



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 1 June 2005

Mercredi 1^{er} juin 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 June 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} juin 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ST. WILLIAMS CROWN FOREST

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant):

Last week, I attended the opening ceremonies of the St. Williams forestry station interpretive centre, initiated by the Port Rowan/South Walsingham Heritage Association and ForestCare.

A bit of history: Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Pratt, MPP for Norfolk from 1905 to 1914, is considered the Father of Reforestation, as he was instrumental in establishing St. Williams in 1908 as the first reforestation project in Canada. Together, MPP Pratt, lumberman and sawyer Walter McCall and Dr. E.J. Zavitz of the Ontario Agricultural College planted the first trees at St. Williams.

Dr. Zavitz had a profound impact on forestry and reforestation. He was appointed the first Provincial Forester in 1912 and later Deputy Minister, Department of Lands and Forests, from 1921 to 1934. Both he and his wife are buried in the nearby Forestville cemetery. MPP Pratt is buried by Dedrick's Creek at the St. Williams forestry station. To the north and west of his grave are large red oak, white pine and maple. Inscribed on his tombstone are the words, "My memorial ... look around you."

Fast-forward to today. I'm very proud that St. Williams Crown Forest has been identified as one of 10 signature sites under Ontario's Living Legacy's Lands for Life. I look forward to working with this government in continuing to explore the possibilities in the St. Williams area.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise today in honour of Injured Workers' Day, a day on which we honour those who have been injured, who have died or who have taken ill on the job. Last year alone, 100 people were killed and 273,905 people were injured on the job in Ontario alone. That is almost half the entire population of the city of Hamilton. It is unacceptable.

My colleague the Minister of Labour, Chris Bentley, has made health and safety in the workplace a top priority. Today, the minister announced another step

being taken by the government to ensure workers are treated fairly. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is changing the way it factors Canada Pension Plan disability payments into its own benefit calculations for disabled workers. This step is one that injured workers and their groups have long sought. It will put more money into the pockets of thousands of workers in this province.

Is it enough? No. Other changes to support injured workers must be made, and the minister has set a firm deadline of September 30, 2005, for the board to report on reforms and a plan for implementation of those reforms. Today's announcement by the minister is welcome, and it is a move forward. We still have a way to go.

In a more symbolic vein, I want to let you know that the member for London–Fanshawe, my colleague, has reintroduced a private member's bill brought forward by the late Dominic Agostino to erect a monument here at Queen's Park in honour of those who have died on the job.

I'd like to recognize in the members' gallery some people from the Hamilton and District Injured Workers' Group, Barry Cowells and Peter Paige and, up in the public gallery, Karl Crevar. Thanks for being here.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today as the opposition energy critic to formally advise the Minister of Energy of a walkout today in Barrie by members of the Society of Energy Professionals. These 200 engineers and mid-level managers work at Hydro One's main grid control centre. They are among 1,000 members of the Society of Energy Professionals who have been without a contract since the beginning of the year. I realize this House is not the forum to negotiate labour agreements. However, this government must also make every effort to keep the lights and the economy on in Ontario.

The members will be aware that summer is one of the heaviest periods of power consumption. That's why it's important that Hydro One have available the full complement of engineers, IT specialists, supervisors and other skilled workers represented by the Society of Energy Professionals.

The Minister of Energy has said the best place to resolve differences between management and union is at the bargaining table, and we agree. However, a union spokesman said today that the strike action was necessary

because there have been no meaningful talks since April of this year. I rise in the House to ask that the Premier and this government take action to protect Ontario's power supply by helping to bring both sides back to the negotiating table.

In completion, this is from the society: "This letter fulfills our ethical obligation as licensed professional engineers to warn of the potential lockout/strike implications at Hydro One and hereby transfers all accountability and potential liability to ... the Premier of Ontario."

1340

ONTARIO'S GREATEST WOMAN

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): First of all, let me thank you, Mr. Speaker, for hosting the dinner for female MPPs last night. I really enjoyed it, and I want to announce today that it's time to vote for Ontario's greatest woman. Over 80 amazing women were nominated for Ontario's Greatest Woman, which I announced—

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: I'm not on—on International Women's Day. Some are names that you will recognize and others might not be, but virtually every nomination was accompanied by a heartfelt explanation of why the candidate should be named Ontario's Greatest Woman. It was so inspiring to hear such thoughtful remarks that I included some of the excerpts from the nominations, along with brief bios of them all.

