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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 24 November 2004

Mercredi 24 novembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 24 November 2004

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 24 novembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus and our leader, John Tory, I rise today to welcome the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association to Queen's Park. I see there are a number over here.

The OPFFA represents approximately 9,500 professional firefighters, each of whom is ready to put their life on the line every day to help keep our province safer.

Firefighters' dedication to serving Ontarians is evident in the OPFFA code of ethics. The code includes the following: "I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of the fire and emergency service."

The OPFFA is here today to raise concerns with MPPs on issues like OMERS autonomy and standards for the fire service. We hope their concerns will be heard loudly and clearly, especially by Dalton McGuinty and the members of his government.

In a letter to Fred LeBlanc dated May 23, 2003, Dalton McGuinty personally outlined his promises to Ontario firefighters. We expect the Premier to keep these promises, and as the official opposition, we must hold him accountable for them.

Earlier today, I was pleased to meet with Fred LeBlanc, the association's president, and Brian George, the association's executive vice-president, as well as Michael Gagnon from the Midland fire service. I was pleased to listen to their concerns and to have John Tory participate in one of our meetings later on.

I thank the OPFFA for coming out to Queen's Park, and I encourage all members to show their support for our firefighters by attending the OPFFA reception later today in committee room 2.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Each year in June, the municipality of Chatham-Kent hosts its Seniors' Information Fair. It is also an opportunity for the community to celebrate and recognize senior men and

women who unselfishly contribute to making Ontario what it is today: a dynamic and vibrant province.

I am pleased that the minister responsible for seniors, John Gerretsen, was at this year's ceremony to personally thank the many men and women for their personal achievement in adding to the growth, diversity and prosperity of our community and for the significant role they have played in building our society.

The McGuinty government is committed to improving our seniors' quality of life. Our budget sets out a plan to provide seniors with the care, respect and dignity they deserve. We will provide more nurses and more care in our nursing homes and long-term-care facilities. As well, eligible couples who require care will receive priority for placement in the same long-term-care facility. Our government will provide 2,300 new joint replacement surgeries, 9,000 additional cataract surgeries and a \$448-million increase for home care. We will add an additional \$125 to the property tax supplement for seniors. We continue to provide OHIP coverage for eye exams for seniors over 65.

I'm very proud of the McGuinty government's contribution and commitment to our Ontario seniors.

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): On Monday, I had the great pleasure to visit Sudbury to tour local mining operations and learn more about the many issues facing the mining industry in northern Ontario.

When the member from Sudbury was in opposition, he was very concerned about the rate of construction on Highway 69. He even began a billboard campaign to emphasize the need to four-lane Highway 69. On June 14, 2000, he said, "I demand, on behalf of my constituents, that you begin four-laning Highway 69 from Sudbury immediately." In his re-election campaign he promised quick action on Highway 69.

You can imagine my shock when, driving along that very highway on Monday, I noticed that there has been no construction. After 14 months as minister responsible for the northern highway program, the member for Sudbury has certainly changed his priorities. The lack of construction on Highway 69 is just another example of the Liberal government's inaction in the north.

Four-laning Highway 69 is a safety issue and an economic issue. It is a vital transportation link. In 1996, the minister had 12,000 people from Sudbury fill out postcards that said, "Highway 69: worth the investment."

I guess he lost those postcards in his move to the minister's office.

Earlier this month, the minister did announce some good news, though. He announced a tender for 700 metres of highway just south of Sudbury. At that rate, it will take 157 years to finish the highway from Sudbury to Parry Sound. We won't even be around to know whether the government kept this promise.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): November is Adoption Awareness Month. Now is the time that we need to act and open up adoption records to ensure that the health of all adult adoptees is ensured and to respect their human rights.

As you know, a private member's bill, Bill 14, was proposed by the NDP. It provides access to birth registration and adoption records for both adult adoptees and birth parents. Bill 14 ensures that adult adoptees have access to their family and personal health information, essential to prevent inherited genetic diseases. Nonetheless, either party is able to file a contact veto.

We were happy to hear on Monday that the Premier still supports adoption disclosure. However, we were troubled that he will not act now. He said he wanted to review other jurisdictions. That work has already been done; all the homework has been done. We don't need to study this issue further. It shouldn't be watered down. The adoption community is tired of having its hopes dashed time and time again. We need to implement progressive adoption reform that protects the health of adoptees and guarantees their human rights. I urge the Premier to reconsider the year's delay he has proposed and to call the member for Toronto-Danforth's original bill, Bill 14, for third reading and a final vote in this Legislature. It will open up adoptions, and opening adoption records will prevent the stigmatization surrounding adoption and enhance the health of adoptees by providing essential medical information.

The time to act is now. It's in the government's power. Let's get the adoption bill done in Adoption Awareness Month.

1340

LYNN JOHNSTON

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Last week, one of my riding's and our country's treasures celebrated a milestone. Lynn Johnston, the celebrated cartoonist and creator of the very popular comic strip *For Better or For Worse*, celebrated the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Patterson family.

Lynn Johnston is celebrated worldwide but lives in my riding, just outside of North Bay in East Ferris. She and her husband, Dr Rod Johnston, are local heroes—major contributors to countless local charities and community events.

Many of us have grown up with the Pattersons: watched their ups and downs, their children go off to school, their parents age, their nest empty. Recently, their daughter graduated from teachers' college. As part of the great celebration, real-life graduates of Nipissing University's faculty of education graduating class received a copy of the comic strip which illustrated the great day.

I have had the chance to see Lynn Johnston among her fans first-hand. In New York City, I watched at Book-Expo America, North America's largest book fair, as hundreds lined up for her autograph. And just last week I was lucky enough to be at Gulliver's Quality Books and Toys, a fabulous bookstore on Main Street in North Bay, where together with 30 or 40 fans we sang Happy Birthday and celebrated this great milestone. Lynn sang, served cake, and then signed books with her usual smile and humour and a personal caricature.

I am proud to rise today to congratulate Lynn Johnston on 25 years of making Canadians and people who follow her strip in over 2,000 different newspapers in 20 countries smile every day. Thanks for 25 years of smiles, Lynn.

YOUTH GAMBLING

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Speaker, I'm sure you'll agree with me; you were probably as shocked and disappointed as every other parent in this province when they heard the Premier yesterday simply laugh off when he heard the report that children are gambling in our schools, that there are actually young people who throughout the course of their lunch hour are spending time gambling. This comes from a Premier and a Minister of Education who felt it important to take their time to tell teachers and principals what can or cannot be in the vending machines of our schools. This is a government that sees fit to tell parents what their children should eat at school, but they are not prepared to take action with something as insulting as knowing that our children are learning how to gamble in an environment that should be there for academic excellence.

I believe that every parent wants this Premier and this Minister of Education to show leadership, to hold principals and teachers accountable for what is going on in the schools. If they can tell kids what to eat, surely they can come to their support and ensure that schools are a place for excellence in learning, not a breeding ground for tomorrow's gambling addicts.

VIETNAMESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Next year will mark the 30th anniversary of the end of the tragic war in Vietnam. One of Canada's legacies of the end of that war was the openness with which Canadians welcomed so many of Vietnam's talented people who fled that country to come to a land of peace and prosperity for them and for their families.

Last Saturday night, I had the pleasure of attending the Vietnamese Canadian Community Scholarship Fund's

2004 Academic Excellence Award ceremony held at the Meadowvale Community Centre in Mississauga. This not-for-profit organization, founded in 1992, annually recognizes, supports and encourages talented Vietnamese Canadians whose academic performance and community contributions reflect the excellence and the work ethic that our Vietnamese community brings to Canada. Since its inception, the fund has rewarded more than 100 Vietnamese Canadian students through its excellence awards and encouragement awards programs.

I am pleased to recognize two good friends who are members of the association, Thi and Sylvia Nguyen-Huu, who are today celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary and are in the members' gallery. I'm also pleased to send the congratulations of this Legislature to the association president, Mr Tran Van Dao.

I also send the congratulations of the Ontario Legislature to this year's 10 scholarship winners, all straight-A students: Daniel Nghiem, Cindy Ha, Jennifer Huynh, Ngoc Nguyen, Cathy Nguyen, Tiffany Nguyen, Lei Chin Cat and Christine Le.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I'm proud today to stand as part of the McGuinty government, which is taking a big step forward in helping some of our most vulnerable citizens.

All too often, couples who have been with each other for most of their lives are split up when they enter long-term care. These people deserve the dignity of being able to live together. That's why our government is easing the way for elderly couples to remain together in long-term-care homes so that they can continue to provide love, support and companionship to one another.

I know this will help people in my riding who have found themselves separated from their loved ones. Many in long-term-care facilities have found themselves in this situation.

This initiative is part of the government's action plan, announced last May, to reform Ontario's long-term-care homes. This action plan also includes hiring more nurses and front-line staff, providing enhanced care for residents, giving residents and their families more of a voice in long-term-care homes, a new public reporting Web site, and strengthening enforcement and accountability.

The overall goal is to ensure that seniors in long-term-care homes are treated with the respect they deserve in a strong culture of dignity and community.

I am especially proud of this plan.

HEALTHY LIVING

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Today the chief medical officer of health released a report that says obesity is becoming an ever-growing problem in Ontario. This government understands the severity of the situation, and that is why we are acting.

We are taking preventive measures to ensure that child obesity numbers go down. We have banned junk food in

primary schools, we are ensuring that children in primary schools have healthy eating options in our schools, and we will ensure that children get at least 20 minutes of physical activity every day.

We have also opened up our schools for community use, because not only does this government encourage citizen engagement in community activities, but this government supports and encourages healthy, active lifestyles.

Furthermore, we have introduced Active 2010, a comprehensive new strategy to get more Ontarians physically active. Active 2010 will boost total funding to the sport and recreation sector to more than \$20 million annually. The strategy includes Pause to Play, a campaign directed at 10- to 14-year-olds to promote a lifetime of fitness.

Obesity is a disease we can prevent, and this government is committed to doing just that.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: Mr Hoy has moved that the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs be adopted. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be counted.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Qadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Craitor, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Peters, Steve	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Peterson, Tim	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Tascona, Joseph N.
Churley, Marilyn	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Wednesday, November 17, 2004, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICY

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 24, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

FIREFIGHTERS

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): It's a privilege for me to rise in the House today to pay tribute to Ontario's professional firefighters. I would like to acknowledge that many of them from all over Ontario are in the members' gallery, and you can see them here off to our right.

Today, I'm also pleased to acknowledge the great contribution the valiant men and women of Ontario's fire services make to public safety in this province. During the past two months, we have seen a number of events that show our respect and appreciation for the firefighters of Ontario.

In October, I was privileged to attend the annual Firefighters' Memorial Day service at the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst. Firefighters who died while on duty safeguarding their communities are remembered at this ceremony. We do this so that no man or woman who dies while protecting the lives and property of their fellow citizens will ever be forgotten. In Toronto, the fire service also held a moving ceremony for fallen firefighters.

1400

These services were conducted to honour the fallen, but we cannot forget the living. They are our everyday heroes. They're the people who are so good at their jobs that the rest of us sometimes forget just how vital they are to the safety of our communities. The government recognizes both the commitment and the contribution of this province's professional firefighters. We appreciate the hazards they face on a daily basis.

We also recognize that the kinds of emergencies firefighters must respond to can involve anything from fire to chemicals to radiological or even biological or nuclear threats. That's why our government is providing funding for three key central fire services to maintain their chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear, or CBRN, response units. These specialized units, based in Windsor, Toronto and Ottawa, can also be deployed anywhere in the province if they are needed.

I began by talking about the valour of our firefighters. Last year, we saw on live television just what it means to be a firefighter. When the Uptown Theatre collapsed in Toronto, we were all gripped by the heroism of Toronto's firefighters and the heavy urban search and rescue units. I'm pleased to say that our government is continuing to fund Toronto's heavy urban search and rescue unit, or HUSAR, as it's called. As with the CBRN teams, the HUSAR unit will assist any community in the province that may need its specialized training and equipment.

I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the Ontario Firefighters' Memorial, which will be located just south of the Legislature. The executive vice-president of the OPFFA, Brian George, is a member of the memorial foundation. The other foundation members are Neville Murphy of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, and Jim Richards of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario. The foundation oversees all aspects of the memorial. It is thanks to their hard work that we will be able to attend the official unveiling of the memorial next spring. This memorial will honour all those firefighters who made the ultimate sacrifice for public safety, and it will serve as a permanent reminder to all of us that, every day, firefighters risk their lives and personal health and safety to keep us and our communities safe.

On behalf of the people of Ontario, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our firefighters for all they do to keep our communities and our citizens safe.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I want to take this occasion to introduce my colleagues in this Legislature to a group of people who make a great contribution to the unparalleled quality of life that we enjoy in this province. I'm speaking of the members of the Ontario Environment Industry Association, also known as ONEIA. Today is the ONEIA annual Environment Industry Day at Queen's Park. I want to specifically mention the chair of ONEIA, Mark Vanderheyden, and the Environment Industry Day chair, Anton Davies. I know that all the honourable members will join me in welcoming the Ontario Environment Industry Association to the Legislature.

Today is an important opportunity for companies in Ontario's environment sector to meet with members of provincial Parliament and senior government officials. I know that many of you have taken part in these meetings and that we are all inspired by the accomplishments of an industry that generates an estimated \$6.9 billion in annual revenues. Ontario's environmental companies are succeeding by leading the world in goods and services that protect air, water and land. I'm proud to say that some of the best environmental work in the world is being done right here in Ontario.

The McGuinty government sees Ontario's environment industry as an invaluable partner. Their work helps meet a commitment that all of us share to ensure safe, clean, livable communities. We recognize that innovation must be at the forefront when ambitious goals have been set.

I want to echo the words of the federal environment minister, Stéphane Dion. He has spoken of a new industrial revolution where the environment drives creativity, innovation and competitiveness around the world.

Our government is taking strong action to protect the environment. We have introduced a bold new action plan for cleaner air. It includes air emissions limits for major industrial sectors that have never had limits before. We have set aggressive targets for diverting waste away from disposal. We have introduced regulations to make Ontario's hazardous waste rules among the toughest in North America. And we are making significant advances toward the protection of drinking water at every stage, from source to tap.

Ontario's environment industry is creating bold and innovative solutions for businesses, municipalities and households that enable them to implement our vision for a healthier environment. Our government understands that everyone has a role to play in the environment. We know that we can only succeed with the benefit of the expertise and experience represented by the Ontario Environment Industry Association. Our government is

counting on them as we continue to address difficult environmental issues.

The people of Ontario are fortunate that the members of ONEIA are on the job. A quick look at the round tables this afternoon—I certainly invite you to take time to visit them—shows that they are involved in some of the most challenging issues we face, issues like climate change, source protection, air quality standards and hazardous waste pre-treatment.

The track record of Ontario's environment sector should give all of us confidence that we can meet these challenges. I would like to ask the honourable members to join me in expressing appreciation to the Ontario environment industry today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased again—I had a chance in members' statements—to talk a little bit about the firefighters today.

I really want to zero in on something the minister said and bring to the attention of this House some of the promises made to the firefighters by the McGuinty government in a letter dated May 23, 2003. That, of course, was before they were elected as a government. There were four key items—some of the issues they're lobbying for today. Here's what Mr McGuinty said:

"I would be pleased to outline my commitments to Ontario firefighters. First, as you know, a McGuinty Liberal government will ensure an increased supply in thermal imaging equipment for fire departments. I understand that more of this equipment would be a great asset to our firefighters in their work.

"I am also acutely aware of other needs within our firefighter services. Second, I will ensure that an independent audit of the fire marshal's office (FMO) is carried out. Jury recommendations following inquests into fire-related deaths have highlighted a lack of monitoring and intervention by the FMO in municipalities where public safety is threatened. An audit of the office is clearly in order."

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: I didn't heckle him.

"Third, I am committed to working with the OPFFA and fire departments across Ontario to develop standards for fire suppression. 'Guidelines' and 'points of reference' are simply not good enough. It is essential that our firefighters have clear standards in place to follow. My team and I will work to improve these standards, which would ... reveal staffing and response deficits within our fire services....

"Fourth, as outlined in my letter to the OPFFA earlier this year, I have openly expressed my support for OMERS autonomy. In my view, by amending the OMERS plan despite the board's objections, the government is abusing its power. Ontario Liberals have repeatedly urged the government to implement autonomy for OMERS. I continue to support that autonomy....

“We look forward to the opportunity to put our plans into action....”

These are all quotes from a letter dated May 23, 2003, by guess who? The man who has broken more promises than anybody in history: Dalton McGuinty.

So, to the professional firefighters, I wish you all the best. We on this side of the House—John Tory and the PC caucus—will continue to press the government to make sure that Dalton McGuinty keeps his promises to the professional firefighters of Ontario.

1410

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I'm pleased to welcome the Ontario Environment Industry Association to Queen's Park on behalf of our leader, John Tory, and our PC caucus. I would like to urge all members to attend the reception this evening. This is the fifth reception hosted by this group.

The Ontario Environment Industry Association represents over 1,500 companies and generates \$1 billion in economic activity. Overall, our environment sector employs 60,000 people, generating in total \$7 billion in economic activity.

I'll mention that as we move forward we rely on this sector increasingly as we struggle to meet the demands of something in the order of four million people arriving in this province over the next 20 years—we think of increasing air pollution, water pollution, use of vehicles, generation of waste and runoff, just to name a few of the impacts that we'll have to manage as population numbers shoot skyward.

Like the PC Party, ONEIA members are concerned with pollution prevention, reduction and management. They work for a cleaner and greener Ontario, and they recognize the importance of continuing to attempt to remove regulatory hurdles, barriers to the introduction of new technology in this field.

