here when we introduced second reading of this bill.

I would repeat what David Lepofsky had to say: "Mr McGuinty has made a series of promises and with this bill he's kept them all. He promised he would work with the disability community, the business community and the municipalities to develop the law. He did that.... He said he'd introduce a bill within the first year. He did that.... He said the bill would fix the major problems with the Conservatives' weak bill, and it does."

Time and again our government worked with all the people with respect to the opinions about this bill, and the ODA Committee worked hard for a long time to establish a strong bill alongside our minister, who has a passion about the people with disabilities.

I want to remind you, Mr Speaker, monsieur le Président, que le gouvernement McGuinty estime que chaque Ontarien et Ontarienne devrait pouvoir apprendre, travailler et participer pleinement à la vie de la société.

This is our mission, that every person can have accessibility, that every person can go anywhere without any barrier. This is our goal. This bill speaks to it. We're not saying 20 years to start implementing it. We'll start implementing this bill when everybody has agreed on it and we pass it in this place; then that bill would take place. We're talking about 20 years for it to be fully implemented. That's what I want to say to the public of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Response by the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: I thank my friends and say that disabled Ontarians have waited a long time for accessibility, and this bill will leave them waiting even longer. It's the Liberal way: You go slowly, at a snail's pace, don't offend anyone, and then claim, "It's historic. This is really, really big." It's the Liberal way to be timid but pretend you're really bold. It's the Liberal way to say, "We're working on this legislation with the people affected, with the partners," rather than saying, "We're too afraid to act."

This is an excuse not to act. This is a failure to act. This is the fear to act. This is all about consulting to death, in my humble view. This is about establishing accessibility standards that can go on and on. It's about talking about the process of the development of those standards, which can go on and on. That's what that is about. If people are happy to engage in this process, great. If they're happy at the end of the day and say, "We're happy to engage in this process, and it might take a long time," that's great. Our duty is to point out the weaknesses of this bill, and they are, in our view, profound.

We want public hearings. In our view, people cannot wait 20 years. We think that a lot of people agree with us out there, and that's why we need to hear from them. We will have the debate in this House. We will take it to committee hearings, and we will go wherever you want, to listen to both organizations and individuals and determine whether this bill is historic or whether it's deficient, whether they can wait 20 years or whether they can't.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I find, in this job, that it's not always self-evident, before one enters a debate or thinks about a particular issue in depth, which issues are going to touch the core and which aren't. I realize that this is one that is very—the concern for it runs very deep with me. I'm going to talk a little bit about where that comes from.

First, I want to acknowledge two of my constituents. I don't know if they're watching today, but if they are, then I'm speaking to them: Audrey King and Sharon Dever. They're two of my constituents who really have informed my thinking about this issue. They've been talking to me for many months about this issue. The way they live their lives helps me to understand the issue better.

I think it's very difficult for any of us who aren't dealing with a particular issue, whatever it is, to understand people who are dealing with life issues other than the ones we have to cope with. So I think that one of the struggles for us in this Legislature is to write legislation that actually reflects the needs of the people who need it. The issue of whether there will be public hearings, the issue of our consultation with the sector as we put the standards in place—those are all ways that we have to demonstrate that we are going to do our very best to write a piece of legislation and to refine this piece of legis-

lation so that it meets the needs of the people who are living the realities of people with disabilities, whether those disabilities are visible or invisible.

I think that this whole issue of legislation around people with disabilities is a human struggle, and I think we all have to acknowledge that, of course, the best time to have fixed this would have been years ago. The best time to have planted a tree would have been 40 years ago, because then you'd have a very large tree at this point.

Unfortunately, here we are: 2004. We have to move forward. Some of the accusations that are coming at us from the members across the floor are that we're moving too slowly, that we're not moving quickly enough—

Interruption.

Ms Wynne: Mr Speaker, I'm just going to sit.

The Acting Speaker: We'll recess for about 10 minutes.

The House recessed from 1728 to 1735.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Don Valley West.

Ms Wynne: As I was saying, we need right now, in 2004, to move from where we are, to move forward. Bill 118 is An Act respecting the development, implementation and enforcement of standards relating to accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings and all other things specified in the act for persons with disabilities. What this act will do is put standards in place. It will develop standards that will allow Ontario to become more accessible, will force Ontario to become more accessible. If we believe in the human rights of all Ontarians, then we must do our part. What Minister Bountrogianni is doing is she is leading this province to be more accessible, leading this province to a more accessible future.

These standards will be set in close co-operation with persons with disabilities, with sector representatives, with other ministries. It will be a large discussion about what those standards should be.

There will be tough penalties for non-compliance. The issue of compliance is the one that has been brought up to me over and over again by people in the sector. It's all very well to have fine words, but if there are no standards, if there is no time frame and if there are no consequences for non-compliance, then the bill has no teeth, the legislation has no teeth.

I want to read from an article by Linda Crabtree. She talks about "Politician Warmed Cockles of My Little Advocate Heart," speaking about Minister Bountrogianni. She's talking about this piece of legislation, and what she says is, "As it stands now, it has teeth—deadlines ... and fines—but it is also fair." So I think it's pretty clear that there is widespread support for this legislation, and, I expect, from all sides of the House.