The names that came up again and again in your e-mails have been compiled into a top 10 list. I'm inviting everybody now to vote for the candidate of their choice before June 30, 2005. As promised, Ontario's Greatest Woman will be announced on Canada Day in Riverdale Park. I'm thrilled by the interest that people all across Ontario have shown, including members from all parties in this Legislature.

I'm going to briefly read the top 10. They were awarded according to how many nominations they got, and it's quite a diverse mix: Maude Barlow, Marilyn Bell, June Callwood, Ursula Franklin, Barbara Frum, Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, Agnes Macphail, Hazel McCallion, Alice Munro and Laura Secord. Those are the top 10. There are many others on my Web site, www.marilynchurley.com. Thank you, and I urge everybody to get involved.

CLASS SIZE

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma–Manitoulin): Last Friday, I went back to school. I had the honour of visiting in Mrs. Whitley's class in St. Joseph Central public school at Richards Landing. I dictated the spelling. Students Keighan and Joey did an excellent job. I also had the pleasure of attending Mr. Mason's grade 5 and 6 class, where I saw their parliament in action as it decided important issues of local school significance. I am sure

that all the teachers at St. Joseph's Central public school will agree that small class sizes are crucial to ensuring that students get the individual attention they need to master the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy.

Last year, \$90 million was invested to start to lower our class sizes. As a result, 1,100 new teachers were hired, reducing class sizes in the primary grades. This year, \$126 million will be invested to hire an additional 1,275 teachers and build more classroom space to support the smaller classes.

The government is also increasing funding to school boards across the province by \$820 million this year. This means that the school boards serving Algoma–Manitoulin will receive an additional \$27 million in 2005-06 to help ensure the success of our students.

I would like to thank Principal Roman Peredun and all of the teachers and students I met at St. Joseph school. I look forward to my next visit.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Members' statements.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like first to echo the sentiments already given today about your generosity in hosting us last night. It's certainly appreciated.

Today we read in the paper the latest chapter in the story of our disintegrating provincial archives. The columns in the building are full of cracks, and the engineers recommend that they be reinforced with steel collars. The engineers first thought that the columns could collapse, and then reversed themselves and said that the columns were safe. I certainly hope that they are correct in their second analysis.

I have raised this question in the House before: last October, and less than two months ago, in April. I pointed out to the government both times that a report several years ago said that the current space is unsafe and unhealthy, and the preservation of documents is at risk. The collections are starting to develop mould, and the second floor is sagging. Historical documents and photos are at risk of theft or damage, and thefts have already been reported.

Our PC government had a plan to preserve the archives. The McGuinty Liberals cancelled the plan and have replaced it with nothing. It is time for this government to stop dithering and save our archives. The staff at the archives work hard to preserve our heritage and history. The government must take action to give them a safe and secure space in which to do their jobs.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): Yesterday a six-ton MRI magnet was installed at the Greater Niagara General Hospital, and I was there to witness the installation of this MRI magnet. I will tell you, it was an awesome sight.

This MRI investment is a reflection of the real efforts to improve access to quality and timely health services for the people of Niagara. Wait times for MRI scans in Niagara are currently more than 20 weeks. It is anticipated that the region's additional MRI will dramatically reduce the wait times by about 30%.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the Premier and the Minister of Health personally for their leadership in reducing wait times in Niagara. In the last year we have received a new ambulance dispatch service, a new CT scanner, a new dialysis machine and a new emergency wing for the Greater Niagara General Hospital. Let nobody ever say this government does not care about health.

The MRI unit is the newest technology available, featuring ultra-fast image acquisition and superb diagnostic detail. As a direct result, Dr. Tom Lee informed me that he was able to attract three new doctors to the Greater Niagara General Hospital. This is really good news.