It's too bad that again the McGuinty Liberals are too busy breaking promises to be proactive on issues like this. The government recently introduced a spills bill—this wasn't mentioned in the list of government accomplishments just now for some reason—that would increase penalties and make companies guilty until proven innocent. I ask the question to the minister, what good are sanctions if you do not increase prevention, monitoring and enforcement? It raises the question, is this merely a cash grab under the cloak of environmentalism?

The minister's own industrial pollution action team said, “Ontario's environmental management framework is largely reactive, not preventative.” In that context, I again welcome the Ontario Environment Industry Association to the Ontario Legislature.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats are proud to welcome professional firefighters from across Ontario to this chamber and to join in the applaud-

ing and saluting of them for their incredible commitment and contribution to the safety and welfare of people across this province.

The New Democrats want to make it very clear that we unequivocally support the right of professional firefighters to belong to an association, to develop their own constitution and to create bylaws that they are allowed to enforce without interference by any level of government, bar none. It is critical to professional firefighters, to the safety of firefighters across this province and to the welfare of communities that those standards that professional firefighters create for their sisters and brothers in their association are capable of being maintained and enforced by those same firefighters.

All the talk of memorials and memorial services is moot if we don't go beyond mere lip service to firefighters. Good words are not enough. Day after day after day in this province, from small towns to big cities, firefighters put their lives on the line and, indeed, far too often lose their lives in the course of protecting people and, yes, property.

It is imperative, if we truly value the role that firefighters play, that we as a province, as a Legislature, will enact minimum standards, enforceable standards, for firefighting services across this province, standards that address minimum staffing, standards that address resources and training available to firefighters, whether it's in the city of Toronto or the small community of Attawapiskat up in the riding of Timmins-James Bay, whether it's rural Ontario or urban Ontario.

This province has got to become responsible for ensuring that firefighters have the tools and the training to do the job that they're called upon to do day after day after day. If we don't give them the tools and the training, if we deny them those resources, we are insulting them, we are expressing disdain for them, and we are showing the highest disregard for firefighters who have given their lives in the pursuit of their professional duties.

Furthermore, we owe it to firefighters to ensure there is a fire marshal's office in this province and a fire marshal that support professional firefighters; that there's a fire marshal and a fire marshal's office in this province that support professional firefighters' goals; that there's a fire marshal and a fire marshal's office that build morale and build unity, rather than being disruptive and driving wedges between firefighters.

I say to you that we take great pleasure in applauding our brave women and men in fire services across Ontario. We should then commit ourselves to ensuring they have the resources, tools, training and staffing to do the difficult, demanding, dangerous, challenging job they're called upon to do.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On behalf of New Democrats, I would like to welcome the environment industry representatives to Queen's Park today and certainly salute the work they are doing. There are many talented people working in the industry, I

know, working very hard to come up with innovative solutions to solve our environmental problems.

However, the Liberal government is lagging behind the EC with introducing carrots or economic incentives to help industry introduce these new technologies and materials that are less toxic to the environment and initiatives to shift toward cutting pollution at the source.

Currently, in typical Liberal fashion, a small measure has been proposed in the carrots category through the environmental leaders program, but it is more cosmetic than substantive in nature. Companies that take the initiative to go beyond compliance levels receive recognition on a Web site and preferred customer status at the approvals branch.

I want to give one example, because there are many incentives in place, which could be in place here in Ontario, that would make a difference. I want to refer to a specific example that I raised earlier this fall when the government announced new standards for treating hazardous waste before it goes to incineration. There is actually an Ontario-born solution right here. A firm called Eco Logic developed a process of thermal reduction that has very low emissions to eliminate hazardous materials like vinyl chloride and PCBs. But because there are no incentives offered to them, incineration still reigns, simply because it's cheaper.

Without the kinds of incentives they're offering in the EC and other places, like low-rate loans, grants and other incentives to encourage the use of ecologic solutions, we will go on having the old kinds of technologies in use. We have to change that and bring more carrots to the system.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRONG COMMUNITIES (PLANNING AMENDMENT) ACT, 2004 LOI DE 2004 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT DES COLLECTIVITÉS (MODIFICATION DE LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 26, An Act to amend the Planning Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1417 to 1422.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved third reading of Bill 26, An Act to amend the Planning Act. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Fonseca, Peter	Prue, Michael
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra

Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Horwath, Andrea	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Ramali, Khaili
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Peters, Steve	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Scott, Laurie
Baird, John R.	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flaherty, Jim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakubuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 56; the nays are 17.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On reading Christina Blizzard's column today, we know why the Minister of Health is absent, but we were provided with the Premier's schedule and were told he would be in attendance in question period today. We're looking for direction and advice.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I presume that the government House leader has a comment.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Will he be attending? Because you can stand your question down until later.

Mr Runciman: They said he's not going to be here.

The Speaker: So I understand he won't be here.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Right Honourable Ian Scott, the former Attorney General of Ontario, wishes to pass on his greetings to this House, to tell us all that he misses this place greatly, and to give his best regards to all the members of this House that he served so well as MPP for Rosedale.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. May we proceed now to oral questions.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): To the Acting Premier, Mr Phillips: Yesterday, Premier

McGuinty couldn't answer a simple question about why doctors voted against your offer to them. That may be why Mr McGuinty isn't present today, but hopefully you've been briefed on this issue.

It's become clear to the people of Ontario that the McGuinty health scheme is out of touch with the health care priorities of Ontarians. It's another McGuinty botch-up. The Premier set out five priorities in health care which he claims to have wide support for. He said he wants more MRI and CAT scans performed, yet the radiologists who perform these scans voted 95% against Mr McGuinty's failed deal. Are you working with these people or not, and how can you explain this rejection?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Just to refresh, I guess, the public's memory on this and that of the opposition, let's recognize that the proposed agreement between the government and the OMA was the result of nine months of discussion and negotiations between the OMA and the government. The OMA had nine people there discussing how we can revamp an agreement with the OMA. Those nine people representing the OMA voted unanimously in favour of this agreement. It was a proposal that would meet the needs of the public of Ontario, a proposal that would help to revamp the way health care is delivered in the province of Ontario and, frankly, a proposal that attempted to meet the needs of the medical profession. It was done in a spirit of goodwill and co-operation, and I would just say to the member opposite that that is the tone that we will continue to set with our doctors.

1430

Mr Runciman: This is Liberal spin. There was no agreement. There was an offer from the McGuinty government. The OMA negotiating team did not recommend. They were frustrated, after nine months, at not getting further and they referred it to their membership. That's what happened. Those are the facts. It's been proven a sham with respect to this argument the government is putting forward.

There's more evidence proving that this government, the McGuinty government, is the gang that can't shoot straight. The Premier said providing more cancer treatments is a priority; 61% of cancer physicians voted against your failed offer. The Premier also said he wants more hip and knee replacements; 62% of orthopaedic physicians voted against your failed offer.

Acting Premier, those who have the responsibility for implementing your priority list have said a resounding no. You're a rational person; you have the respect of this House. Tell us today that you will go back to the drawing board, talk to the people who have to carry out this important work and admit that the McGuinty health scheme is an unqualified failure.

Hon Mr Phillips: Again, I would say that the proposed settlement with the OMA was negotiated with, I think, nine members of a negotiating team from the OMA, and they supported the proposal. I think the Leader of the Opposition would recognize that that was done in a spirit of co-operation over those nine months.

The Minister of Health indicated in the House, I think just yesterday, that he will sit down with the president of the OMA, which is what I think the public would expect, and discuss the next steps.

Again, I repeat for the people of Ontario, this was not something that came out of the government without nine months of intense discussion with the representatives of the OMA, attempting to reflect their needs and also, importantly, the needs of the health care system of Ontario. That proposal has now been rejected and, as I said, the Minister of Health will be meeting with the president of the OMA over the next few days to discuss it.

Mr Runciman: There are some quotes in the Toronto Sun this morning—Dr John Rapin, the president of the OMA: "Rapin said the ... negotiating team signed off on the deal because it felt there was nowhere else to go at the bargaining table. He noted that the OMA board refused to endorse the deal." That's the reality, despite what the Acting Premier and his colleagues may wish to say otherwise, trying to portray this as a deal that was endorsed by the negotiating team. It was not. They could not support it, and they did not support it.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): As they did last time.

Mr Runciman: Yes.

Premier McGuinty's inability to rein in his bully-boy Minister of Health—the high-handed, Liberals-know-best approach—has not been helpful, to say the least.

There's more proof in the details of this failed deal. The Premier said Ontarians would receive more cardiac procedures, yet 69% of cardiologists voted against your offer. McGuinty said there would be more cataract surgeries performed in Ontario; 85% of ophthalmologists voted against McGuinty's deal. The health system is getting worse, yet the Premier is forcing people to pay more in taxes for the health care services you've privatized and the misplaced priorities. Clearly, the Premier and your swaggering Minister of Health are completely ill-equipped—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Acting Premier?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again, I say to the public and to the member, this was the result of, I think, 120 sessions where the government's representatives and the OMA sat down to reach a settlement. The OMA negotiators agreed with the proposal.

I would say also, in terms of what's happening in health care, that just a few days ago the Minister of Health announced substantial incremental funding for hospitals. Hospitals this year received about \$1 billion more than they would have received under your Magna budget. Twenty-one thousand more individuals are receiving long-term care; substantially more full-time nurses in the health system; substantial progress being made in the health area.

Finally, I would say that this agreement, the result of nine months of work, 120 sessions, attempting to work with our doctors to fundamentally restructure the way health care is delivered in Ontario, was an attempt to deal

with issues that frankly, dare I say, for eight years you simply didn't deal with.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Acting Premier. I say to the minister that families, hospital workers, nurses and the many health care executives who have had to submit plans to close beds, lay off nurses and increase waiting lists will take cold comfort from the lines that you just gave to this House.

Try as we might on this side of the House, we've been unable to get any answers from your government on the overwhelming rejection of your plan for health care. You're on the front bench of your government, you're the man who is the guardian of the public purse, so I know you'll have been very intimately involved with these discussions as a senior member of this cabinet. I have a very simple question that I'd like to direct to you personally: Why do you think Ontario's doctors voted so overwhelmingly against this deal?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again I go back to the fact that we spent nine months negotiating with the OMA doctors. I think the Minister of Health has articulated clearly in this House, and I think the people of Ontario understand, that there have to be some fairly fundamental changes in health care. This agreement was a creative step to address that. Whether it be to deal with doctors in underserved areas—and I dare say that probably half the members in this Legislature, at least, have problems in finding family physicians—whether it be dealing with waiting lists on cataracts, MRIs and other things, this was a creative attempt to deal with those issues.

Frankly, I think that when you are trying fundamental change, it often takes some time. I would again say that nine months of co-operative negotiations went on, 120 sessions, and the OMA negotiating team agreed with it. I'd just say that perhaps it's indicative of why you never tackled this problem. It isn't easy. But we are attempting to deal with some fairly fundamental reform in health care. It may take some time.

Mr Baird: The member opposite's response is one of the reasons this hour is called "question period," because it certainly isn't called "answer period," from the content of that response. I'm once again astounded.

Neither the Premier yesterday, the Minister of Health the day before, nor this minister today will stand in their place and acknowledge any reason why 60% of the physicians in this province voted so massively against you and your deal and your policy. I'll tell you why; I'll tell you what some of the physicians said. They disliked your attempt to be sneaky and to back-end-load this deal. Many physicians in this province were insulted by the attempt to give a kickback to physicians if they cut prescription drug coverage for the poor, for the disabled and for frail seniors. Many physicians in this province were astounded by the lack of recognition of the reality of experienced physicians who are close to or beyond the age when most of us would retire.

Acting Premier, will you commit to us today that none of these three terrible initiatives will be contained in any

future negotiations on behalf of the government with our doctors?

Hon Mr Phillips: Just so the public understands, this is a page from the agreement. It says, "The undersigned representatives of the parties hereby agree to unanimously recommend acceptance of this agreement to their respective principals." It's dated September 16, 2004, and it lists nine members of the OMA.

So I say to the Legislature, and very much to the public, recognize what the Premier has attempted to do and what the Minister of Health is attempting to do, and that is some fairly fundamental restructuring of health care to solve some of the problems that desperately have to be solved. This agreement was a creative attempt at that, and there are the nine OMA negotiators who unanimously signed the agreement.

I'd just say again to ourselves, this is creative, with some new ideas in it. Sometimes new ideas take a little time to find acceptance.

Mr Baird: I say to the minister, if he thinks this disgraceful deal with doctors will somehow improve like a good bottle of wine, he is sadly mistaken. Let me tell the member opposite, the president of the OMA refused to recommend this deal, the board of the OMA refused to recommend this deal, and last weekend 60% of Ontario physicians refused to sign off on your plan for the future of health care in Ontario.

1440

I say to the minister, doctors and working families are starting to question the competence of your government to handle this file. They're increasingly coming to the conclusion that Dalton McGuinty's government can't be trusted to manage our health care system. Senior members of your cabinet don't seem to understand basic elements of the deal and are closing their minds and ears to listening to why Ontario physicians so massively voted against this deal.

I say to the member opposite, why, again, does he believe 60% of physicians voted so massively against your plan for health care?

Hon Mr Phillips: I appreciate the rhetoric, but let's deal with the process. I think the public understands that fundamental change in health care is required. We are dealing with serious health needs out there.

For nine months, nine individuals selected by the OMA, who understand this issue, spent 120 sessions dealing with it. Then, after that nine-month process, they said this: "The undersigned representatives of the parties hereby agree to unanimously recommend acceptance of this agreement...." Nine signed it. You can say, "Well, why didn't it happen?" and whatnot. I would say that those nine individuals, who spent all that time to understand the needs of the doctors, unanimously signed it. I repeat: This proposal fundamentally reforms. It perhaps takes time for all of us to fully understand it.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Today Campaign

2000 released its annual report on child poverty in Ontario. In 1989 the House of Commons committed to end child poverty. Today, in Ontario, child poverty is worse. There are now 373,000 children living in poverty in this province, 100,000 more than in 1989. Acting Premier, it is a disgrace to have 373,000 children living in poverty in a wealthy province like Ontario. When is the McGuinty government going to find the will to tackle poverty in Ontario?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'll refer this to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for the question. Notwithstanding that this report was based on 2002 data, the McGuinty government believes that even one hungry child is one child too many. We have taken leadership to eradicate this poverty. For the first time, we've increased the minimum wage. We reinstated social assistance. We've increased ODSP. We've also doubled the nutrition programs. For the first time in over a decade, we've increased monies to child care. We're taking steps. It is a tragic situation in a country like Canada, but we've taken leadership to address child poverty.

Mr Hampton: In fact, the policies of the McGuinty government are making it worse. The McGuinty government's failed health, hydro and social policies mean that people who are already struggling now have even less to live on. Your regressive and unfair health tax, a tax on modest- and low-income Ontarians: Someone with an income of \$200,000 a year sees his income tax rate go up by only 2% as a result of your health tax, but for a single mom with an income of \$30,000 a year, her provincial income tax goes up by 23%. Your wrong-headed hydro policies force low-income people to pay up to 27% more for an essential service we all need every day.

Acting Premier, why is the McGuinty government taking more money out of the pockets of low- and modest-income Ontarians who are already finding it difficult to live?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed, we have also allowed free immunizations for children, which will save families about \$600 a year. The McGuinty government has also instituted the emergency energy fund for low-income families. And, for the first time in a decade—

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I hear the honourable member opposite from the Tory caucus yelling. It was you who made social assistance cuts. We have put them back. It was you who didn't increase ODSP in over a year. We put it back. It was you who didn't spend one penny of federal child care money on child care. We're doing that. We're taking real leadership. We're not going to take any lectures from the Tories across the way. We are addressing child poverty in a vigorous way.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you should be ashamed of that response. Your increase of \$3 a month in social assistance, your so-called increase in the minimum wage—all you did was increase it from 1995 levels to 1997 levels. Families are being forced to use food banks because, while you promised during the election to end the clawback of the national child benefit, you haven't done that.

Here's what children say about living in poverty: Poverty is, "feeling ashamed when my dad can't get a job ... being teased for the way you are dressed ... pretending you forgot your lunch" because you don't have one.

Campaign 2000 said today, "All that is lacking is the leadership and the political will" to really tackle child poverty.

Acting Premier, why is the McGuinty government failing the poor children of Ontario? Is it because you lack the political will or the leadership to do the job?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I guess the honourable member doesn't want to accept the fact that we're taking concrete steps to address this very tragic situation.

The honourable member has an interesting recollection of the facts and of history. In 1992 and 1993—remember those years?—the NDP raised income taxes on working people. A single person making \$20,000 a year saw their income taxes increase by \$160. The NDP increased tuition fees for college and university students by over 50%. And, under the NDP, hydro rates increased by over 40%, and gas taxes by over 30%.

I will not get any lectures from the honourable member on what they did to working families and what we are doing.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Today's child poverty report card gave your government a failing grade on affordable housing. The Toronto Star confirmed what we've been saying all along: "The Liberals are not keeping their promise to build some 20,000 affordable housing units for 'needy Ontario families.'" The Star calls claims that you've invested \$65 million to build new units "bafflegab." Why? Because Ottawa, the federal government, is paying for those housing units, not the McGuinty government, and because what little money you have put in isn't your money; it was money committed by the previous Conservative government.

Acting Premier, when are you going to keep your promise to build 20,000 new affordable housing units for Ontario families and children who are waiting, who are living in poverty? When are you going to keep your promise?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'll refer this to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I'll deal with various other aspects in the other two supplementaries, but I'd like to quote former New

Democratic Party cabinet minister Anne Swarbrick, who said in response to today's announcement by my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in relation to a new partnership providing incentive funding and an innovative new housing program, "This partnership demonstrates that when community partners work together, we can create innovative, practical solutions that improve Toronto's quality of life."