I want to talk a little bit about my personal interaction with this whole area. Some of my earliest memories come from a time when there was, believe me, no legislation in place that forced anybody to have accessible workplaces or accessible facilities. I grew up in Rich-

mond Hill. My father was a family practitioner, and he practised in a place at one point called the Villa, and it was a senior citizens' facility. In the back of the senior citizens' facility there were a few rooms where young people with severe disabilities were housed. There were no services for them; there were no vans to take them on outings; there were no programs for them.

One day, when my dad was doing his rounds in this institution, he heard some singing from one of the rooms. He came home and talked about this young woman who had muscular dystrophy. Her name was Bev, and she had a lovely voice.

My mom was a professional singer, looking after four kids at home at the time, but she decided that what she was going to do was go into this facility and work with some of these young people who were 17, 18, 19 years old and see if they might want to take some singing lessons, might want to work with her.

What happened was that she and a woman named Jessie Passmore, who was a pianist, developed a group. They were called the Villatones. They travelled around the province. They fought for funding to buy a van so they could go and do radio shows in small towns around the province. It changed their lives that they had some people who were willing to build on some of the talents they had and work with them.

That was a tiny, individual example. There was no systemic support for people who needed the kind of support those young people needed. These were young people who had had diving accidents or who had been born with disabilities, and there just were not services in the community for them. Not only were there not services, but they couldn't go into restaurants, they couldn't go into public buildings and they couldn't go into private businesses, because there was no way in.

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Obviously, we've come a long way from there. We have much more recognition in the community of the needs of people with disabilities, but we've got a long way to go, and that's what this legislation signals, that we've got to put these standards in place, we've got to be clear about what they are, we've got to be clear about what the compliance is, and we've got to put a timeline in place.

I was talking earlier of the concern about moving too slowly. The way the bill has been set up, the first standards would be implemented no later than five years from the creation of the committee that would set the standards, and the standards would be reviewed every five years, or earlier.

I think what is critical for us to understand is that it is necessary to give organizations and give people the time to realistically put the changes in place. For us to say today, "Within five years, everything has to be done and we have to be there," wouldn't be realistic. We would be deluding ourselves. The community would know that it wasn't realistic.

So what we're doing is putting in realistic time frames, and what that does is allow the sector and the people in

the community to be confident that we are serious about this. We're serious about it. We're going to make this happen. So I think, quite the opposite of moving too slowly, we're actually putting a realistic plan in place that's going to give confidence to the people who most need this legislation.

As a school trustee, I spent many hours talking about how we make our schools more accessible, how we move to a place where children could go to the schools in their community without having to be bused somewhere else or having nowhere to go, because there are communities in the province where there isn't anywhere to go. There aren't accessible school buildings.

So we need to make sure that there's access for children in every part of this province to the schools that they need to go to, to the colleges, to the universities. That's a critical piece of this because we have got to educate the whole province, and in order to do that, we've got to make sure that students can get to those institutions of learning.

So I am absolutely proud and pleased to be supporting this piece of legislation. The only way we're going to change our attitudes as a society—and it's all of us, because there's nobody who's free of ableism. We are all, to some degree or another, fearful of—we have a lack of understanding of people who are other than we are. So the only way we're going to change our attitudes is to make sure that we've legislated the standards that we will all then have to accept and work toward.

Then the next generation of children, like my youngest sister, who used to travel with my mom when she was a tiny baby, who travelled with those kids in their wheelchairs and listened to them sing—my younger sister is now working as a special-needs assistant, and she has a different attitude about people with disabilities than I do, because she grew up understanding that people are capable of all sorts of things. It doesn't have to do with whether they're sitting in a wheelchair or whether they can see or whether they can hear; they're capable of all sorts of things.

And so this piece of legislation speaks to our humanity and speaks to our vision of an Ontario that respects the humanity of all individuals.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Dunlop: I just wanted to say on behalf of Mrs Munro, thank you very much for your—it's kind of an unfortunate little trip she made there, but she's fine. I just wanted to say thank you very much to all members of the House for coming to her rescue so quickly there.

I just wanted to follow through on something that the latest speaker just mentioned, and that's the time frame. As we go forward with this legislation, I think it's going to be the time frame that's going to be the most controversial part of this. I kind of agree with the time frame, and I'll tell you why.

Twenty years sounds like it's a long way off, but we all know how fast 20 years rolls around. In order to implement the type of work that will be required on buildings, just the access that people need and all the

different resources they're going to need, I think the time is going to move very quickly in this area.

As we've said earlier, we've come a long way in this province over the last 20 or 30—I'm going to say 30—years to remove barriers. As we proceed over the next 20 years and put the regulations in place, I think it's going to be hard to even achieve the goals of this bill in the 20-year period. I think there are going to be areas where the province is going to have to show a very strong leadership role in providing assistance, in some cases both to the private sector and at public facilities as well.

With that, again, I will be supporting this legislation, although, like Mr Marchese, I'm looking forward to some fairly good committee hearings on this and positive responses from the public.