By increasing the number of MRI scans, we are delivering to Ontarians a big part of the government's overall wait-time strategy. This strategy is providing people with faster access to better health services to reduce their pain and suffering and keep them healthier longer. This is exactly what good government is all about.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): A little over a year ago the McGuinty government, in partnership with the federal government, announced a \$2.8-million allocation to the city of Brantford and the county of Brant for the construction of rental units under the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program. Last week, I had the pleasure of attending a groundbreaking event on this important initiative in my riding of Brant.

Our government knows that shelter is a basic human need and that it is critical to a caring and growing community. Thus, it is with great pride that I'm able to say that 51 units of new affordable housing will soon be a reality for lower-income families, seniors and single persons in Brantford.

Safe and affordable shelter is especially crucial to the many households in this province that are trying to get by on lower incomes. The McGuinty government understands this. We have recently signed a new Canada-Ontario affordable housing agreement, the first in 10 years, in which the province will provide \$301 million to create more than 15,000 units of affordable housing and to provide housing allowances to some 5,000 lower-income families in Ontario.

I am proud to be a member of a government that believes affordable housing is important and to be part of an initiative that affirms the collective values of compassion and caring that Ontarians voted for 20 months ago.

I am so delighted to see that the city of Brantford shares our commitment to the development of affordable

housing in our community. I want to congratulate Mayor Mike Hancock, council, city staff and particularly Multani Custom Homes, who have worked so hard to make this development a reality for so many families. I thank this government. I appreciate it.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Before I ask the member from Essex for his statement, could I have a bit of quiet, please? Everyone is making their own members' statements, and I'd like to hear the statement from the member from Essex.

ONTARIO GREENHOUSE ALLIANCE

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I would like to welcome, in the members' west gallery, members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance who are visiting us at the Legislature today. Formed in 2003, the alliance brings together three greenhouse organizations—the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, Ontario Pepper Growers and Flowers Canada—forming a strong, united voice for greenhouse growers.

This industry makes up the second-largest farmgate income sector in agriculture, with sales of over \$1.1 billion in 2004. In Ontario, there are over 1,200 greenhouse operations, most of which are concentrated in and around my riding of Essex, the riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex and the Niagara region. Together, greenhouse operations in Ontario employ more than 18,000 people, bringing substantial benefit to rural economies like Essex.

Their members continue to build on an excellent safety record by working responsibly with organizations such as the Technical Standards and Safety Authority to adapt new approaches and technologies to safety outcomes that are practical and economically sustainable.

The greenhouse industry is an export-driven industry whose competitive efficiency takes on the world marketplace and brings millions of new dollars to the Ontario economy, enhanced by the fact that it is one of the few sectors of agriculture to experience consistent growth in the past decade.

Again, I welcome the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to Queen's Park today and remind all members to stop by the legislative dining room this afternoon to meet some of the members and pick up a sample of delicious vegetables and some beautiful plants.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma–Manitoulin): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 128, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to enforcement powers, penalties and the management of property forfeited, or that may be forfeited, to the Crown in right of Ontario as a result of organized crime, marijuana growing and other unlawful activities / Projet de loi 128, Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs d'exécution, les pénalités et l'administration des biens confisqués ou pouvant être confisqués au profit de la Couronne du chef de l'Ontario par suite d'activités de crime organisé et de culture de marijuana ainsi que d'autres activités illégales.

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 June 1, 2005, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the report of the Integrity Commissioner concerning his review of expense claims under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, for the period April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): While I have the attention of everyone, we have with us in the Speaker's gallery today distinguished members of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians, led by their chairman, the Reverend Canon Derwyn Shea. The association is conducting its annual meeting at Queen's Park today. Please join me in welcoming these distinguished former members.

WEARING OF T-SHIRT

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to know whether or not we have a stranger in the House sitting in the seat of the member for St. Catharines.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is there a stranger in the House?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I am compelled to make a statement later on this afternoon about a walking campaign and will have to ask permission of the House. It's been recommended by the member opposite who just spoke that I not do this but I

ask for permission to wear this particular shirt advertising the walking campaign.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think it would only be fair that the member from Nipissing, Ms. Smith, be here to express her opinion on the attire chosen by Mr. Bradley today.