This housing allowance program, announced today by my colleague John Gerretsen, is an example of that kind of partnership. I know that the member wants to be fair-minded and acknowledge the work that John Gerretsen has done, the work that our federal colleagues have done and the work that Anne Swarbrick has done in supporting Toronto's working families.

1450

Mr Hampton: This is about 20,000 housing units you promised to build. That piddly announcement today amounted to 400, as compared to 20,000. What's actually happening is that you're standing in the way of building affordable housing because right now, as we speak, there's \$300 million of federal money committed for affordable housing in Ontario. But where is it? It's gathering dust in a bank account while 150,000 Ontarians wait for affordable housing. Why is it gathering dust? Because the McGuinty government will not come up with the matching funds that are needed to unlock that money and put it to use.

Here's some advice from a self-described housing expert: "Don't pretend that taking weak measures and recycling other people's money are housing strategies." So said David Caplan. Why is \$300 million of federal money gathering dust in a bank account while 150,000 Ontarians wait on a list for affordable housing?

Hon Mr Caplan: I appreciate the quote, but the member is, of course, quite wrong in his facts. Monies are not gathering dust. We have unlocked over \$63 million and put it into much-needed affordable housing. Yesterday, the Premier outlined 597 units in Waterloo, 104 units in London, 94 units of affordable housing in Wellington county and 895 units here in the city of Toronto, and I could go on. In addition to the already-mentioned 2,700 units of affordable housing, there's an additional almost 400 new, affordable ownership units which have come on stream—over \$65 million in new housing.

Our government has done more in eight months than the previous government did in eight years. If the member wants a review of history, I can assure the member that we have learned the lessons of your failed housing program and we're not going to repeat it to the point where the Provincial Auditor urges the government to shut it down.

Mr Hampton: In everything you just announced, the money was actually committed under the former government. That's why the Toronto Star is so critical of you. You take federal money and try to take credit for that, and then you take money committed by the former government and try to take credit for that.

You mentioned the announcement you made about the 400 rent-supplemented units in the city of Toronto. Let me remind you that you promised 35,000 rent-supplemented units in the election. If you do the numbers, at the rate you're going, it will take you 87 and a half years to provide the 35,000 rent-supplemented units.

Is it going to take 87 and a half years? Is it going to take more homeless people being arrested on the steps of Queen's Park? Is it going to take more embarrassment of your government? When are you going to keep your promise to build the affordable housing units so that people who are desperately waiting for affordable housing will have a place to live?

Hon Mr Caplan: Now we know why the member's housing policies were a failure: He's got a basic problem with mathematics. We have unlocked over \$65 million of housing dollars, not money announced by the previous government. They didn't spend any money; they cancelled affordable housing programs. You were there.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Caplan: That's what you said for a lot of years, I say to my friend the leader of the third party.

We have unlocked those dollars; we are building the units. In fact, we have gone farther in a few short months than the previous government did in their entire eight years, and there's much more on the way.

I would say to the member, tone down the rhetoric and look at the facts. You will see that the McGuinty government is back in the housing game. It is welcomed by housing providers. We have a new partnership. In fact, we are negotiating a new arrangement with the federal government to access fully the federal dollars that will be available. I look forward to a renewed housing program here in Ontario, both the kind that my colleague announced today relating to housing allowances, as well as a new capital program.

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the Attorney General. For the last few months, you've been preoccupied with developing pit bull legislation for the province. Perhaps, Minister, you can turn your attention to protecting children who are trapped in sexual exploitation and prostitution in this province. Two years ago, legislation was passed to protect these children specifically. The Office for Victims of Crime worked directly with your seatmate and cabinet colleague the member for Sudbury, who championed this cause—he worked directly with the Office for Victims of Crime—and resulted in Bill 86. You have been the Attorney General now for well over a year. Why have you not proclaimed Bill 86, and why have no funds been allocated to get these safe houses for these children victims in Ontario? Why has it taken you so long to act in the interest of these vulnerable children?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): The minister of children's services.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question, and indeed this is an issue of great concern to all of us in this province. The exploitation of children in this way has got to be one of the lowest acts of humankind. We are not proclaiming the former bill—first of all, you didn't proclaim it—and if you're asking me why we're not proclaiming it, it's because it's not comprehensive enough. We are taking a very serious look at Mr Bartolucci's bill, and I want to congratulate my colleague for his comprehensiveness on his bill.

Mr Jackson: I think it's disgraceful that the Attorney General of this province has no opinion on this important issue. He offs it to a minister who doesn't have the budget, the resources or the mandate. I'm talking about a report that the Office for Victims of Crime, through their victims' justice fund, financed. Some \$50,000 went into this fund to come up with Martin's Hope—the Martin Kruze incident. The minister will be aware of that. This man committed suicide in desperate reflection upon the inadequacies of the justice system in this province, a system you are responsible for, both at federal table discussions and within this province—not that minister over there; you're the Attorney General of this province.

You are sitting on over \$45 million in the victims' justice fund in this province, funds you're not applying to these vulnerable children in our province. So don't off your question to a minister with no budget. Do your job and stick up for these people. Frankly, they're more important than pit bull legislation. It's about time you got it.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Well, it might not have been much of a budget under his government, but we have a very healthy budget in the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

One of the reasons we have not gone forward on this bill is that stakeholders were telling us, "Make sure you have the services in place when you proclaim or introduce a new bill," which is what we are doing in our first year of our mandate. For the first time in a decade, we increased spending on children's mental health. Without these services, you can have the strictest laws, but if there aren't the services to help these children who are sexually exploited, you will be defeating the purpose. We are working hard on this issue—very hard.

CHILD CARE

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. There is a crisis in child care funding right across the province. Regulated child care is becoming a luxury in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. Your election platform promised \$300 million in new provincial funding for child care, which you said would serve an additional 330,000 children. To date, we've seen not a penny of new provincial funding for children. Minister, my question is simple: When are we going to see the \$300 million in new

provincial funding for child care that you promised more than a year ago?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to thank the honourable member from Hamilton for the question. Indeed, child care was one of the main promises of our platform. I'm glad to see so much interest in our Best Start plan. We will be announcing our Best Start plan tomorrow, and it will be a comprehensive plan, one with a seamless transition to school age. We're very proud of it, and that's all I'm going to say about that at this moment, but I want to reassure the member that I have taken all her concerns under consideration.

1500

Ms Horwath: Well, Minister, you promised you would devote \$300 million in new provincial funding to regulated child care and you haven't done it yet. It's a mystery, Minister: the case of the missing \$300 million, worthy of a Sherlock Holmes investigation. It's gone AWOL; not one penny of the promised new provincial funding for child care has seen the light of day.

Don't you think it's time that you honoured at least one of your election promises? Will you confirm right now that you will commit the \$300 million in provincial funding that you promised during the election and use it in its entirety for a comprehensive, not-for-profit system of quality regulated child care? Or would you prefer to be known as the minister who breaks promises to children?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I would like to remind the honourable member that for the first time in a decade we increased funding to child care in this province by over \$60 million, and we have never hidden the fact that that first allotment was federal money.

That government didn't put a penny extra into child care. They did not believe in it; they were ideologically opposed to it. But the research is in: The early years are the most important years in a child's life, and we will invest.

I know it's hard for you to accept that we are actually fulfilling this very important commitment, but we are. And stay tuned for tomorrow's announcement.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Our government has made a commitment to provide direct assistance to families in greatest need of housing. We promised to help people with low incomes, many currently living in shelters or spending more than half their income on rent. We promised to help them find safe, decent, affordable places to live.

Minister, today you made an announcement about a very innovative program that demonstrates the McGuinty government's goal of promoting affordable housing in Ontario. Can you please inform Ontarians of some of the details of this announcement and describe how our government is delivering on our commitment?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the member for her question and also for her involvement in helping to bring all the various parties together.

Today, in partnership with the city of Toronto, the Toronto Community Housing Corp and the local landlords, the McGuinty government, our government, is reducing the social housing waiting list here in Toronto by 400 individual families and members. The pilot project that was announced today, in the amount of \$3.6 million over five years, will help approximately 400 low-income households, and we don't think that's piddly: 400 individual families that are either living in shelters or paying more than 50% of their income on rent are going to be helped in this regard, to remove them from the waiting list.

We believe this is a great program. Let's just see what David Miller had to say about this: "This pilot program will help hundreds of deserving Torontonians find a place to call home. It also creates a framework for co-operation that will help us push forward with other initiatives to address this city's affordable housing crisis."

It's a start, and it's a start in the right direction, to help 400 families in this city.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My supplementary question is to the same minister. Minister, your announcement illustrates our government's ability to work with communities to try to help improve Ontario's quality of life. Can you please inform Ontarians and constituents in my riding, Scarborough Southwest, which has a large percentage of people on affordable housing or in need of assistance, as well as those across Ontario, how you plan to continue to assist in making this program work so that people can function properly in low-income situations?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: I hear a lot of catcalls coming from across the House, but we think it's an excellent example in which government can work together with the private sector—the landlords, in this case—the Toronto Community Foundation, the Toronto Housing Corp and the city of Toronto. It's a start in the right direction. We are helping 400 families in a pilot project.

This is the first time that a housing allowance program of this nature has ever been accepted and endorsed by a government in Ontario. The NDP didn't do it. They didn't create one housing allowance program. The Tories certainly didn't do it. We're on the right way of solving the affordable housing program in this province.

LANDFILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of the Environment: While you've been attempting to put out garbage fires, Ontario's landfill crisis continues to grow. My question is about the Edwards landfill in Haldimand county, specifically about

the application for a provisional certificate of approval to expand the Edwards landfill to receive Toronto area garbage.

Given that this C of A application calls for a 5,000% increase in the daily fill rate and changes the allowable waste to now include residential, commercial, institutional and industrial waste, and given that under section 30 of the Environmental Protection Act, the director is compelled to conduct a hearing before issuing a C of A in these kinds of situations, it appears you have no choice but to require a hearing before the Environmental Review Tribunal. Minister, can you tell the people of Haldimand county when the hearing will be held?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I appreciate the question. It's an opportunity for me to clarify the process. The honourable member mentioned in his remarks that it is the director who plays a very important role when there are amendments to a certificate of approval, and it is the director who would make those determinations.

With regard to the proposals that have been put forward for the Edwards landfill, I think it's also important that the members of this House understand that, as the ministry is considering this application to amend the certificate of approval, people who live within a two-kilometre radius of the site have been informed. There has been a public open house; it was held in June. There has been information in the local paper. A public liaison committee has been created. Three members of the public were appointed to that public liaison committee. Our government believes there are processes in place that ensure the concerns of the public have a venue to be heard.

Mr Barrett: I'm not dealing with the problems in consultation. Minister, under section 30 of the EPA, the director is compelled to conduct a hearing before issuing a C of A where the application is made for enlargement of a waste disposal site, and I quote in part, or "any other waste the director ascertains is the equivalent of the domestic waste of not less than 1,500 persons." If you feel the director is not compelled to conduct this hearing under section 30, it still would be a factor in favour of exercising your ministerial discretion under section 32.

Minister, there is a significant change in the nature and the daily volume of allowable waste—as you know, from letters coming in—at Edwards landfill. Surely this is enough to convince a government minister to exercise her discretion under section 32 and order a public hearing. Again, when could a hearing be held?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I think it's important that I clarify for the honourable member and the members of this House that the director has a responsibility to make a determination. If, within the community, people object to the decision the director makes, they can appeal that to the Environmental Review Tribunal. The Environmental Review Tribunal then considers that, and if people continue to be unhappy with the determinations that are made around the Edwards landfill, then that decision comes to me. That is appealed to me as the minister.

It's totally inappropriate for me to interject myself into the process prematurely and I have no intention of doing that. I am a strong proponent of following the process. I believe there's an adequate one in place and I think it is totally inappropriate that it would be suggested that the minister influence the process in this way.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. If you looked at the news clippings today, you would have seen in the Star and the Sun items about the film industry crisis in Toronto. One reads,

"Hollywood Needs Carrot to Film Here, City is Told."

Production firms say tax incentives aren't competitive. Toronto may lose place as 'preferred destination.'"

I raised this question with my colleagues last week and I'm going to tell you again what's at stake here. Over 50,000 jobs depend on the industry. Most of these jobs are located in Toronto and most of the film studios are right in my riding. This is a crisis happening in jobs in my riding. The industry stopped growing in absolute terms four years ago, and according to your government's own Ontario Media Development Corp, foreign projects filming in Ontario declined a stunning 36% in 2003.

Minister, I'm going to ask you today, what is your government planning to do to reverse the decline in foreign television and film productions in Ontario?

1510

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the Premier has commented on this several times. First, to restate what he has said, that's to tell the film industry and indeed the public of Ontario that we fully understand the importance of this industry. It is an important industry for Ontario. We have an enormous infrastructure developed around it. It brings a lot of jobs to the province of Ontario, there's no doubt, and the Premier has been crystal clear on that.

The Premier has also indicated, during the campaign, the commitments that we've made. We intend to honour those commitments. We've said that we will deal with this over our mandate, and we will do that. This year's budget contains some modest improvements. The Premier has indicated that over the four years of our mandate we will do exactly what we said we would do in our campaign commitment. I think that will be of significance to the Ontario film industry.

Ms Churley: I guess that was a more positive answer than I got from the finance minister the other day. But I would say this to you: You promised during the election that you would increase the tax credits to the film industry. That's what you promised. The film industry can't wait over the mandate of four years to get this increase. They need it now. Other jurisdictions have been cutting into Ontario's share with higher tax credits.

In an article that appeared today in the Toronto Star, Ken Ferguson is quoted as saying he is reconsidering building a major film and media complex in the port lands in my riding, partially because of provincial policies toward film. Mayor David Miller has also come out saying that more needs to be done on the tax credit.

Minister, I've spoken with the finance minister, who at least has now agreed to meet with the film industry. That's a positive move forward. Will you commit today to keep the promise that you made in the election to give the film industry this increased tax credit, and do it immediately so that they do not continue to lose their market share?

Hon Mr Phillips: I'd say what I said earlier in my first comments, and that is, I fully appreciate and understand the importance of the industry, and we've made commitments which we will honour during our mandate.

I also would say to all of us, we're all dealing with a fiscal reality that the province cannot do everything in the first year. What the Minister of Finance has said is that we must ensure that if we want to guarantee long-term economic well-being in Ontario, we have to do things in the health care and the education areas, but we also must make absolutely certain that we have our fiscal house in order.

We'll do that. We will deliver on the commitment we made to the film industry. We'll do it in a way that ensures that we indeed get our fiscal house in order. My judgment is, if you want to know what perhaps provides the most important long-term economic well-being, it could very well be that.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. A blockade of six lumber mills in Timmins and Cochrane—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. The member from Toronto-Danforth, will you just come to order, please?

Member from Thunder Bay-Superior North, would you start the question again.

Mr Gravelle: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. A blockade of six lumber mills in Timmins and Cochrane by independent truckers has been ongoing for two weeks now. The driving issue behind the blockade is how much the truckers are being paid by the harvesting contractors to haul logs from the bush to the lumber mills. Unfortunately, this blockade has already started to slow the flow of lumber and its by-products from the mills. As a result, mills are preparing to lay off workers because they don't have a large enough supply of logs to keep running. While I understand that the Ministry of Natural Resources doesn't have a direct role in the dispute, can you tell the Legislature what you've done to help resolve the situation?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): As with the local member, it has been a big concern for

all of us to see this action take place. As the member correctly points out, this has been an action not involving the government but between companies, contractors and independent truckers who haul the logs into the mills, and it's starting to have an impact on the sawmills in northeastern Ontario.

On Tuesday, I asked my parliamentary assistant, Michael Brown, MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin, to go to Timmins as a fact-finder, to start to sit down with the truckers and the companies. He had a very successful day doing that yesterday, and he has already reported back to me today with some suggestions as to how we can facilitate this. He's going to continue that work.

I am very confident that the companies understand our concern and are working very closely with the independent truckers.

Mr Gravelle: I'm certainly pleased to hear that we're doing everything we can to address this difficult situation.

You mentioned in your response the importance of forestry to the northern economy. You know as well as anyone that forestry is the main driver behind the northern economy and a huge contributor to Ontario's overall economic prosperity. Ontario's forest industry employs about 80,000 workers and generates annual sales of \$18 billion. More than half of its sales are exports, principally to the United States, and almost 50 communities in northern Ontario, many in my constituency, are heavily dependent on the forestry sector to sustain their economies. As Minister of Natural Resources, could you tell the House what you're doing to ensure that the forestry industry deals with the difficult challenges it's facing and remains strong into the future?

Hon Mr Ramsay: I do have an answer for the member opposite. This morning in Thunder Bay, I announced the establishment of a minister's council on forest sector productivity. This council is comprised of the top CEOs of the major forest companies that do business in Ontario, municipal representation and two of the main union reps who head the unions involved in the wood products industry in this province. Also, I've asked First Nation communities that have forest product industries in their communities to be part of this. We all know the incredible challenges the industry faces right now, whether it's the softwood tariff dispute with the United States, all the other costs or the rising Canadian dollar. I know they have ideas about how government can help them. I expect to have an action plan in place by April of next year so we can help the industry be more productive.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to ask a question of the Acting Premier, who is also the Chair of Management Board and the minister responsible for the Ontario Realty Corp. You promised the working group that is trying to help save the Frost Centre that the Ontario Realty Corp would not be moving or selling anything that is still at the Frost Centre. Last night, one of my constituents was driving by the Frost

Centre and was surprised to see a couple of workmen who identified themselves as being with the ORC. These workmen were removing the Frost Centre sign.