Ms Martel: I'm going to make a couple of comments in response to the comments that were just made. I wish I could say that I am delighted to see the legislation that is before us, and delighted to see us take a step forward in making sure Ontario is barrier-free, but I am not delighted. In fact, I'm pretty distressed about the fact that the best it seems we can do as a provincial jurisdiction is to say to people, "Twenty years from now, Ontario will finally be barrier-free and you will be able to participate fully in the economy and social fabric of the province."

I look at the province and say to myself that you have to think that in the province of Ontario, with the resources that we have, financial and human resources, with the technology that is out there, we should be able to do better than that. There should be no question of our ability to do better than 20 years. I would hope that when you think of the economic and social contributions that can be made by people with disabilities, that employers, retailers and others in the community would be anxious to do better than that, recognizing how they could benefit by making sure that Ontarians with disabilities are able to participate fully in the economic and social life of the province. I've just got to tell you, 20 years is so long.

There's no doubt in my mind that people who have been waiting already a long time are going to be dead before we're done here. And is that very fair? I hope that during the public hearings somebody's going to come forward and say, "In a province as rich as ours, with the human and financial resources that we have, we can do better than that."

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a pleasure to stand in this House to support this bill. I think, of all the things that we do, when we can do something for the less fortunate in our society, it's always a plus. This is a real plus. We, as fairly able people who sit in this House, the majority of us sometimes take for granted what goes on in everyday life.

A few years ago my daughter's first job was working with an organization in the town of Cobourg that looked after adults with disabilities. It was the first time in my life—in my late life, I should say—that I had the opportunity to be more closely associated with people with disabilities. They give you a whole new meaning. I remember my daughter saying, "We'd like to take these

folks somewhere today, Dad. We couldn't do it because...." or, "We'd like to go there but we can't do it because...." I think what we're doing here, regardless of the time frame, is we're making some headway so that these people can do what you and I or my daughter could do back then.

In the east end of my riding that I serve, in the municipalities of Quinte West and Brighton, I was fortunate to be on council when we established a transit system to serve both municipalities to deal with people with disabilities. I was very delighted that they were part of our gasoline tax, because they're offering public transit to the less fortunate. Every year they have an awareness day. As a politician, or as a member of the community, I've taken part every year. They gave me a whole new meaning on how to work a wheelchair through the downtown of Quinte West. Even these buses that are equipped to be accessible are a challenge.

I am so delighted that we're taking this leadership role to do something that's—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Scott: It's a pleasure once again to listen to the debate and to rise on this occasion to deal with the act. It is all about access, as the minister said. People with disabilities need to access more of our communities. In rural Ontario it's a special challenge. We have a lot of older buildings, a lot of historic buildings.

I want to mention the community groups that have come together, and I'm sure it's similar in many ridings around. They've come together and a lot of them have applied for those Trillium grants. I was at the Trillium function last night. They've applied for wheelchair accessibility. The Lindsay library, for example, applied for a Trillium grant and received money so they could make it wheelchair-accessible. A lot of the Legions are doing similar things. So I think it's super that the Trillium program and the communities are recognizing the needs that people with disabilities have in our ridings.

I think we've come a long way. I can remember when a lot of offices, even elected members' offices, weren't accessible. It's been good that public pressure has been out there and that they have worked, especially the politicians, to make them more wheelchair-accessible.

As I mentioned before, I have family members who are deaf, and the devices they use in order to work the telephones, the TVs—I'm sure we're all familiar with the TV devices that have the written word. The age of the computer has really assisted them. You don't have to talk; you can write on the computer. People don't know you have a handicap. It's a wonderful evolution for them.

I know Cam Jackson has worked really hard previously in the government and is going to be welcomed here in his initial speech next week as we have further debate. So I'll look forward to all the proposals and speeches on this debate.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes in response the member for Don Valley West.

Ms Wynne: I'm glad to hear from the member for Simcoe North that Ms Munro from York North is OK.

I think the comments that have been made by the member for Nickel Belt, the member for Simcoe North, the member for Northumberland and the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock illustrate that every one of us in this House has experiences to which we can relate when we're thinking about accessibility and how important it is for our communities. That doesn't mean we don't struggle with it. It doesn't mean that we don't see examples everywhere we go of inaccessibility and try to work with our communities to make our world more accessible. As MPPs, that's one of the things we do. We have people coming in to talk to us all the time who can't access in one way or another either the services or the facilities in the community. So this legislation touches us all.

When this bill goes to committee, there will be the opportunity for people to speak to it, and we will continue to listen to people from around the province on refinements and on their concerns. But at the core, I believe we've got it right.

I know the member for Nickel Belt feels that we should be moving faster, there should be more, we can do better. You know what? At some level I would agree with her, but I would agree with her on all sorts of files in government. Of course we could do better. If we had all the resources in the world, we could do better. If the world were a different place, we could do better. Given what we've got, given the resources available to us, given our history, given the state of our buildings, this is what we must do. We must put the standards in place. We must make sure those standards meet the needs of the community and we must put compliance mechanisms in place. That's what this legislation does. It's the rational, reasonable thing to do.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. This House, standing close to 6 pm, stands adjourned until 1:30 pm on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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