The Speaker: I understand that the member from St. Catharines is asking for unanimous consent to wear his T-shirt. Agreed. But he also promised that he would be on his best behaviour while he wears that display.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DES EMPLOYÉS MUNICIPAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act / Projet de loi 206, Loi révisant la Loi sur le régime de retraite des employés municipaux de l'Ontario.

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

Mr. Gerretsen.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'll wait until ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

OMERS PENSION FUND

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Our Premier, when leader of the official opposition, made a commitment that he would support governance devolution of the Ontario municipal employees retirement system, often referred to as OMERS. Today I am pleased to introduce legislation that, if passed, will fulfill that commitment.

This bill, the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act, 2005, would relieve the Ontario government of its governance role in OMERS and would hand that role to the municipal employees and employers who contribute to the plan.

For too long, the Ontario government has had the final say on decisions related to the OMERS plan. And remember, the Ontario government does not pay directly

into the OMERS plan. OMERS currently remains the only pension plan in Ontario where the government plays the sponsor's role without being a direct contributor to the plan. The bill I'm introducing today, if passed, would correct that anomaly. But more than that, this bill would establish a framework in which OMERS can secure and enjoy continued fiscal sustainability in the years to come.

Our government is proposing a governance model for OMERS that builds upon the model recommended in the OMERS board report of 2002. This model was based on broad input from both employers and employees.

On top of that, there are a number of features in this model that I would like to highlight at this time.

First, this model proposes a single base plan with potential supplemental benefit plans for different groups of employees and employers. This could lead to improved pension plans for our police forces, for our fire-fighters and for all our other municipal sector employees, based upon local decisions.

Our model proposes a sponsors corporation, with subcommittees that could provide advice on the design of the supplemental plans.

Our model also includes an administration corporation, which would continue the current role of the OMERS board.

Our model proposes raising the accrual rate cap to 2.33 for public safety employees.

Our model features access to any supplemental plan benefits through local decision-making.

The final feature of our model that I would like to highlight is a dispute resolution mechanism proposed for the sponsors corporation that is similar to that in the Ontario teachers' pension plan, which has mandatory mediation before arbitration.

I'm also pleased to point out that our approach will ensure that OMERS continues to be the exclusive provider of pension products for the municipal sector.

Our government has listened to OMERS stakeholders, and this model is our attempt to accommodate the views of employers and employees. But more than that, we will listen further.

If the bill passes first reading today—and it has passed first reading earlier today—our government proposes that legislative committee hearings be held immediately so that we may get even more stakeholder input.

The purpose of the legislation I'm introducing today is to provide a clear process for governance transition. However, we still want to hear from stakeholders on the specifics of what they want from a new OMERS governance model. We want to hear how we can fine-tune our proposed legislation. We know that OMERS stakeholders care passionately about their pension plans, and we want to give them an opportunity to help shape the governance of this plan from the outset. We are enabling stakeholders to determine what is best for their future.

Our goal is to give municipal employers and employees the power and the tools they need to create and maintain a quality of life that is second to none.

1400

ACTIVE 2010

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): A recent report by Active Healthy Kids Canada indicated that only half of Canadian children are active enough to ensure their optimal growth and development. Too many kids are spending too much time surfing the Internet, watching television or playing video games. The rest of the population is not much better off. Studies indicate that more than half of the adults in Ontario are not active enough to prevent chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. Obesity and physical inactivity create problems for people and unnecessary burdens on our health care system. Inactivity profoundly affects the quality of life of the people we serve.

Our government is encouraging people to become more active. We are providing opportunities to participate in sport and recreational activities. We are doing it through our Active 2010 strategy. The goal of the McGuinty government's Active 2010 strategy is to increase Ontario's sport participation and physical activity rate so that by the year 2010, at least 55% of Ontarians are physically active.

We're doing that in a number of ways: by funding not-for-profit organizations in communities across the province to promote and provide sport and physical activity services; by allocating the first funding increase in nine years to the province's amateur sports organizations to boost participation and excellence in sport; and by encouraging people to become more active through our promotion and education campaign.