What kind of signal are you sending to the working group? What sort of signal are you sending to the people who have been trying to keep the Frost programs alive? Minister, will you keep your word? Will you put the sign back up?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): That's a good question. I would just say to the residents of Haliburton—and I'm there many weekends, so I have to handle this very carefully—that the policy of the ORC is that when a building is declared surplus, they take the sign down and store it. So they're following policy. I don't fault them, but in this particular case, I don't think it's a good idea. I'm not faulting the ORC, but I think the sign should stay up. They were following policy, but this is a unique circumstance. I'm going up there, perhaps this weekend, so I want to make sure the sign is back up.

1520

Ms Scott: Thank you, Minister. I'm sure that you will drive by when you travel up there this weekend.

The sign has tremendous symbolic significance. It has long remained up there, and it has weathered many a winter. Could you please tell us when the sign will go back up?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Bring your hammer.

Hon Mr Phillips: There is a community group of terrific volunteers working on this, trying to finding what's called a financially viable, locally driven solution, and I'm anxious to see that happen.

I assume that those workpeople kept the nails and that we can get it back up fairly quickly—certainly by the weekend, I would hope.

I'm not faulting our officials for doing it; they were following policy. But in this case I think there's a unique relationship with this facility. I'll even bring my hammer up there, if need be, for the weekend.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to say to the Chair of Management Board that the golf course at Blairhampton is closed at this time of year.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): To the minister: I'm sure that all our sign crews have nothing to do right now, so you can put them to work.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, you will know that a number of people in your ministry have been advocating map staking for years. To explain it to members of this Legislature, what that basically means is that if we move to a map staking situation, large mining companies would be able to sit in their boardrooms down on Bay Street and decide which claim they want to bring in for their own company,

putting out of work local prospectors and people in the mining industry who work on the ground in the bush in northern Ontario.

You will know that there is a huge campaign going on right now in northern Ontario. Whereas major companies had said there was no gold to be found at Hemlo, Don McKinnon, an individual prospector, went in the bush with John Larche and found the largest gold deposit in Ontario in a very long time. Now Mr McKinnon is heading up a campaign asking you to say no to map staking and to say no to those people in your ministry who are advocating that. Are you prepared today in this House to say, "No. There will be no map staking in northern Ontario"?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Thank you for the question. Do you know what? This is a huge, huge, contentious issue. Clearly, the Mining Act advisory committee is looking at the pros and cons with regards to map selection and map staking. Clearly, there is a difference of opinion between the PDAC and the OPA, the group of prospectors in Timmins that advocates against it. In direct answer to your question, at this point in time there is absolutely no consideration being given to map staking in northern Ontario.

Mr Bisson: I've got the supplementary; I may as well use it. I don't know how to take "yes" for an answer.

I just want to make sure that we both understand each other and we're both very clear. At this point you're saying there will be no map staking, but will you commit that in the life of this government you will not go to map staking anywhere in northern Ontario?

Hon Mr Bartolucci: To the member or to the industry, I'm not going to do that. What I am going to commit to is to ensure that the reports and the studies that are going to be brought back from the Mining Act advisory committee will be studied very, very carefully. They will be shared with my critic in the third party, because I think that's important as well.

I want to reinforce that at this point in time, there is no intention to move to map staking in northern Ontario.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Minister, last week, our government launched Consumer Awareness Week to educate consumers about their rights, protections and responsibilities in the marketplace. As part of the message communicated to the public, you discussed the growing issue of identity theft, which has also been highlighted in the media in recent months. For example, as reported by the Globe and Mail, in March of this year a massive identity theft occurred involving over 1,400 citizens. These files were stolen from the largest credit bureau in Canada, Equifax. According to the Attorney General, identity theft is at a record high and increasing at an alarming rate. What steps should consumers take, and what measures should our government

implement, to ensure that consumers don't fall prey to theft or fraud?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): That's the best question I've heard from a member from Toronto today. I want to thank the honourable member for Davenport. He has expressed a great interest in what is commonly known as the fastest-growing crime in North America, that being identity theft.

Members of the House may remember that in March we launched a new program called Keep Your Identity Safe. Because new Canadians are often victims of identity theft, we've distributed a brochure and a communications campaign in eight different languages, which advises individuals how they should take action, first, to protect themselves from identity theft, and secondly, if they are victims of identity theft, how to go about reporting it.

We've also introduced an on-line identity theft statement that can save precious time when an individual has had credit cards or their identity stolen. I'm very proud of the work the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services has provided. I look forward to the honourable member's supplementary.

Mr Ruprecht: I really appreciate that answer—
Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: Speaker, I can't ask my—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Member for Davenport, if you have a supplementary, please present it.

Mr Ruprecht: I have another very serious question, actually, if you could all pay attention to this.

I have received complaints from some of my constituents who are concerned about inaccurate information on their individual credit files—you may check your own credit file. This incorrect information greatly affects their ability to apply for credit cards and purchase consumer goods—even for routine banking. Literally thousands of Canadians are denied credit due to erroneous, derogatory information on their files with the credit bureau. In fact, a major study was done by the Consumer Federation of America in 2003. Over half a million people were surveyed, and guess what they found? They found that erroneous information was on the credit files of more than 47% of the people who were surveyed.

What protection do consumers have to ensure that inaccuracies on credit files are verified by the consumer and changed promptly by credit agencies?

Hon Jim Watson: The member has been very persistent in dealing with the issue of credit reports. As individuals of the House may be aware, and if they're not, the federal legislation, PIPEDA, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, requires that credit reporting agencies must make corrections to mistakes identified in credit reports within 30 days of the request. That's the law. Consumers have this right. They also may contact the registrar of consumer reporting in my ministry.

The member is quite correct: Individuals should, on a regular basis, check their credit rating. It can be done free

of charge via mail. The information is available on our Web site, at cbs.gov.on.ca. A number of articles have been written about this—Linda Leatherdale in the Sun and Ellen Roseman in the Toronto Star—urging individuals to contact their credit rating agencies to ensure that the information is correct, because that will affect one's credit history.

1530

PETITIONS

PER DIEM FUNDED AGENCIES

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 4,000 vulnerable children, youth and adults are provided with high-quality services in residential care and treatment homes in the province of Ontario, including those individuals who are medically fragile, developmentally handicapped, autistic, physically abused, neglected, conduct-disordered, young offenders and emotionally disturbed; and

“Whereas over 4,000 child and youth workers are dedicated in their profession to work with vulnerable children, youth and adults in the provision of an accepting, safe, supportive, therapeutic environment; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget promised \$38 million to children's mental health services or otherwise a 3% operational increase to those agencies who have not received an increase in several years; and

“Whereas the government of Dalton McGuinty “has excluded the 93 agencies and more who serve this vulnerable population under a funding structure referred to as ‘per diem funded agencies’; and

“Whereas, by excluding these children of the province and the dedicated staff who serve them from the 3% increase promised in the 2004 budget, agencies will close down, thereby handicapping government with respect to the delivery of service and costing the government far more by placing those hard-to-serve clients in more costly facilities,

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

“That the Parliament of Ontario do the right thing, help and assist the lives of the many, many vulnerable people in Ontario and include per diem agencies (Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth) in the 2004-05 provincial budget. Keep your promise and commit to the 3% increase in staff and client funding. The Parliament of Ontario should recognize that the clients and staff are all citizens of Ontario and should not be penalized by virtue of where they reside or where they may be placed” in our province.

I've attached my signature of support as well.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition signed by thousands of Ontarians. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the 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;

“Whereas 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;

“Whereas the 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

“Whereas 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 these petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Portuguese Canadians number 171,545 in the Toronto census metropolitan area, many of whom encounter serious barriers (language, culture, and location) to accessing community and long-term services; and

“There are no long-term-care homes dedicated to the needs of Portuguese Canadian seniors; and

“Camões House for the Aged and Portuguese Community Centre of Toronto is proposing a partnership with a local long-term-care provider to purchase up to 160 existing beds in the Toronto area (for a nominal fee), to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto. This partnership is tentative and is dependent on the approval of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

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

“We encourage the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, his staff, and members of the Legislature to support the Camões proposal, and to make the appropriate administrative and policy changes required to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto.”

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I'm delighted to put my name to it.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

“Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

“Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children’s treatment centres in their area; and

“Whereas there is no children’s treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

“Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children’s treatment centre services in their own area; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children’s rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

“Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

“Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August, the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York Region District Health Council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children’s treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region.”

I’m pleased to sign my name to this.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re: support for chiropractic services in 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 agree with this petition and affix my name thereon.

PIT BULLS

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): On behalf of my constituents of Thornhill and Concord, I present today a petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation. The petition reads:

“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 ... implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds.”

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock):

“Save the Frost Centre

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre has a long history in the county of Haliburton and provides an important historical link dating back to its use in 1921 as a chief ranger station; and

“Whereas the history in the use and management of natural resources in Ontario stretches back to the 1600s and forms an integral part of the overall history of the province and MNR. The history of the ministry and the Frost Centre itself easily qualify as a significant historic resource; and

“Whereas the Minister of Culture, Madeleine Meilleur, has said, ‘The McGuinty government values and is committed to conserving Ontario’s heritage for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations’; and

“Whereas the Frost Centre is an important educational resource for the community, being described on the Ministry of Natural Resources Web site as ‘Ontario’s leading natural resources education, training and conference centre’; and

“Whereas closure of the Frost Centre would cause economic hardship in the local communities of the county of Haliburton and district of Muskoka due to direct job losses and loss of tourism dollars spent in local communities; and

“Whereas the local community has not been consulted about the closure plans;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should not close the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre."

It's signed by thousands of people, and I attach my signature to it.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of my riding.

"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 and 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," request "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.

1540

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

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

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that pro-

pects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

This was sent to me by a number of my constituents in Wellesley township, and of course I support it as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and....

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital's catchment area;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

I will sign this one.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York

region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children’s treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

TAXATION

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Hands Off Our Wallets

“Whereas the Liberal Premier McGuinty promised as part of his election platform that he would not raise taxes; and

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal budget on May 18 imposes an increase of income tax ranging from \$300 to \$900 per person, in addition to a \$3.9-billion electricity rate hike; and

“Whereas false promises of Liberal Premier McGuinty adversely affect the trust between Ontarians and their elected representatives;

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

“We petition that the Liberal Premier keep his promise and immediately agree not to impose higher taxes.”

I am pleased to join my fellow Cambrians in signing this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising / Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My understanding is that I have not even a full two minutes left in my debate on this issue.

As I was mentioning back on October 26, I think that people would generally think the bill is headed in the right direction. The issue becomes, once again, the government’s lack of a fulsome bill covering off the issues of government advertising. Quite frankly, we in this party have affectionately referred to it as the Mack truck legislation: a bill that has so many loopholes in it that you could drive a Mack truck through the loopholes.

Quite frankly, it’s not enough. It’s certainly a beginning, but Bill 25 needs to have a lot more work done on it. It needs to have, I think, a lot more attention to the details, and it doesn’t go far enough in addressing the fact that people are quite fed up with the use of taxpayers’ dollars for advertising—quite frankly, partisan advertising—by governments. It’s simply inappropriate. It shouldn’t be done.

Interjections.

Ms Horwath: This bill, unfortunately, as my friend from Niagara Centre, Mr Kormos, is indicating, is just another Liberal broken promise. It doesn’t make the grade. It doesn’t deliver on the promise that was made to deal with this quite horrible practice of advertising partisan politics through taxpayer money.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to address Bill 25. I certainly can remember, when I was campaigning for six months, how the public would tell me they’d watch television and see the ads, or the pamphlets being put out by the Tory government, that weren’t for the purpose of educating the public on services being provided by the government but really were designed for partisan advertising. One of the commitments I made was that that would be something I would certainly be bringing forward once I was elected. Of course, the government has committed to that.

I can still remember, one evening when I was campaigning, someone asking me to come into the house. There was a television ad running. I sat with this couple and watched the ad. It was one of these partisan ads that the previous government ran. The person I was sitting with was a former editor of one of the largest newspapers in our community—he had retired—and he was very clear and concise that this had to stop.

I’m really pleased that Bill 25 is designed and committed to eliminating partisan advertising. It’s a good step. There was nothing that existed before; no government has ever taken this initiative. It’s easy to criticize it, saying it’s not enough and not the right thing, but someone has to take the lead. We have, and we’re going in the right direction with it.

It will save money, which will be spent for hospitals, schools and the things that people in all the communities across Ontario want it to be spent for. That’s what the bill will lead us toward. It’s in line with the throne speech, where we made that commitment, and we’re sticking to it.

I’m pleased to have had the opportunity, for the past two minutes, to speak on this bill and share with the people of Ontario where we’re going with it.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This bill was introduced by this party some two months ago, I think, and between the time of introduction and now, the government produced a very, very political piece with taxpayers’ money. We stood in this Legislature and asked them to live by the legislation they had laid on the table. Everybody on the opposition side thought it was only fair that the Liberal Party pay for that piece of Liberal propaganda.

We've heard about a government that goes about the province and talks about democratic renewal and reform. Yet what we have, in fact, is a government that is practising something it does not preach.

We welcome getting this government into this stage of our legislative process, because we want it passed. We would have liked the Liberal government to give their latest rag of advertising, which they presented to the people as a government piece—we would have liked to have the auditor review that and hear his comments on it. We asked in this Legislature, “Premier McGuinty, take that piece as though the legislation had already been passed, give it to the auditor and ask him what his advice is with regard to whether or not this was a partisan piece of advertising.” What did we hear back? Nothing. They thought they could get away with it. They have been getting away with it, and they continue to get away with it. So they talk one way and they act another. Disgraceful.

1550

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Once again, Andrea Horwath, New Democrat, member for Hamilton East, with a strong and compelling argument and a careful and thorough analysis of Bill 25, addresses the issue in as capable a way as anybody could in this chamber, as anybody ever has in my experience here. What she's telling you is that this is the Mack truck bill. There are loopholes in here so big you can drive a Mack truck through them, the Electrohaul, the Caterpillar tractor, if you will, if you were so inclined.

This government has no commitment to abandoning partisan advertising. They've demonstrated that over and over again. They've demonstrated that with the publication of glossy magazine pieces so clearly constituting partisan self-promotion on the part of the Liberal caucus and the Liberal Party.

Of course, they're desperate. They've been reading the polls lately, along with Conservatives and New Democrats, and while Conservatives have some reason to be pleased and New Democrats are elated, the Liberals have found themselves pretty cranky about the evaporation of support for them out there in every single part of this province.

New Democrats have been very clear, saying, “Look, send this bill to committee,” because there are more than a few folks out there across Ontario who want to tell you that your bill is nothing but a scam, a sham, a fraud. It is flim-flammy of the highest sort; another duping or effort to dupe the people of Ontario. Well, they're hip to your tricks now, friends. Burn them once, shame on you; burn them twice, shame on them. They're not going to get burned twice. People are up to your tricks now. They know what kind of scam artists you are. You guys constitute a consumer rip-off all unto your own selves. This bill is the highlight of that sort of scam.

I'm looking forward to Ms Shelley Martel and her comments on this bill in 30 minutes.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Even the NDP's own caucus is laughing at that last statement.

Let me just say that this legislation is exactly what we said we were going to do in the last election: It's a banning of partisan advertising. The NDP would have us throw a blanket over communications throughout the entire province. That would be doing nobody any justice. We have to communicate with people. We are doing a lot of good things, we're bringing a lot of good change to this province, and it's important that people know what their government is doing. That's not partisan advertising, that's just informing people, and I think it's extremely important that we do that.

We're transforming this health care system. We're bringing in more nurses. We're improving primary care. We're reducing waiting lists. We're doing all kinds of things in the health care system. We're providing more community-based services, like home care. We're investing in all the right things in health care, and we are making progress. The people of this province, as they see this service going through this transition, deserve to know what we're doing, where it's at and how it's going.

It's the same with education. We're seeing improvements in education and class sizes. We're already seeing improvements in results. We're seeing some of the schools across this province being fixed up.

The people of Ontario have a right to know what's being done with their taxpayer dollars. We're improving the mess that we inherited from the Tories. We're working very hard to get that deficit down, and as we saw in the recent financial statement, that deficit is coming down. It's through the hard work of this caucus and this government that that's happening, and the people of Ontario deserve to know that.

We don't want to be saying that in a partisan way. We don't want to be putting that out, where the Premier's or the ministers' pictures are on every single publication that goes out, but the information has to flow out in some way. You can't put a blanket over information coming out of Queen's Park. People have a right to know.

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

Ms Horwath: I'm pleased to respond to the questions and comments provided by the member from Niagara Falls, the member from Lanark county, the member for Niagara Centre and the member from Scarborough Centre. I think it's really apparent that there are always improvements that can be made. Certainly, some that have been suggested were in fact part of legislation that was tabled by my good friend and colleague Peter Kormos from Niagara Centre in previous times, I believe a couple of years ago. They included things like really specific guidelines around what is acceptable and what isn't, so that it's not just a matter of someone's opinion but that really strict guidelines exist.

It's a matter of value for money. It's not just a matter of whether or not the advertising is partisan but of where the value is in that advertising. Where is the dollar value? Is it appropriate to spend the money, based on what the piece of advertisement actually is and what effect it will have and whether or not it will actually be valuable to the

people of Ontario to spend that money on that particular piece of advertising?

In fact, there are a number of parts of this bill that need to be fleshed out a little bit more, that need to be more inclusive of specifics as well as of different yardsticks to measure whether or not the particular piece, whether it's a print, radio or television piece, is in fact an effective use of taxpayers' money—not just whether or not it's partisan, but whether or not it is a valuable piece of information that needs to have advertising dollars attached to it.

Quite frankly, I do appreciate the comments of the members here. However, I believe that this bill will get an excellent airing in committee. It needs to have some further details ironed out. I look forward to that further discussion happening both today and in the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: You two can sort it out however you want, but the member for Simcoe North has the floor.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Now I'm informed that you have already spoken on this bill, so I will call for further debate. The member for Lanark-Carleton.

Mr Sterling: Things are happening so slowly in this Legislature that some members can't remember whether they're on second or third reading debate because the government fails to call bills dealing with democratic reform. They introduced a rash of these bills at the beginning, and then they haven't called them.

I suspect it's because they don't want to live within any new rules in this place. They want to go out and tell the world, "We're all for change." So what do they do? They bring in this bill—I think it was the first bill—about cabinet ministers' attendance in this place. They were to get fined \$500 if Dalton McGuinty thought they were away without a proper excuse, like the kind of system we have running in our elementary schools, where you have to bring a note to your teacher if in fact you were absent, to prove that you were away with the boss's, the principal's, approval.

So goes the promise that there was going to be more independence in this place. We instead had the Premier with one of his first democratic bills say, "I'm going to keep a record." We haven't seen the record. We haven't had any indication from the Premier whether he has fined anybody this \$500 per day. Or maybe he's treating it like all his other democratic renewal bills, that they just put them in front of the Legislature but they have no intent of living within even what I would call an abysmal policy of democratic reform.

Then we had the bill coming forward with regard to a fixed election date. Even the commentators are now saying that the bill is really specious; it doesn't have any legal effect. It's in some ways against the principles of

our Constitution, and the Premier has every right to walk down the hall to the Lieutenant Governor today, tomorrow, any day from now until five years from October 2, 2003, to call the election.

1600

Essentially we have a bill that says the Liberal government is going to promise to have an election on October 4. It's nothing more than a promise, and we know, of course, what Liberals do with promises: They break more than they keep.

Then we have this bill, which, as all of these other bills have, has tremendous opportunities for the government to break it. We have Bill 84, which is the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which essentially says that the government is going to have the auditor do an audit before the next election, but in that bill, as in this bill, the Premier basically can walk away from it if he so chooses. It essentially says that the Premier should do this, but if he doesn't want to do it, he doesn't have to do it.

What kind of responsibility, what kind of legislation is this stuff? There is no penalty. There is no real obligation in law for the Premier or this government to act in any other way than they want to.

Then we come down to this bill, Bill 25. Bill 25 is a bill that requires the government to place any brochure it's sending out to the auditor for him to have a look at, to see if it's partisan or not partisan. This bill was introduced, I believe, two or three months ago; maybe it was even introduced in June. It's so long ago that I've forgotten when they introduced it. It was in the spring.

We've seen little indication on the part of the government that they really want to call this legislation, because once the bill is passed and receives royal assent—probably this bill has a proclamation section in it. I haven't looked at it that closely, but if it has a proclamation section in it, they'll probably proclaim the bill just prior to the next election and claim this as one of their wonderful pieces of democratic renewal, that they in fact didn't follow.

Part of the problem with this particular bill is not only how phony it is, but the fact that it will cause a tremendous problem in running the government of Ontario, and an unneeded expense with regard to what will happen in the government of Ontario. Probably they will use this bill to forestall the publication of real information to the people of Ontario, because what they will do is say, "We submitted this, along with a thousand other pieces, to the auditor this week, and he can't have a look at it for three or four months to approve it so that we can use this." Effectively what the government will do is use this as a stalling method to produce pertinent information to the public of Ontario and the opposition members of this Legislature.

When you look at the titles of these bills and you hear what the so-called intent of the government is on these bills, I can see that people who are less engaged in these matters than us would say, "Hey, this looks kind of good. They're going to really stop partisan advertising." Don't hold your breath.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): They can do it in Buffalo.

Mr Sterling: As my good friend from Nepean-Carleton, a very perceptive young member of this Legislature, points out, you can go to a Buffalo TV station and put your ad on there, because there's no jurisdiction in this Legislature with regard to that advertising medium.

I guess the worst part of this government and all of their chitter chatter about democratic renewal, showing how much they lack depth on it, relates to their production of this glossy book talking about how wonderful this government has been over the past year. It is clearly a partisan book. There's no question for anybody who would read it, because there's not one negative thing that they say in the book. It's all, "We're wonderful, we're wonderful, we're wonderful."

Even though it says, "We're all wonderful," notwithstanding that many in this Legislature and in this province would give this government an F-minus with regard to this past year, the Premier saw this as a B year for how his government reacted to the needs of the people of Ontario.

I've been looking at some of their other democratic renewal reforms. We had this announcement this week—and we're going to be debating it a little bit tomorrow—with regard to the creation of a citizens' assembly to look at the election method of our province of Ontario. I won't deny that we should look at these matters, but basically what Premier McGuinty and the Liberal government have done is say, "This isn't an issue for all elected representatives in the province of Ontario. This is an issue for us, the Liberal Party. And I, King Dalton, and all my merry men will make the decision for the next hundred years on how people are going to be elected in this place." We haven't seen the government bring forward a motion. We haven't seen them bring forward a piece of legislation that involves the members of the Legislative Assembly.

I'm certain that all members of this Legislative Assembly would agree to the engagement of a committee of citizens, if properly selected. They would agree that they have some defined duty and there would be some method of their reporting to the people of Ontario and this Legislative Assembly. But we have been totally excluded from that debate. How democratic is that? I mean, this is just a joke. The Liberal Party have decided on their own what result they would like in the end. They have put us on an irrevocable path toward a proportional representation model for voting in the province of Ontario.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Not true.

Mr Sterling: Ted McMeekin, you know that that's what's going to happen. The human nature of people who are asked to engage in a reform move will probably take a very radical approach to the reform of this place, without understanding, perhaps, what actually happens after people get voted into this place.

You won't find a member of this Legislature who wouldn't plug for reform of this place, but it has to be an

all-encompassing debate. It has to be a motion that goes out, a bill that goes out, with the universal approval of all parties of this Legislature. This government is acting in a most undemocratic way toward all of these so-called democratic reform initiatives.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the member from Lanark-Carleton, let me just reinforce the comment that he made with respect to the lack of penalties in the bill.

Look, the government proposes that they will send to the Provincial Auditor advertising that they intend to undertake—advertising defined as any items designed to appear on television, radio, billboards and print, as well as print material the government would have to distribute to households via bulk mail—and, under the process put forward by the government, any of the advertising that is deemed to be partisan by the Provincial Auditor or by his appointed designate would not proceed.

Now, I'm sure I stand to be corrected, but I don't recall that there are penalties in the bill if the government decides to ignore what the Provincial Auditor or his designate says with respect to this matter. For example, if they say, "It is partisan, and you shouldn't be putting it out," I don't think there are penalties listed in the bill to deal with that.

The reason I raise this is that it's all well and good to send this to an officer of the House, whom all of us respect, and ask him to do his job, but if the government can ignore, willy-nilly, what the Provincial Auditor has to say anyway and there is no penalty for doing that, what's the point? Why waste the Provincial Auditor's time? Why waste the time of his designate? Why bother to do this at all if, at the end of the day, there really isn't any way to stop the government from doing what it wants to do anyway? If this were going to have any kind of teeth at all, one would have thought that the government would come forward with some kind of penalties if they do what they're not supposed to do. That's not in the bill. There's not an enforcement mechanism, there are no penalties, and frankly, they're just going to do what they want to do anyway.

1610

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured to stand up and speak in support of Bill 25, banning advertisements using taxpayers' money to promote partisan issues. I was listening carefully to the member for Lanark-Carleton when he was talking about the government approach to this issue. If we didn't believe in that important issue, why would we introduce it?

I believe it is our commitment to the people of this province to protect every penny, every taxpayer's dollar, to spend it on important issues like education, health care etc. But sometimes, as a ministry, as a government, you have to send a message to the people of this province concerning health care, education, the environment or agriculture. You have to use some kind of mechanism, whether it's the papers, a magazine, a TV ad, billboards or whatever media, to inform the people of this province. I believe it's necessary.

The member for Lanark-Carleton was speaking about using outside-the-border advertising media. This question was asked of the Chair of Management Board before. He was clear about it and said, "We're not going to use inside or outside media to promote our cause by using taxpayers' money." If we want to do any advertising of party issues, it's got to be from the party. But, for the people of this province, the money is going to be used only for promoting the people of this province.

Mr Baird: I found the speech by the member for Lanark-Carleton to be on the point. It shows why he's been so successful in being elected to this chamber in eight successive general elections.

I am shocked that the member opposite didn't mention the Mack truck clause in this bill. They used to criticize the previous government for having the Premier go on economic development television ads on Detroit television, which goes into Ottawa, Windsor and southwestern Ontario, or on Buffalo TV, which goes into the GTA and the Golden Horseshoe. This bill allows it.

I think one of the Liberal members opposite called it the crack cocaine of government advertising, but it's legal in this bill.

Interjection: It was Jim Bradley.

Mr Baird: My colleague says it was Jim Bradley who might have said that.

But that will continue to happen, because Dalton McGuinty doesn't keep his promises.

I said on election night that I would stand in my place and congratulate the government when they did something good. I want to congratulate Gerry Phillips. I brought an example, the last time we debated this six or eight months ago, about how he and his public servants were, in a partisan tack on his own piece of legislation, putting all sorts of glossy pictures of the Premier and his ministers in the government newsletter. They said, "No, that doesn't count." Well, I've been watching, and I say to the people in the communications branch over at Management Board, you've been doing a good job, because I haven't caught any breaking of the law since they introduced this bill. They were flouting the law, flouting their own minister, but it's shape-up time over there, and they've done an excellent job and stopped putting glossy pictures of the minister and the cabinet in this brochure. I'm sure the Chair of Management Board was terribly embarrassed by that.

I'd like to ask the member for Lanark-Carleton: When this bill is passed as law, does it immediately come into force? When would he, as a former Attorney General reading this bill, and being an expert legislator, say this bill would come into force?

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

The member for Lanark-Carleton has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Sterling: I guess what is most upsetting about these democratic renewal reforms is that we see such a lack of substance behind any of the initiatives this government has taken to date. It was disturbing to me that while this piece of legislation languished on the floor of

this Legislature, the government would go forward with a clearly partisan piece of advertising, patting themselves on the back for the first year of a disastrous lead into government, patting themselves on the back in this partisan piece. When we asked in the Legislature, would the Premier submit this particular document to the auditor—and I phoned the auditor before we asked this question because I wanted to be consistent and not say, "You didn't do this," if in fact they did it. I asked the auditor's office, "Was this document submitted to you with regard to this, to live within the spirit of this act, even though it hadn't been passed by the Legislature?" That's a measure of whether the government really wants to track this down. The answer was no, they didn't submit it to the auditor. Therefore, we don't have very much confidence in what they say.

The answer to the question with regard to the proclamation of this act is that when it's really supposed to bite, although there's not too much to bite in this legislation, is at the call of—guess who?—Dalton McGuinty. I expect this particular act to be proclaimed on October 3, 2007.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Martel: It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate. Following up on what the member from Lanark-Carleton just said, I suspect you're actually very correct that it will go into law very close to the next election. It probably won't see the light of day until then.

I decided to go back and just have a look at the start of this debate, which was on April 26, 2004. I'm looking at the leadoff speech that started with Gerry Phillips, who said the following: "We believe this groundbreaking legislation is the first of its kind in the world. There is no other legislation like this anywhere else in the world that we've been able to find. So I'm pleased and I think all of the Legislature should recognize that we are really providing leadership in this area to ban partisan" government "advertising."

I looked at Bill 25 and I read what the minister had to say and I've listened a little bit to some of the comments that were made at that time, particularly from government members who were very adamant that the bill is going to provide tough new restrictions on partisan government ads. You just have to pick up the bill to look for the tough new restrictions, and what jumps out at you the most are the big, looming loopholes that allow the government to essentially get out of the promise it made before the election and during the election that it was essentially going to do something to ban political advertising.

Let me deal with just one of those big, looming loopholes. Subsection 6(1) under the standards says the following: "It must not be a 'primary' objective of the item to foster a positive impression," meaning that if the partisan ad, be it radio, television or something in the print media, is put to the auditor, the primary objective cannot be to foster a positive impression because, if the primary objective is that, then it's going to be considered partisan advertising. That's a mealy-mouthed, weaselly word.

If the government were really interested in getting at all political advertising, if the objective were to try and foster an impression—that is, link you to the government, link you to the Premier—then these are the kinds of things that wouldn't be permitted. You see, by the use of "primary," it gets the government off the hook. It suggests that if the auditor thinks it's only a secondary motive or a secondary impression or a tertiary motive or a tertiary impression, then it's OK; it's not partisan advertising after all and it can be allowed. Look, you might as well drive a Mack truck right through that loophole, because that gets the government off the hook. That lets the government go to the Provincial Auditor and say, "Well, it's not our primary objective. It's our secondary, our tertiary, an additional objective."

1620

How many ways do you want to try to get around this? That one loophole alone, that one particular section, section 6 in the standards, makes it really clear that, frankly, the government is not too interested in shutting this down and making sure we don't continue to have money spent on partisan political advertising. If the government were really interested, you wouldn't have a clause like that, you wouldn't have a loophole like that, because that lets the government off the hook.

If they actually do end up proclaiming this law and going to the Provincial Auditor with some of these pamphlets, brochures or advertising in any, way, shape or form, you can bet that the government is going to be saying to the Provincial Auditor, "Look, it's not our primary motivation. Don't consider it to be that. Let us off the hook." That's just one of a couple of loopholes in the bill that makes me really question how serious the government is about doing what it promised to do during and before the last election.

If Bill 25 is really going to ensure that the taxpayers find out how their money is going to be spent—I heard a Liberal backbencher say earlier, "The bill is all about ensuring that Ontarians who have a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent get that information." Do you know what? My question is, do they have a right to know, and is that right to know going to be guaranteed by this bill? The answer is no, because there's nothing that guarantees that getting the information is getting the correct information, the true information.

I look at this glossy little bit of advertising that the government put out. I turn to the health section because I have a particular interest in health matters as the NDP health critic. The first thing I see is that the government says:

"What we've done in our first year

"Three new or expanded MRIs will shorten wait times in the province; an additional six will be operational by 2006." Do you know what? Those MRIs were announced by the former Conservative government. Not only that, but one of those MRIs, the one in Oakville, for example, was up and running as of June 2003, before the last election. But here's the government in the glossy ad telling people that they are responsible for nine new MRIs. Not true.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, that's bordering on a prop. If you want to read from it, OK, continue, but just don't wave it around.

Ms Martel: I'll be careful, Speaker.

The second point I want to raise: "Created a new program to vaccinate children against pneumonia, chicken pox and meningitis." Do you know what's interesting? When the Premier was talking about this on the radio, he said that every single dollar of the health premium would go into new health services, and he referenced this new vaccination program as one of the programs being paid for by the new health tax. That is completely false. In estimates, in October, I asked the Minister of Health, "Where did the money come from to pay for the new vaccination program?" Every single penny, every single dollar for the new vaccination program for the next three years, is federal money, \$150 million worth of federal money. Not a penny is coming from the new health tax. Does this glossy little brochure point out that the money is federal? No, it does not.

The next item: "Funded hospitals to hire up to 1,000 more full-time nurses." Do you know what? I was at the Ontario Nurses' Association reception last night for their biannual convention. Mr Baird was there with me. It was very interesting to have nurses approach both of us to say, "Our hospital got some additional money to hire more nurses"—or, "Our hospital got some additional money to transfer part-time nurses to full-time nurses"—"and now, as a result of this government demanding that our hospital balance its budget, these nurses are going to be laid off." That's what we heard last night at the Ontario Nurses' Association, and that's not in the book either.

Here's another one: "Toughened enforcement of care standards for residents in Ontario nursing homes."

Well, that's a surprise. Let me tell you about the enforcement standards. This government promised it was going to have a registered nurse 24/7 in every long-term-care home in the province. Note that it says "Toughened enforcement," past tense, as if it's already been done.

Do you know that the regulation that forces long-term-care homes to have a full-time nurse 24/7 doesn't even go into effect until January 1, 2005? Do you know that the Liberal government, before the election, promised it was going to have three baths a week for residents in long-term-care homes? Now it's down to two, and that regulation doesn't go into effect until February 2005. Do you know that the government that promised, before the election, they were going to reinstate 2.25 hours of hands-on nursing care for residents in long-term-care homes is the same government that's now not going to do it, and the Minister of Health confirmed that in estimates? How come? How come, in this glossy brochure, it says "Toughened enforcement of care standards" when that's absolutely not true?

So the point I'm making is, do people have a right to know? They sure do. They have a right to know the correct information, the factual information. They also have a right to know what the government hasn't done,

like not keeping its promise to parents of autistic children over the age of six, when this government promised they were going to end the discrimination, and it hasn't. The same government said they were going to stop the clawback of the federal child care benefit, and it hasn't. Those are things the public needs to know too. I guarantee you, Bill 25 is not going to do anything about that.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I want to spend a few moments talking about why there is a need for a bill such as Bill 25. I remember, not that long ago really, during the time of the past government that I would go to the mailbox and find brochures from the government of the day. They would be there time and time again. There were so many. There were lots of brochures. I can assure you of that. They were beautifully done and they had photos of our ministers and the Premier, and they were glossy and colourful.

People started to talk about them. They were coming so often in the mailbox that people started to question the point of doing this. They had already started to become cynical about what these brochures were and what they were doing. It got to the point where people started to question what they were costing. Then, at one stage, I noticed that all of a sudden there was the cost of them. Right in the very top corner, it would say, "This brochure cost so many pennies to produce." I knew then that the government was already starting to get a bit sensitive about it, but the fact is they still continued to put them out.

It caused some problems in terms of credibility for the government. People on the streets and people at their mailboxes started to wonder what this was about, whether it was to give facts and information to the citizens, or was just their way of promoting themselves as a government and getting ready for the next election.

A bill such as Bill 25 is a way we can address that kind of situation, so people will again be able to trust the information they get from their government.