Our Active 2010 promotional strategy started last November with a campaign called Pause to Play, appealing to youth 10 to 14 years old. Pause to Play's transit ads, school posters and Web site encourage kids to put their video games on pause and, instead, have fun playing and being active. But it's not just the youth of our province who need to be persuaded to get moving. We have launched a province-wide adult walking campaign to encourage people to get off their chesterfields and take a walk on our sidewalks, trails, parks and beaches.

You may have already seen our posters created by For Better or For Worse cartoon artist Lynn Johnston. They are displayed on transit shelters, disposal bins and in elevators, as well as in places like health centres, hospitals and libraries across the province. Our message is simple: Walking a total of 30 minutes a day is enough to keep you healthy.

This morning, I met with Toronto city councillor Olivia Chow, the CEO of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, Richard Peddie, and hockey stars Darryl Sittler and Wendel Clark. We were at the Air Canada Centre to kick-start Toronto's Get Your Move On campaign to encourage Toronto residents to become more physically active. There, on behalf of the McGuinty government, I announced communities in action fund grants to help the city get tens of thousands of residents, many in low-income neighbourhoods, active and healthy.

This is the kind of activity we are seeing as organizations across Ontario partner with the province to promote increased participation in physical activity in their communities. We want to make a real difference in the health and well-being of Ontarians in every region of the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

OMERS PENSION FUND

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing upon the introduction of his bill today. I welcome the presence of many police and firefighters, in addition to our colleagues the legislators, in the gallery here today.

I know police and firefighters, as the minister mentioned, have advocated for changes in OMERS governance and have spoken with members of our party as well. The minister, as well, knows there are groups who will likely oppose the direction that this bill is taking. CUPE, for example, has some strong feelings about this bill. I know that municipalities as well will have some strong feelings about the direction that this bill takes. There's no doubt, from what I understand, that a significant number of employee and employer groups have taken issue with the approach, and there are some in favour of the direction as well. So I'm pleased to see that the minister is suggesting in his statement that we take this bill to committee after first reading. I look forward to that process and hope there will be co-operation among all three parties, seeing that this is going to go for broad public consultation.

I wish they had used a similar process on first reading of a couple of other bills. For example, the greenbelt legislation would have been a much better piece of legislation that would have taken into account the needs of farmers, municipalities and other stakeholders. In fact, I'll bet you would have had the science right if you had taken it out for first reading and actually gotten input instead of the mad science you used that put junkyards and dump sites into the greenbelt. But I digress a bit. I just want to say that I'm pleased it's going to first reading so we can hear from the police and firefighters, but also from CUPE, from AMO and other municipal employer and employee groups.

Secondly, when we're talking about OMERS, we have to remember as well that OMERS will likely be counted on to invest in public infrastructure. I say to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and his colleagues that the government has sent out tremendous mixed message on public-private partnerships. On the one hand you're opposed to them, and then the next day you're in favour of them. In fact, investors are talking about what they call the Ontario premium caused by this uncertainty, meaning that if they're going to partner at all with the Dalton McGuinty government, they're going to charge a higher rate of return to compensate for the uncertainty. Witness the process on the P3 hospitals, which they were against and then were for them, MRIs and CT scans being

nationalized, or the use of taxpayer dollars to attack companies in other countries.

Those are my comments, and I do look forward to this bill going to first reading hearings.

ACTIVE 2010

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond on behalf of our Progressive Conservative Party, the official opposition, to the statement by the Minister of Tourism and Recreation.

I first of all want to welcome the many former parliamentarians who are here today. It's good to see such a good turnout of our former colleagues.

Returning to the minister's statement, I think it goes without saying that our party is supportive of efforts to encourage the Ontario population to undertake greater exercise. In fact, today I had an opportunity to go for a walk up to Bloor Street. My BlackBerry went off at quarter to 2 to tell me that there was a minister's statement, so I had to take a cab back, unfortunately, and I didn't get the full benefit of my walk. But I think all of us would agree that it's worthwhile and beneficial to encourage people to walk a few minutes a day.

I must return to the other responsibility that the minister has as Minister of Tourism. We haven't seen him coming in here crowing about the provincial budget, and for obvious reasons: His budget, as Minister of Tourism, was cut by 11.4%, some \$21 million, in the most recent provincial budget. I know the minister would have advocated forcefully for an expansion of his budget and done what he could. He is a well-respected minister within his caucus and within his government, but unfortunately, his colleagues weren't prepared to listen to him. I'm disappointed about that. Certainly we need to do more in that area, and I would ask the government to continue to undertake efforts in that respect.