1630

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the speech by the member for Nickel Belt. My only comment is, why did she wait until the end of her speech to talk about autistic children? I know this is an issue she cares very passionately about. She used to berate me because I and the previous government refused to extend the full IBI therapy to children over the age of six.

The second-loudest person—

Interjection.

Mr Baird: I refused. I said no. This was an early childhood development program and I said, with great respect, "No, I will not do it."

Over the yelling of the member for Nickel Belt, the person who was the second-loudest yeller on it was the now Minister of Children, Marie Bountrogianni, who promised autistic children she would release this terrible Conservative cap at the age of six, and that you could take her promise to the bank.

People may not like my policy, but I never, ever lied to an autistic child. Never did I lie, or never has the member from Nickel Belt lied, to an autistic child. Nora Whitney, one of the many people who has been a fighter in this issue, who sued me when I was the minister, and who continues to sue this government, has said, "Well, at least you were honest."

Many families were comforted by Dalton McGuinty's promise that he would repeal this discriminatory practice, and voted for Dalton McGuinty and had hope in Dalton McGuinty that he would do it. But he didn't do it. I think—and I'm not accusing any member of this House—anyone who would lie to an autistic child ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): This bill that has been presented here is a bill to raise standards so that taxpayer dollars don't go into partisan advertising. If the opposition would remember, one of the reasons the public was so incensed in the last election was particular to the notion that so many of the taxpayers' dollars were going to putting pictures of ministers and the former Premier in literature that was going across this province. The public is a lot smarter than the opposition credited. Therefore, part of the result of all that partisan advertising was a loss in the election.

A lesson learned from that is that government has to raise its standards, as they apply to itself, and the Provincial Auditor is now going to be charged with defining or interpreting whether or not the government has met the smell test when it comes to this advertising.

I know that the member from Nickel Belt always has, in her stand, a selective interpretation, constantly, when it comes to how she depicts what is being portrayed. Of course the opposition has a role to play, and the role should be to hold the government to account, but in some cases all they want to do is to try to embarrass the government, without substance in their arguments.

Before the next election, we are going to have the auditor look at the books, not do what happened last time, and give actual dollars as to where the financial state of the province is.

Mr Sterling: It really saddens me to hear the pontification of Liberal members of this Legislature talking about people who were in government before misleading the public about what they were doing and what they were saying, when we have a party that made a huge number of promises which, evidently, the only justification for was that they wanted the reins of power and were willing to say anything to get those reins of power.

These Liberal MPPs are talking about honesty and integrity, and they are the worst examples of it. The campaign of the Liberal Party in the last election had no bearing on the way this government was going to take the reins of power and what they were going to do in the future. So the credibility of this government saying, "We are going to clean up our hands by passing this phony piece of legislation"—the public don't believe you. They don't believe anything the Liberal government is saying.

I was in a Santa Claus parade last Friday morning, and you couldn't believe the support there was for me and my

party. My party leader, John Tory, was with me in Kanata, Ontario. We went through the streets. The thumbs up, and the thumbs down for Dalton McGuinty and his bunch of whatever, as they described it to me, even with children around. It was unbelievable.

Public, don't get tricked by this phony piece of legislation. It will be proclaimed a day before the election so they can carry on as they have in the first year and use public money for partisan advertising.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nickel Belt, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Ms Martel: I'm going to remind members of the Liberal Party in particular what Gerry Phillips said when he introduced this bill: "The bill helps us, among other things, to fulfill a pledge we made to help restore public faith in our democratic institutions and to strengthen our democracy."

Let me tell you something—and I say this very clearly to the member from Sarnia-Lambton—you're darned right it's my job to hold your government accountable. For you to suggest that anything I raised today was without substance, shame on you, especially with respect to autism. I raised autism in particular because I think it is absolutely disgusting that Premier McGuinty, during the last election, wrote a letter to the mother of a five-year-old autistic child and said the following—and I'm quoting from his letter: "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six."

We are here, well over a year since the last election, and your policy with respect to autistic children is the same as the Conservatives'. The only difference is, the Conservatives never, ever promised that they were going to end the discrimination. They were upfront that they were not going to make any changes with respect to that. Your Premier, on the other hand, had the audacity to go out and troll for votes among families with autistic children and make a promise that it is clear he never had any intention in the world to live up to.

What you are doing with respect to autistic children is immoral. You are fighting them every step of the way. You are fighting families in court, you are fighting families at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal and you're using my tax dollars to fight those kids when you promised you were going to be different. You're darned right I'm going to hold your government to account, especially on this issue, because what you have done on this issue is disgusting; it's immoral.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I think it's becoming very clear that we, as members of the PC opposition, support any initiative like this if it increases the measure of accountability. The member from Lanark-Carleton just finished relating some of this to the issue of democratic renewal. The member used terms like "integrity" and "honesty." We would support this legislation if it is not only going forward but if it's

actually being used in the context of those kinds of values. From what I have been hearing to date and in the media, the usage of this bill at present is cynical at best.

The bill I'm referring to is Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising. The bill supposedly establishes an independent review of government-based advertising, as the Liberal government has indicated there has been an abuse of the public purse. The issue with this legislation will be how that line is drawn between advertising that does not offend the legislation and advertising that offends it. What I'm suggesting is that the application of those criteria will be subjective at best.

The law has yet to be passed. Perhaps this is the reason for the delay in passing this law, so that other, what I consider partisan, documents can be published and put out across Ontario, touted as government information and communication. We continue to make a case that there is a partisan bent to some of these publications.

1640

This is enabling legislation. The devil is in the details, and it does leave it open for future regulation to be brought in, which, again, could be questionable and could be confused.

This particular piece of legislation hinges on a promise, a Liberal promise: "We will implement the McGuinty bill to ban self-promotional government advertising and authorize the Provincial Auditor to review and approve all government advertising in advance." That was from a document entitled Government That Works for You, a Liberal platform document. It's found on page 15.

I certainly have one government document here that I question the colour of. I don't know whether I should hold this up or not, but the colour of this government document is the identical colour of a Liberal partisan document. If it's not really partisan, taxpayer-funded advertising, what is it, if it has the same colour? We hear criteria mentioned across the way: "If it doesn't have the picture of Dalton McGuinty on it, then it's a government document. It's not a partisan document." We beg to differ.

There's a 16-page booklet entitled Getting Results for Ontario. It was released by Premier Dalton McGuinty's office on October 18, and it is there to highlight the first year in power. We put forward the position that it does represent some partisan advertising. For example, there is a four-page section on health care, but nary a word about the health tax. I find this passing strange.

This is an expression I hear across the way: the health care premium. Of course, the lexicon switches back and forth between "premium" and "tax." Nothing is written about the health care premium instituted by this government. Nothing is said about the delisting of physiotherapy, optometry and chiropractic services. Along with the health tax, where this government basically has indicated to people, "You pay more," there's no mention of the delisting of those three essential services, a situation where you not only pay more but you get less. The Liberals promised to introduce legislation to bring an end to this kind of taxpayer-funded, partisan approach.

We certainly have heard mention of loopholes. Again, the law isn't passed yet. It has left the door open for these kinds of documents to be brought forward. It is suggested that the government is using a number of loopholes, to use that oft-heard expression, some large enough to drive a Mack truck through.

If the provincial Liberal government is able to get away with this, despite proposed legislation that is supposed to ban this kind of report, this kind of taxpayer-funded, partisan advertising, then I would suggest that this legislation obviously needs more teeth—that could be difficult with enabling legislation—and I would suggest that the people of Ontario look well to the kinds of regulations that will be attached to this bill.

I'm suggesting this kind of report is an update on all the Liberal-identified good things that their government has been doing and includes errors of omission, omitting things for which this government has clearly been criticized, the kind of criticisms that the member for Lanark-Carleton would even hear in a Santa Claus parade—again, delisting of essential services and the health tax.

I made reference to the report Getting Results for Ontario, and quite honestly—and I think the television is in colour—I see no difference in the colour between these two documents. I actually see no difference in the colour between the government document and another document that has exactly the same—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to remind the member that we're getting close to using props. I don't mind you reading from a government document, but please keep that in mind.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. Oftentimes, a picture is worth 1,000 words. I would describe that colour as red, but maybe it's more of a brick colour. I honestly can't come up with the words to describe this colour. I've got about four documents here, some are partisan Liberal, some are government documents, and they're all the identical colour. I just have to try to relay that in words to the television viewer.

We know the Provincial Auditor will screen all proposed government advertising, and partisan government ads would be banned under this legislation. Obviously, the auditor has not screened these documents. We know the rules are intended to apply to all print, television, radio and billboard ads, as well as printed brochures that have been sent out to homes.

During the tenure of the previous government, a number of brochures were sent out to homes. One thing I appreciated in that distribution was the unit cost of each brochure was indicated on one of the corners of the document so the taxpayer would know exactly the unit cost. I think that included not only the cost of writing it, printing it and distributing it; it would include the distribution or postage cost as well. That was quite a transparent approach.

Again, looking at the Liberal documents and the government documents here, I see no indication of what they cost. Perhaps once this legislation is passed we can

only hope—I don't mean to be cynical—that we won't have these kinds of loopholes.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: I want to focus on the one particular loophole that was noted by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. It is in section 6. I think it needs to be reinforced again. Section 5 sets out the requirement to the auditor to determine if an item meets the standards required by the act; that is, is the item partisan or non-partisan? Section 6 sets out the standards or the tests or the criteria that have to be met in order for the Provincial Auditor to determine if indeed an item is non-partisan.

Subsection 6(5) says the following: "It," being the item, "must not be a primary objective of the item to foster a positive impression of the governing party or a negative impression of a person or entity who is critical of the government."

The point that I raised before and that I'm going to raise again is that I don't know why the government is using the words "primary objective." It seems to me that maybe part of the point of using that is to be able to then say to the auditor, "It's not our primary purpose, it is our secondary purpose," or an additional purpose; an adjoined purpose or a tertiary purpose. Either it's a purpose or it's not, either it's an objective or it's not. To try to qualify it by saying "primary" just leads me to think the government is using that word in order to give an out to the Provincial Auditor, who might very well determine that there certainly is an objective of the piece to foster a negative impression of the governing party or somebody else, but since it's not the primary, the first goal, the first objective or the first purpose, then the piece is okay.

This raises the question of the loopholes that are in this legislation. I think that it's very clear that we are going to need public hearings, because if you look at that loophole it's hard to imagine that this legislation can be enforced at all.

1650

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It's a pleasure to comment for two minutes on this bill. It's part of a long list of measures that have been brought forward by this government, not only to improve the basic services in our province but also to answer some pretty basic questions the people of Ontario have about the way government operates.

I've had so many people who have come to me and said, "Why don't governments ask the Provincial Auditor to take a look at their books just before an election?" And do you know what? There is no good answer for that, which is why we've introduced legislation that will have the Provincial Auditor take that sort of measure.

Another question people ask is about election dates themselves: "Why do governments virtually shut down at the end of the third year, waiting for the right poll or the right focus group in order to call an election?" The simple fact is that, again, there's not a good answer to that, which is why we've put forward legislation that will see a fixed election day and an electoral cycle that makes sense, an electoral cycle that's workable.

Why is the Provincial Auditor limited from looking at areas like universities, colleges and other institutions that receive government grants? Why has the Provincial Auditor not been able to go in and do value-for-money audits? Again, there is no good answer to that, which is why this government has put forward legislation that will allow that to happen.

Finally, and I could go on, many people have asked me why we have governments that insist upon sending out pamphlets and other literature and advertising to the people of Ontario saying what a wonderful, magnificent job they've done in areas like health care and education. Why don't governments simply take that money and put it into health care and education? Once again, there is no good answer to that question, which is why we've introduced legislation that is going to outlaw that type of partisan advertising, which brought about so much cynicism, when it came to the previous government. That's why we're doing it.

Mr Sterling: It would be nice if we were dealing with a real piece of legislation, but this piece of legislation is so thin in content. It doesn't have any penalties, nor do any of the other democratic renewal pieces of legislation.

We had some questions put by the previous member about what the public was asking, and why doesn't the government do this and why doesn't the government do that. I have a question that I get every weekend when I go back to my riding, every day when I talk to people here, there and everywhere. The question is, "Why do the politicians not have to keep their word that they gave to us before the election?"

Why don't we have a piece of legislation that would monetarily disadvantage governments that lied? Why wouldn't we have a piece of legislation that said, "You gained power by not telling us what you are going to provide us with"? Why don't we have a piece of legislation that would fine Mr McGuinty for standing up in front of the public and saying, "We will not tax you"? That's what he said to the average citizen. What did he do? In the first two months he broke his word. I have to tell you, they're asking that question a lot more than the questions about government advertising or any of those other kinds of issues.

This legislation doesn't surprise me, because this government is thin on integrity in terms of what they say they're going to do and what they actually do. What they've done here is sort of a thin, veiled piece of legislation that says it's going to do something that it's not going to do. It's not going to deal with the advertising issue at all.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It's a pleasure to rise and talk about the speech made by Mr Barrett. I think he hit it in a nutshell. We have a piece of legislation here that at first blush most politicians would agree with. I know certainly when it was entered into the House, at first blush, we all thought, "Thank goodness there's going to be some rein put upon the gratuitous government advertising we witnessed from the previous government." I will even tell you, it was probably

witnessed from the NDP government as well. We did. I wasn't there, but it happened, and with the Peterson government before that. You can go back to the Miller government before that. Everybody did this gratuitous advertising that tried to make themselves look good. At first blush, I looked down this list, and I thought, "What a good thing this is going to be," until—and Mr Barrett said this very well—you get to sections 5 and 6 and you see the loopholes that exist, and then you look at those loopholes in terms of what the government has already done in terms of their advertising.

When I saw this little booklet called Getting Results for Ontario, I must tell you that I was somewhat shocked in view of what this bill had promised. It caused me a great deal of concern, enough concern that I have turned around and have started to look in depth and in detail at what is contained in Bill 26, not just surmising, as was said so eloquently in this House, that it's going to put an end to gratuitous advertising, which I had a supreme hope would actually happen. It is the reality that section 6 is not being adhered to by this government, even as they are proposing this bill and even as it is before this House.

I will have an opportunity to speak and I will expand on that in due course.

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

Mr Barrett: I thank the members for their comments. I continue to question the sincerity of this bill, the government advertising bill, Bill 25. I will continue to do further research.

During Remembrance Day week, I noticed a number of government ads for the licence plates for our veterans, and I certainly hope there was no subliminal message there. It was an Ontario government ad. I took that on good faith. It's an excellent idea for our veterans to have licence plates. That was very heavily advertised. I hope there was no direction there to unfairly boost the Liberals in Ontario.

I say that because it is no secret that people are losing faith in their institutions. Government is at the top of the list of institutions that people would like to see changed. They'd like to see the kind of changes that the member for Lanark-Carleton is working on with respect to democratic renewal. A number of members—I guess four members now—have introduced legislation on recall. Very recently, Jim Flaherty introduced a law to recall members.

I made mention of the criticism of the Getting Results for Ontario document. The health section makes no mention of the health tax and doesn't talk about the delisting of essential health services. Some of that information came from the St Catharines Standard, a Niagara newspaper. It was titled "Liberal Booklet Dismissed as Propaganda," written by Kalvin Reid, an excellent reporter. He used to work for the Simcoe Reformer. I think we're going to get a lot of help from the media as we continue to analyze this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Prue: It is indeed a privilege and an honour to stand here and speak about this bill. As I explained in my

last two-minute comment, when this bill was first introduced in the House, I thought it was a really good bill. I thought it was an idea whose time had come. I wanted to commend the government for bringing forward a bill that would put an end not only to what happened in the last government but to what has happened in Ontario literally for decades.

If you're old enough to remember, as I do, you will remember that governments of all political stripes have put out these fancy, glossy, colour photographs of Premiers and members of the executive council. They've talked about bills in ways that, quite frankly, left a lot to the imagination. Certainly, it was not what you read in the newspaper or saw on television with the third or fourth estates and what they were able to do in terms of a realistic appraisal of what was contained in bills. It would always be one-sided.

Of course the government—and this can be any government—has a majority of members. They have the majority on the budget, they have all of the bureaucrats, all of the civil servants at their beck and call, and are able to produce documentation and advertising that an opposition party, whether it is a large opposition or a small opposition like us in the New Democrats—we may be small but we're mighty, I should add—is unable to acquire, unable to put forward. So there is a certain unfairness when governments use that massive strength, that massive pecuniary ability they have with taxpayers' money to put out propaganda.

1700

At first blush I thought this was a pretty good thing. Then the government sent us all a copy of *Getting Results for Ontario: Progress Report 2004*. A copy came across my desk, and I have to tell you I was extremely disappointed that the government saw fit to issue this little piece of what I can only describe as propaganda. So I went back to the bill, thinking, how is this little piece of propaganda related to the bill?

I went through the sections, particularly section 6. It sets out what this is supposed to do:

“6(1)(ii) To inform the public of their rights and responsibilities under the law.” I read the 16 pages and I could not find anything that informed about the rights and the duties of the public under the law or laws that have been proposed or passed in this Legislature. There was nothing in there that would give it the legitimacy for which this document was published.

“6(1)(iii) To encourage or discourage specific social behaviour, in the public interest.” I went through the 16 pages, and there was nothing in there that encouraged or discouraged behaviour of the public in the social interest. This started to disturb me.

I went to paragraph 2 and looked to see what was there. It says, “It must include a statement that the item is paid for by the government of Ontario.” I read through the 16 pages again and again, and the closest there is that this was paid for by the government of Ontario is a little logo on the back that says it was printed by the “Queen's Printer for Ontario,” but nowhere does it say that the

government of Ontario financed it or paid for it. So one has to extrapolate enormously to determine whether or not this met paragraph 2. I would suggest that it did not meet paragraph 2. Nowhere in this does it inform the taxpayers that they themselves have paid for this document and that they themselves are responsible for the document.

I went to paragraph 4: “It must not be partisan.” I looked at it, and nowhere, I must admit, inside did I see the word “Liberal,” but everything about this document is partisan. It is partisan because it refers incessantly, paragraph after paragraph, to “our government”: what our government is doing, what our government proposed in the election and what our government is doing to carry out what we had promised to the people of Ontario back in 2003. It is hugely partisan and therefore is contrary to what I find in this bill.

Paragraph 5 says, “It must not be a primary objective of the item to foster a positive impression of the governing party or a negative impression of a person or entity who is critical of the government.” There is nothing in this document that is not positive about the government. If it is not primary, it is certainly secondary. I will tell you that this particular provision of the bill causes grave concern, because what has happened in the publication of this little brochure, *Getting Results for Ontario*, is nothing short of the same partisanship which you have said will not happen under paragraph 5 of subsection 6(1) of this particular act.

The secondary object, for sure—if it's not the primary one in getting results for Ontario—is to leave “a positive impression of the governing party,” and you have ensured that it does not make a negative impression of the opposition or of those who are opposed to the measure simply by not even mentioning that there are other priorities of other members of this House, that there are other options and other things you have said that run contrary to what is contained in here.

As some of the speakers have said, there is nothing in here about any of the contentious issues we have had to deal with. There's nothing in here about the health tax. There's nothing in here about privatizing hospitals. There's nothing in here about the delisting of chiropractic services or delisting optometrists or physiotherapists. In fact, every contentious aspect that has taken place in this House in the first year of the mandate is not contained in this bill. Therefore, it paints the governing party in the best possible light and ignores what the opposition and the people have had to say on so many contentious issues that I think are really important to the people of this province.

Last but not least, it goes on in number 6 to say, “It must meet such additional standards as may be prescribed.” I tried to think what those standards might be, because we will never know until a minister at some future time prescribes additional standards. I tried to think for a long time what standards might be prescribed. Might the standards being prescribed include or exclude opposition statements on how the government is

behaving? Might they include or exclude what the people of Ontario or press reports on documents have said? Might they include or preclude government legislation that is introduced and then not followed through on? We have many bills that are languishing after first reading, that had never survived first reading and have never been introduced in the House. What might be prescribed? This caused me a great deal of difficulty.

I went back and looked again. I looked again at how this little brochure was set out and what the titles had to say. The titles and headlines really entice people to read. Just like in a newspaper, just like when you're watching the promo on television about what news item is coming up, it is intended to grab your attention and cause you to read further or, even if you don't read further, to be left with a positive impression.

Here are all the buzzwords that are contained in this little document: "Getting Results for Ontario," "Success for Students," "Lower high school drop-out rate," "Getting Results in Education," "Better Health," "Strong People, Strong Economy," "a skilled workforce," "Building a Better Future Together," and so on. There is nothing in this document that is in any way objective, that gives a different side, that weighs the pros and cons of the decisions being made or why certain decisions have precedence over others.

On the basis of this document and on the basis of the legislation, if this is what we expect to happen by passing Bill 25 at some point, I have to tell you, I am very sadly disappointed at what I thought was going to be a good bill. The publication of this document has really shown me that this bill means very little at all.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I'll speak in favour of Bill 25, the Government Advertising Act. My constituents of Thornhill and Concord surely are in support of Bill 25.

Every Ontarian during the last election over the prior administration was bombarded with free advertisements because the Tories were using public money to promote their political philosophy. My constituents did in fact, on many occasions—I was the candidate at the time—question why public money was used to promote a political party. Therefore, this bill will try to eliminate that possibility. In Ontario there are many other sectors or areas where public money can be used, such as in education, health and many other areas. Therefore I am very pleased that we recognize that reality and that we're going to put a stop to that abuse.

The Tories unfortunately could not find the proper date to call an election in their last year of office, so they kept on sending material on a monthly basis with pictures of the Premier, pictures of various cabinet ministers and the local Tory candidates. I am pleased to report to my constituents in Thornhill and Concord that we will not allow that to continue. Anything that must go out to inform the community will be done in the public interest and not in the interest of the political party that happens to be in office.

Therefore, even if for some people Bill 25 is not perfect, I invite all members to support it, because at the end of the day it is a good bill for the people of Ontario. It is a bill that will save money, and any dollar that is spent notifying people will be spent only because it is in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

1710

Mr Sterling: One of the troubling parts of this piece of legislation, along with Bill 84, which deals with the auditor, is my concern that you're turning the auditor into a position where he's going to be pitting himself for one political party against another political party.

This week, all the parties are interviewing candidates for our new Provincial Auditor. I am involved in those interviews, as well as Ms Martel, and Mr Milloy from the Liberal Party. One of the things that comes through as you question candidates with regard to the position of auditor and start to delve into and think about the role of the auditor is that he must always remain non-partisan. These two bills put the auditor in an almost impossible situation where he must choose one party over the other. He must choose whether this piece of advertising is partisan or non-partisan. Should he choose, all the time, to either defend the government or attack the government, then I think the auditor is put in a position of starting to become a partisan player in this institution.

The auditor's position has a tremendous amount of respect from the people of Ontario. I do not think it is proper that we dump this responsibility on an individual who is primarily there to look at how the operations of the government are running, and to be unbiased. This bill, along with Bill 84, starts to turn the worm on the institution of the auditor of Ontario.

Ms Martel: It's a pleasure to respond to the comments made by my colleague from Beaches-East York. I talked earlier about my concern with respect to one of the loopholes. I'm going to raise a second concern, and that has to do with what the penalties are if the government decides to contravene what the auditor has said, if indeed the auditor says that something is partisan and should not be distributed.

If you look at page 2 of the bill, subsection 2(4) talks about the prohibitions: "The government office shall not publish, display or broadcast the advertisement if the head of the office"—that is, the government office—"receives notice that, in the Provincial Auditor's opinion, the advertisement does not meet the standards required by this act," and I've already talked about my concerns with respect to the standards.

If you go further in the bill to look at what happens if a ministry decides to put the information out anyway—especially if it's just before a provincial election and you're trying to get a message out—regrettably, it appears that the only thing the auditor can do in the event of a contravention is make that public in a report. So, under section 9:

"(1) Each year, the Provincial Auditor shall report to the Speaker of the assembly about such matters as the Provincial Auditor considers appropriate relating to his or her powers and duties under this act.

“(2) In the annual report, the Provincial Auditor shall notify the Speaker about any contraventions of section 2, 3, 4 or 8.” So he can notify the Speaker about a contravention.

“(3) The Provincial Auditor may make a special report to the Speaker at any time on any matter that in the opinion of the Provincial Auditor should not be deferred until the annual report.”

Essentially, the annual report or a special report pointing out a contravention is the only penalty here. It’s not clear to me that that’s going to be enough to stop a government from putting something out that’s partisan, especially just before an election.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

The member for Beaches-East York has two minutes to reply.

Interjection: OK, go ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: I called for questions and comments and nobody stood. The member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: I’d like to thank the members from Thornhill, Lanark-Carleton and Nickel Belt for their comments. I’m not sure how much, if any, of the comments were related to the speech I made but, in any event, I welcome the fact that they stood up and participated in the public debate. I’d like to comment on what they had to say.

The member from Thornhill talked about—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: Yes, SpongeBob. You like him, do you?

Interjection: I do.

Mr Prue: The member from Thornhill talked about the public interest and that, of course, he and his party will always do everything in the best interests of the people of Ontario, but I would think that is kind of a strange statement to make. That is a self-serving statement. Any politician will say, “Of course I’m acting in your best interests,” even if that is not the case at all times. That is what politicians say, and I’m disappointed that—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: No, I’m disappointed that that was his contribution to the debate.

The member from Lanark-Carleton talked about the auditor as an institution, and the need to protect that institution. I think he was correct on that.

The member from Nickel Belt talked about the auditor and the auditor’s power under this bill. Of course, the auditor’s power is circumscribed in view of the fact that the annual statement is made only once a year. There is nothing that would stop a government so bent from putting out partisan advertising, like the little booklet I referred to in my speech, and making it even more partisan than it already is in the time period leading up to an election, knowing full well that the auditor would be powerless to act upon it in the time frames involved.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It’s a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 25 here in the

Legislature today. I heard someone talking about the member for Beaches-East York and his SpongeBob SquarePants tie. I say it is one of the sharper ones he’s worn, and he’s known for wearing some sharp and flamboyant ties.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we consider that a prop?

Mr Yakabuski: I would consider it some sort of a prop, but not one that I’d use in any of my acting escapades. I’m usually a little more reserved than that, Mr Speaker.

The bill we’re talking about here, Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising, is a bill to deal with partisan advertising. It’s hard not to be somewhat cynical about what this government has done in regard to this bill. We’ve heard so much from this government about how they’re going to change this and change that, and what we’ve really seen from them is a litany of bills, motions and regulations to try to throw the hound off the scent, so to speak. They want to throw the Ontario electorate off the track, off the trail. They’re on to this gang. They bring in these little bits of this and that to try to throw them off the trail, and Bill 25 is a really great example of that.

They did promise in the election that they would deal with partisan advertising. As has been pointed out by the member for Beaches-East York and my colleague from Lanark-Carleton, as well as others, this bill is so full of holes, you couldn’t just drive a Mack truck through it, you could take the whole Mack truck factory and just slide it right through there without even greasing the walls. There’s no problem there. It’s loosely fitted. There are big, big holes there.

He talked about it being audited once a year, so the government pretty well has a free hand in dealing with it. Then, once a year, the government has a free hand and the auditor may slap their fingers after a year has expired. There are no real penalties in place. There are loopholes with regard to the advertising that could, for example, be done originating from a television station outside of Ontario. So there are many problems with this bill.

I want to point to one. I asked a question in the House about this pamphlet, Getting Results for Ontario. You’re bringing in a bill such as Bill 25 that says, “We’re going to do away with and we’re not going to participate in partisan advertising with this new Liberal government.” Then one of the first things we see is Getting Results for Ontario.

1720

I have never seen a publication full of more self-glorifying crap than this publication right here. It was basically going through the last year of the Liberal government. You would think that the address had changed from RR 1, X municipality, Ontario, to Shangri-La. We have just moved into the utopian state, because everything the Liberals have done in this first year is just wonderful. It never said a word in that publication about any of those broken promises. If you’re going to recap a year, you should tell the truth, and sometimes the truth is a little harsh. Sometimes you have to actually criticize

yourself, if you're telling the truth. I would be the first one to admit that the past year for me hasn't been perfect, but if I was a Liberal, you'd think it was, because in this thing that I'm not going to stick up—I don't want to have to put it down because it might be a prop—it has been a perfect year.

Mr Barrett: What colour is it?

Mr Yakabuski: It's a bit on the red side.

Mr Barrett: What shade of red?

Mr Yakabuski: Liberal red.

Interjection.

Mr Yakabuski: Well, there. You get a quick look, but that's it.

If I was a Liberal, you'd think it had been a year of perfection. It's an encapsulation of everything they've done and haven't done and how they've changed the province so wonderfully for the better. But it doesn't say a word about breaking their promise on increasing taxes with the health care premium and the average family of four in this province now saddled with \$1,000 more in taxes a year because of the policies, programs and decisions of this government. It doesn't say anything about breaking their promise on the hydro rate cap. It doesn't say anything about that. It doesn't say anything about going to war with hospitals in the province of Ontario. It doesn't say a word of that.

So you'd think that maybe there was a real year, and then there was Fantasia all over again. There was actually what happened in the province of Ontario in the past year, and then there was the Liberal version of these events, and ne'er the twain shall meet, I can assure you, because we are living in different worlds. Hell, we're living in different universes when we compare this pamphlet with what has actually gone down in Ontario in the last year.

So that, in itself, briefly says what the difference is in what Liberals say they're going to do and what they actually do. They can't even draw an accurate picture of what's gone on in the province in the past year.

Why do we have cynicism among the voters? I know we're going to be talking about democratic renewal. This government has talked about democratic renewal, but I haven't seen any of these members who privately will tell you they disagree with many pieces of legislation this government is bringing in. But you know what happens on voting day. Yes, you've got it right: "I stand in favour of the government. They are my meal ticket, and I'm going to be going with what the Premier says." That's not democratic renewal.

In this party, our new leader, John Tory, has made it clear that we will be able to vote as we see fit, as members of the future government of the province of Ontario.

As I said, this bill is a deflection, as so many other bills are. We have a bill—I guess it's coming up soon for a vote and I'll probably vote in favour of it because it's a nothing bill; it does no harm, yet it doesn't accomplish anything but tie up the business of the House—the bring-your-own-wine bill, Bill 96. That's going to be coming up soon for third reading, I presume.

Ms Martel: It's in committee.

Mr Yakabuski: Is it in committee? I guess we'll have it in committee first. Thank you very much, the member for Nickel Belt. She's very organized about the proceedings here. I often rely on her for information of a factual nature. I get information of a factual nature from her. I appreciate that.

When that comes up, I'll probably support the bill, but I wonder what the big deal about it is, because it's not going to change anything. Nobody is going to be bringing their bottles of wine very many places, because the corkage fee is probably going to make it prohibitive to do so anyway.

Untendered contracts: They talked about transparency in government and accountability, and then they're going around and handing out untendered contracts to their Liberal friends. So should we believe what we see in this bill? With those loopholes about the auditor reporting once a year, should we believe what we see in this bill, or is this just more fluff to try to take the dog off the scent, as I said, and let the people of Ontario think they're actually doing something productive in this province when, in fact, they're doing nothing productive? It's a shell game. It's deception at its finest by the master of duplicity and deception, Dalton McGuinty himself. They're trying to perpetrate this fraud on the people of Ontario with this and so many other bills.

I want to talk about regulation 170/03 before I run out of time, because I have some real concerns about that regulation. I notice the minister has extended the time before that bill will be implemented, but my concern is that it's like you've been sentenced to hang and you get somewhat of a reprieve because the hangman has the flu so he can't hang you until next week.

We need to see some real, substantive changes in that bill and we need to see some leadership from this government. When Dennis O'Connor was given his mandate to do that report, he wasn't constricted by costs or anything else. Governments have to lead and take that information and ask, "What is real, what is realistic, what can we implement, what can we do, and can we do it without taxing the people of Ontario to the point of oblivion?"

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: I was away for part of the speech by the member but I suspect that he showed this nice little brochure. He has my copy.

Mr Yakabuski: I borrowed it from you. There you go.

Ms Martel: Here's the English copy and the French copy.

I heard one of the Liberal members say earlier in the debate that the people had a right to know, that this bill was all about making sure that the people got their right to know about what the government was doing. The point that I think needs to be raised again is, it would be nice if people got all the information about what the government was doing. If you take a look at this, of course, you don't see much about all of those broken promises the government now needs to deal with. There were 231

promises before and during the election campaign. We raised some of those today; for example, the fact that the government has done nothing about stopping the claw-back of the national child benefit for the poorest families in the province of Ontario despite the fact that, before the election and during the election, they promised to do that.

We raised the issue today of the promise this government made with respect to the creation of affordable housing units. Twenty thousand affordable housing units, I believe, was the promise the Liberal government made before the election and during the election, and here we are—

Mr Yakabuski: How many have they got so far?

Ms Martel: I don't know how many they've got, because they seem to be re-announcing some of the ones the Conservatives already announced before they left office. We heard about 400 rental supplements today. That's not the same thing as creating affordable housing, from my point of view. I certainly know there was an announcement about 800 condominium units, and that's far from affordable. I don't know very many poor people who can afford condominiums—I don't know any poor people who can afford condominiums. So how that is going to help people get out of poverty is beyond me.

I agree that the people have a right to know. If they look at this book, even what's in this book doesn't do it.

I talked earlier about some of the broken promises with respect to health. There is some information that's not quite factually correct in this little brochure with respect to health. I suspect that if I looked at other areas in this book, I would see the same.

The problem is, Bill 25 is going to do nothing to ensure that people get access to the information they need with respect to both what the government is doing and, frankly, what the government isn't doing. They're not going to get it through this bill. Frankly, I regret to say that the bill has a number of loopholes that I've tried to identify this afternoon, which means they probably aren't even going to stop getting partisan advertising—something like this brochure.

I know the government says this is part of their renewal package. I don't think it's going to do much of anything to restore people's confidence in the democratic process, and I regret that.

1730

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Bill 25 is a particular favourite of Ontario's environmentalists. Passionate Ontario environmentalists everywhere breathe a sigh of relief for the tens of thousands of hectares of Ontario forest that won't fall to loggers' chainsaws merely to churn out countless skids of reports-to-taxpayers pulp. This was the four-colour pulp, packed with airbrushed photos of the two former Ontario Premiers and a host of their senior cabinet ministers. This was the stuff that generated fat fees for graphic designers, media consultants, research firms, ad agencies, media buyers and a host of other hourly billing professionals. Not one of those suppliers reduced class sizes, none of them improved health care, and not one of those slick media

pieces improved water and meat inspections. But in just one year this government has done all of that.

So after seeing nearly a third of a billion dollars of hard-earned money of Ontario taxpayers frittered away on pulp and TV commercials whose net effect on Ontario taxpayers was to supply cat box liner and prompt a bathroom break while watching TV, Ontarians had had enough. They voted for change and got a new government.

To my knowledge, not a single Ontario taxpayer has written to Premier Dalton McGuinty demanding the return of now-missing partisan government advertising and wanting those reports to taxpayers back. What Bill 25 has done is shift those hundreds of millions of dollars to smaller class sizes, lower budget deficits, a protected greenbelt, a higher minimum wage and hundreds of specific measures that make life better in ways big and small for the people of Ontario.