I want to leave some time for my colleague the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to respond as well.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): As critic for everything over there, I'd like to say that I welcome Jim Bradley's speech today. I wear my pedometer and I average about 8,000 steps a day.

Also, Mr. Gerretsen had a speech in here today. I'd like to mention in passing that I appreciate the money the ministry has put into our area, but I wonder if it's the policy of this government not to inform the local members when they are bringing money into our area, not to let us know about things like that. Mr. Wilson and I both have been left sitting on the sidelines as this government brings money into our riding and again forgets to tell the member. It must be an afterthought, I guess; they just forgot to tell us that we should have been involved. Is this the policy of this open government that we have over here, Mr. Speaker? Maybe you can help me out on that.

OMERS PENSION FUND

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have to say first of all that it's really clear that we in the NDP have been agitating and trying to convince this government for quite some time that there needs to be significant pension reform in the province of Ontario. Lo and behold, it's finally here. A small bit of it, anyway, has finally arrived. I have to say there have been serious problems with the governance structure of OMERS—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'll give you your time. Will you stop the clock for me.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Stop the clock.

The Speaker: When the ministers were making their statements, I observed quiet respect from the opposition. Now I would also like the opposite side to be quiet so I can hear this side too. I want to hear all sides.

As the member asked, the clock was stopped.

Now the member from Hamilton East with her response.

1410

Ms. Horwath: There have been some very serious problems with the governing structure of OMERS for quite some time. At least at first glance, this bill is an attempt to begin to tackle some of those problems. But the process, unfortunately, to get to this point of putting forward some legislation has been a seriously flawed process. Everyone in this House has to know that all the OMERS stakeholders are very concerned. CUPE, OPSEU, CAW, IBEW, OSSTF, firefighters and police, all of these groups were pushing for a thorough review of this particular governance situation.

The unfortunate thing is that this minister decided not to take an inclusive route in drafting this legislation and decided to ignore a number of those groups. There are concerns coming up, particularly in regard to the way these changes are being based on a 2002 model that in fact was rejected by most stakeholders. It's unfortunate this legislation is being based on that model. The government needs to set up an inclusive process, where all the stakeholders are invited to the table, where all of them can jointly meet together to talk about what they need to do to make the governance work for them.

On top of that, there are a number of other reforms that need to happen in Ontario when it comes to Ontario pension systems. We need all kinds of different changes. Some 60% of working Ontarians are not covered by pensions at all. We need to deal with the fact that even those who are covered by pensions in the private sector are facing situations where their pensions are being eroded by inflation, because in Ontario there is no requirement to protect pensions from inflation.

We have to deal with the fact that the system that exists to protect workers when companies go bankrupt—the pension benefits guarantee fund—is thoroughly underfunded, and even the backup amount people are allowed to access if their pension goes sour is only

\$1,000 a month, which might have been all right when it was instituted, but is nowhere near enough now.

I could go on and on, but the bottom line is that Ontarians expect their government to deal with the pension problems in Ontario, and we look forward to the opportunity to get this government to do something about it.

ACTIVE 2010

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): New Democrats endorse this campaign to get people physically active, and we are happy to see the Minister of Tourism leading by example.

I can't help but think about people who are the working poor when you make these announcements. There is a connection for me in this regard. It might sound negative, Jim, but I want to tell you this: How does it help—I would like your opinion on this when you get an opportunity—when we claw back the national child benefit? When we claw that back, how do the working poor stay healthy when they have less money in their pockets? I think about those things, and I am convinced you do too. You must have an opinion in that regard.

I think as well that, yes, when we're talking about welfare rates you did something nice last year. The Tories cut it by 22% and you increased it by 3%. This year they were frozen. I know there are a whole lot of working poor people who would love to stay healthy and eat healthy, and I'm not sure how they are going to get involved in this campaign when they're worried about what they're going to eat, let alone go walk the dog. I know you understand what I'm saying.