Mr Barrett: I want to comment on what I consider an in-depth analysis by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I think he dug a little deeper than many of us have and explained to us that this legislation is a deflection—I think he used the term “deception” or “deception at its finest,” and then went into the duplicity of this legislation—a feint, if you will, to throw one off one's game. He used the analogy of the tracking dog, a bloodhound, where the person being pursued will take certain measures to put a scent across the trail—or I think back to watching cowboy movies when you ride your horses upstream and you're not followed.

I put it in the same category as the pit bull legislation that came out at the end of the summer. That legislation obviously backfired on the Attorney General, but perhaps the goal was to take the minds of the public off issues of health taxes and broken promises.

There's a film out—I can't remember the name of it; it stars Pierce Brosnan, I think. It's one of these *To Catch a Thief* films. It's really quite entertaining. Much of the film focuses on the various techniques that are used by thieves to distract someone with clothing or set up a program or scenario to preoccupy someone, and when you realize what's happened, your diamond bracelet and wallet are missing.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to have two minutes to comment on the speech by our esteemed colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Let me say that what I really think is going on here is this: The Liberals, while they were in opposition, came forward with all these over-inflated estimates of the cost of government advertising. Sometimes I used to listen to them, and you'd think it was hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. And Conservatives did spend a fair amount of money on propaganda; they did. They put out television ads and radio ads and newspaper ads, and they sent mailings to people's homes. I admit that I think the Conservatives put out some expensive propaganda.

Mr McGuinty, when he was in opposition, made it sound as if, under his government, there wouldn't be any

propaganda, that this would end. Well, then people found this, and what's this? This is propaganda. It tries to present itself as an honest and accurate report of the first year in government, but it leaves out all of the things the government has failed to do; it leaves out all of the broken promises. It doesn't refer to that famous promise, "I will not raise your taxes," and then point out that taxes went up significantly.

So I am left to say, where are we at? It seems that the Conservatives put out expensive propaganda and the Liberals put out somewhat cheaper propaganda, but it is still propaganda.

The Deputy Speaker: Anything waved over waist-high is a prop. Thank you very much.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has two minutes to reply.

Mr Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from Nickel Belt, Mississauga West and Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, and the leader of the third party.

The ongoing message seems to be that while there may be some laudable goals, the bill, as it's written, will never get there because it is designed to fail. It is designed to fail so the government can continue to do whatever it wants while perpetrating a fraud on the people of the province of Ontario to try to convince them they are actually doing something that is laudable and honourable.

Of course, the piece of propaganda that the leader of the third party had there—I had borrowed it from them early and given it back, because I always return things that I borrow. I think it's the right thing to do, just as this government should return the money it is going to be borrowing from the electorate of the province of Ontario over the next several years to finance some of their crazy programs.

Anyway, that piece of propaganda basically is the crux of one of our key oppositions to the bill. It's that they are breaking, if not the rule of the bill, the spirit of the bill, even though it hasn't been passed yet. They still want to conduct themselves as if they can do whatever they want even if they pass this bill. This piece of propaganda is so false, so pretentious, as to what has happened in the province of Ontario over the past year. If you talk to people on the street and you ask them, "Has this been a good year for the government of Ontario? Have they been carrying through with what they did?"—are you kidding? They are a bunch of—it rhymes with "criers," and I would never say it in here.

The Deputy Speaker: You can't say indirectly anything that you can't say directly, so be careful.

Mr Yakabuski: If that was inferred that way, I apologize.

The people of the province of Ontario don't trust them, don't believe them. They don't have any credibility, and this piece of propaganda further emphasizes that.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hampton: I'm quite pleased to make some more comments, because there's a lot that's wrong with this

bill. First of all, the bill is not going to do what it advertises. What the government is trying to put across to the citizens of Ontario is that this bill is going to eliminate those kinds of ads and ad campaigns that many people in Ontario found objectionable. This government wants to put that across, but in fact I want to refer to a little history and then to the actual sections of the bill.

1740

One of the things that people really found objectionable, particularly about the Mike Harris government, was that that government bought a lot of very expensive advertising on Buffalo television channels, on Detroit television channels, on CNN and on some of the other big American cable networks that broadcast into Canada. What people would see when they happened to be flicking through the channels—some people do watch CNN. Some people who live in the Niagara peninsula will watch Buffalo channels. Some people who live in the environs of Windsor-Sarnia will watch Detroit channels. What people would see time and time again when they tuned into those networks was a smiling Mike Harris saying that Ontario, under the Conservative government—although he wouldn't say "Conservative government"—under his government had become a wonderful place to invest, the economy was going gangbusters and people had never been better off. If he did not say this directly, the clear inference was that Mike Harris as Premier was doing an unbelievably good job. Of course, the subtle message to people who were viewing was, "You should vote for Mike Harris," or, "You should support the Harris government." People found it really objectionable that public money was being used in that way.

I know the hype the government has put out, talking about their bill to ban or to regulate government advertising, and I know the sales job they've put out there for people, but if you read the bill carefully, that very same kind of episode could be repeated under this bill. You could literally see the now McGuinty government purchasing advertising on Buffalo television or Detroit television or Minneapolis television or CNN or—what is it?—CNBC, the business cable part of NBC, and having a smiling Dalton McGuinty giving one of his "I feel your pain" speeches or repeating his 200 and—I'm sorry, there have been so many promises, I've lost count; but promising, promising, promising or giving himself a pat on the back, saying that he has provided wonderful government.

In fact, this legislation, much boasted about by the government, much talked about by the government, would permit virtually that same thing to happen again. What would be the subtle message, the inference of that advertising? Well, the same inference that people saw under the Mike Harris government: "Oh, Dalton McGuinty must be doing a great job. You should support the McGuinty government." That would be the subtle undertone or message.

There are obvious loopholes in this legislation. That's why we shouldn't pass it. Better yet, one would think that

if the government is going to promote this, if they are actually going to say this, they wouldn't put out this kind of glitzy, glossy advertising. It seems to me that putting out this kind of glitzy, glossy advertising is clearly in conflict with what they said they would not do, what they said they aimed to prohibit, what they said was objectionable.

As I said earlier, it would appear that at this point, the only difference between the former Conservative government's propaganda and the now McGuinty government's propaganda is that the Conservative government had expensive propaganda and the Liberals have cheap propaganda. But it's propaganda all the same, and it runs completely contrary to what they said before the election, what Mr McGuinty said during the election and what they claim to say in this bill. So there are problems with the bill, and there are already evident problems with the government's behaviour.

What should we have in this kind of legislation? My colleague the member for Niagara Centre, Peter Kormos, put forward a private member's bill in which he said, "Look, if we're going to get serious about this, if we're going to deal with government advertising and make sure it isn't used for partisan purposes or make sure taxpayers' money isn't used to send a message, 'You should re-elect the government,' there are a number of principles that should be established in law." Regrettably, they're not in this bill. The principles that need to be there aren't there.

One test is that government advertising should provide good value for money. In other words, there should be a test: "What do you hope to achieve with this? What is the stated goal of the advertising?" If the department or minister can't say what the public goal is of the advertising, if you can't make that statement and then show there's value for money, the advertising shouldn't go. The cost of government advertising should be justifiable. Even above and beyond the value-for-money test, there should be some kind of justification.

One of the things we have to go through as MPPs is that if we're going to travel, we have to show we're taking the lowest cost. In other words, you can't send in a plane ticket showing you travelled business class; you go economy class. You've got to show you're using the lowest cost or the least-cost method of getting the message across.

Government advertising should deal with matters for which the government of Ontario has a direct responsibility; in other words, none of this kind of Pablum you often see on American television networks. It used to be a picture of Mike Harris. Now it could be a picture of Dalton McGuinty. Really what it's about is promoting the face, promoting the name and the smile and then the inferential message, "Vote for me." It has to relate directly to a matter for which the government is directly responsible.

Government advertising should not be designed to promote or have the effect of promoting the interests of the party forming the government. That's why people objected to seeing Mike Harris on television, a smiling Mike Harris saying, "Aren't I a wonderful guy? Don't I

run a wonderful government?" But under this bill, you could see a smiling Dalton McGuinty, saying, "Aren't I a wonderful guy? Aren't I running a wonderful government?" They have exactly the same thing.

Mr Delaney: Where?

Mr McMeekin: Where?

Mr Hampton: I agree: Where? I agree that, if they saw that advertising, people would say, "Where? Where?"

Government advertising should be accurate and factual, with comment and analysis clearly distinguished from factual information. Again, that's not in this bill.

Clearly, had all of the above guidelines been integrated into the Government Advertising Act, the act would have been far more ambitious and ultimately a more important step in promoting integrity in government. But none of these principles is in this bill. That's why, just as under the Conservatives, even if this bill were passed under the Liberals, you would still have the prospect under this bill of seeing a smiling Dalton McGuinty coming to you on Buffalo television, Detroit television or CNN, telling you, "I'm Dalton McGuinty. Aren't I a wonderful guy? Don't you like my smile?" Inferentially, the message is, "Vote for me"—all paid for by taxpayers' money.

Mr Ramal: That's not correct.

Mr Hampton: One of the members says I'm not correct. I've got to tell you, I remember the minister responsible for Management Board on the day he introduced this legislation having to go around trying to lean on everybody in the press gallery because they read it, and they read it exactly as I read it, that this would allow what many people found most objectionable about the Mike Harris government to happen again with the Dalton McGuinty government.

So there we have it. That's why we will not support the bill. It's going to continue to allow propaganda like this. It's going to continue to allow the kind of television advertising that people most objected to under the Harris Conservatives.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr McMeekin: I'm pleased to stand and respond to the leader of the third party, who, as is usually the case, brings an interesting perspective to the debate. My experience, in several years of municipal politics and a few years in this place, is that people ask for very little of the government and often get less in return. On a good day, people will say—those who are engaged—"What is it your government's about? What is it you're hoping to do?" I like to respond to that kind of inquiry by saying, "We're trying to do politics differently." It's really important that in this place, the people's place, we can once again engage in discussion about democratic things.

I don't think partisan political advertising works, by the way. I think we have seen some evidence of that. I think what people want to see is a government that has a vision. They want to know what that vision is. They want to know where the government is going. Every journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step, but it helps if you've got some idea where you're going. They want

some idea that you're able to think and plan strategically, and that you're prepared to be results-based.

I want to say to the members opposite that this government gets it. We don't believe that you have to engage in the starvation of hope and the feeding of cynicism by tracking out all kinds of partisan nonsense. We're quite prepared to declare our vision for the province of Ontario because it's a vision that's shared by the people. This government will be judged on that basis, and we look forward to engaging in that discussion. All the talk about democratic change is a good thing to happen in this place.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lanark-Carleton—well, no. Who's standing here? The member for Lanark-Carleton? Thank you.

Mr Sterling: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I listened to the leader of the third party—

Mr Hampton: Seniority rules.

Mr Sterling: Unfortunately, for me—and what bothers me about this piece of legislation and these other so-called democratic renewal pieces of legislation is that they are holding out to the public that they are going to do something to themselves, they are going to constrain themselves. The public should know that the legislation is phony; it doesn't constrain anybody from doing anything.

The other part that upsets me a little bit is that the government seems intent on bringing legislation to restrict legislators from acting on the principles of integrity, and saying to the public, "You make your decision whether or not this member has lived up to the duties he performs as an MPP, a cabinet minister, a backbencher or a member of the opposition party."

Number one, we have phony legislation. We have a party that's demonstrated they don't even want to follow their proposed legislation, and they keep taking away from the whole aspect that the public can trust the integrity of politicians. They have created the mistrust because they broke so many promises from the previous election. What they are trying to do is regain that trust by saying, "We're going to confine ourselves so you no longer have to look at the integrity of the individual, the integrity of the party, the integrity of the leader." I find that very demeaning to the whole purpose of being elected in this place and saying to people, when I am performing as an MPP, that I live by my word.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the House to be able to sit beyond 6 o'clock this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton has asked for unanimous consent for the House to sit beyond 6 of the clock. Do we have unanimous consent; Agreed?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want a caveat.

The Deputy Speaker: OK. The member for Nepean-Carleton has asked—I heard a no.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for the House to sit between

the hours of 6 and 7 tonight, and that no bills will be called, it will be strictly just procedural motions.

The Deputy Speaker: I've had unanimous consent asked for the House to sit between 6 and 7 o'clock, and that no bills be called. Do I have consent? No.

Mr Baird: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I think I can capture it, actually. Could I ask for unanimous consent for the House to sit beyond 6 o'clock and that any business conducted in the House only be able to be adopted unanimously?

The Deputy Speaker: How are we doing? Do I have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Now, the table will help me, where we were in the order. I was at questions and comments. The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: To the comments my leader made: I was paying great attention at the House leaders' meeting as the leader for the third party, my good friend Mr Hampton, was speaking on this particular bill. I do have to say, however, that we have been down this debate a number of times. The previous government was in power, and we know that they used advertising in a way that most people probably hadn't seen in a long time in the province of Ontario. This government is trying to do the right thing politically by saying, "We're going to basically remove somewhat the ability of the government to use government advertising to promote itself."

But it's a bit of a mug's game. The reality is that governments will continue to advertise. For example, if my leader can pass me one of those leaflets on his desk, in French—governments advertise all the time. This isn't a prop, Mr Speaker. The reality is that government does have the right to publish particular initiatives—

The Deputy Speaker: If it's above your waist and more than 10 seconds, it's a prop.

Mr Bisson: But you don't understand. My point is that the government publishes leaflets through their ministry budgets all the time about what government initiatives are all about. That will continue to happen even if this bill happens to be passed. Quite frankly, government will keep on advertising initiatives of the government through their ministries even if this bill is passed, so it's a bit of a mug's game.

Part of what I would want to add to this is, I guess one of the debates we should have is, what are the legitimate needs of government to be able to inform the citizens about programs and policies that people need to know about? The second issue is, what ability should members of either the government or the opposition have to communicate with their constituents?

You would know that at one time a long time ago, about 10 years ago, there was an ability for members to communicate directly with their constituents by way of mailings. The Conservative government got rid of that and, as a result, no member in this assembly, including government members, has the right to do that type of mailing any more. Why don't we have a debate about those particular issues and look at how we can advertise in a way that's fair not only to the taxpayer but to the people of this assembly and the public?

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): That will change, Mr Speaker, in three years, so there will be other combinations.

I'm pleased to be able to spend just a couple of minutes responding and making some comments on the time of the member from Kenora-Rainy River, the leader of the third party. I note in his comments that eliminating objectionable material was a theme that came up more than once.

I think that there are some objectionable parts of materials that go out, and I think they are the types of things that the public doesn't want to see and hear. They don't want to see the faces of cabinet ministers. They don't want to see their names printed and the roles they play. They don't want to see them quoted in little messages.

I think what drove it home for me was last spring during the pre-election process, the peekaboo time from March on. During that time, I had come to my door the pamphlet that went to millions of households—they might have been only a few cents each, but millions of households—across the province of Ontario: Energy. I saw the Minister of Energy, who now sits across the floor, his picture, the quotes and the role he played. Then there was the education one that followed, and then there was the health one that followed, and my favourite—the one that my constituents really enjoyed seeing—was the one on finance. They sent a clear message to the then finance minister on election day that that type of advertising was not something that they were prepared to accept, and she's no longer sitting in the seat across the floor. As a matter of fact, I am now filling the seat that she once filled.

I think the member for Kenora-Rainy River is quite correct in saying that the public doesn't want to see those objectionable parts of materials put out there. The Chair of Management Board, my minister, is a respected and honoured member of this Legislature. Even today, he actually answered a question and was well-responded to by the opposition, about his intentions—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The leader of the third party and the member for Kenora-Rainy River, you have two minutes to respond.

1800

Mr Hampton: I want to thank the members for their comments. I want to boil this down so that the person at home understands it.

What it boils down to is this: If we'd been here three years ago and the Conservatives had put this out with blue ink and blue lettering, Dalton McGuinty would have been swinging from the chandeliers, saying, "That's an improper use of taxpayers' money, for propaganda."

The Liberal government is elected, and what do they do? They put this out in Liberal election colours, lots of glossy pictures promoting the government, and does anybody in the Liberal caucus stand up and say, "That's propaganda"? No. Suddenly it becomes legitimate gov-

ernment information. But if you changed the colours on this and you used it to boast about the record of Ernie Eves or Mike Harris, Liberals would be swinging from the chandeliers. That's how phony this is.

The other piece of this is what people found most objectionable about the Conservatives: the television ads that used to run on American television that then got piped into Ontario households. If you read this bill, those kinds of ads will be allowed to happen again, ads that run on CNN or Detroit television or Buffalo television but get piped into Ontario living rooms. That will be allowed to continue under this bill.

The other thing that will be allowed to continue is something—when you talk to advertisers, they'll tell you that the best kind of advertising does a sort of image creation. It doesn't state a message directly; it just tries to convey an image. In fact, that kind of image advertising will be allowed under this bill. What's the effect of this bill? Not much at all, and that's why it should be sent back to the printer.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I just enjoyed the time I've had to debate this bill. I'm sure the Minister of Northern Development and Mines would like to talk about something else that we were just talking about.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate? Thank you.

Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have received a note. "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Mr Phillips for second reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising, be deferred until November 25." It has been signed by the chief government whip.

Orders of the day.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I call government order G73.

The Deputy Speaker: Consent to deal with that order? Agreed.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE
LAW AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(SÉCURITÉ DES ENFANTS
ET DES JEUNES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr Takhar has moved second reading of Bill 73. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I move that the bill be ordered to the finance and economic affairs committee.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the House calendar.

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

Hon Mr Bartolucci: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet commencing Monday, December 13, 2004, until Thursday, December 16, 2004.

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

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I would ask for unanimous consent to move adjournment of the House.

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

Mr Baird: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1807.

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Ted McMeekin, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O.Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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