The other problem we have is in dealing with the whole issue of smoking. Bill 164 is before us. Most of us are supportive of that bill; some may not be. When people stop smoking, you know what they do, right? They eat and they become obese. So this campaign is particularly relevant, and I'm worried about your having lost about 11% of your budget. I know it's got nothing to do with you and I know that you lobbied in your own ministry for more money to deal with the issues of obesity, but I'm really concerned at cutting 11% off your budget. People cutting their smoking habit are going to roll up to the fridge and eat some more. Your ministry needs more money to promote these kinds of campaigns and to help out sports organizations. I'm convinced that next year you'll be lobbying for more money to deal with issues of obesity and to get people walking. I'm looking forward to that day.

SENIORS' MONTH

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in recognition of seniors' awareness month.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): As Ontarians, we have the privilege and good fortune of living in one of the best places in the world. As a way of recognizing those who have come before us and continue to shape Ontario, I encourage all Ontarians to join Seniors' Month celebrations taking place in their communities in this month of June. I also encourage honourable members to both attend and organize activities as part of this month's celebrations.

Seniors' Month, which, as I stated before, begins today, is a much-loved tradition celebrating the province's older adults. Popular Seniors' Month events include awards ceremonies, recognition events and social and senior information fairs. A time-honoured tradition in Ontario, it is a time when we make a special effort to recognize members of our community who have helped shape and continue to shape our wonderful province.

Communities across this province were asked earlier this year to proclaim June as Seniors' Month and many have responded by officially proclaiming the month in their communities. This year's theme is Active Living: It's for Life. It reminds us that keeping active is a life-long affair. It is no secret that the health of Ontarians is a major priority for this government. The link between active living and health is clear. Active living helps promote, maintain and improve our health. Ontario seniors deserve to live safely, with dignity and as independently as possible with the supports they need.

One way to help them is to ensure that they have the information they need to access programs and services available to them and to which they are entitled. This information is available in a variety of sources, including: public education and awareness events such as seniors' seminars, which provide seniors with valuable information on healthy aging and healthy lifestyles; the toll-free seniors' info line, 1-888-910-1999, where callers can have their questions answered in dozens of different languages; a guide to programs and services for seniors in Ontario, available in hard copy in English and French, and available on-line in English, French and Chinese through the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat Web site; and a collaborative seniors' portal network, www.seniorsinfo.ca, which brings together the three orders of government to provide information to seniors, their families and caregivers.

Collaboration is an important aspect of the work being done on the seniors' file. Various projects highlight these collaborative efforts, such as: the collaborative seniors' portal that I mentioned earlier; the involvement of a stakeholder advisory committee for Seniors' Month, which brings together ministries and seniors' groups to help promote the month; our current round table on Alzheimer disease and related dementias and inter-ministerial co-operation; stakeholder and interministerial involvement in the Elder Abuse Awareness Day; last month's VE Day celebrations organized by the three orders of government, including our own, and with the participation of veterans' organizations and the Canadian military; provincial, federal and territorial meetings of

ministers responsible for seniors, such as the one I attended last week in Quebec City; and the round table on seniors with the city of Toronto and the federal government.

Earlier I mentioned seniors' seminars. Seniors' Month provides an excellent opportunity to host a seniors' seminar. They are available on a number of different topics, such as safe medication use; how to protect your money from schemes, scams and flimflams; advanced care planning; and safe driving.

1420

To inquire about making arrangements for a Seniors' Month seminar in their communities, the members may contact my office or the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat for further information. These seminars provide seniors with valuable information on healthy aging and healthy lifestyles, and they are made possible through partnerships.

Speaker, wishing you and particularly those former members who are joining us here today who may be older Ontarians all the best this month, Seniors' Month in Ontario. Let's celebrate seniors. They deserve it. We owe our high standard of living to them.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'm pleased, as I am every year, to stand and respond to the importance of Seniors' Month.

At the outset, let me just say it's unfortunate that the minister has already made a statement in the House today about OMERS, and not once did he mention OMERS retirees. He's about to restructure OMERS. Did he put OMERS representatives, retirees, at the table? That is not in his announcement today, and it's something that—

Interjection.

Mr. Jackson: Well, the minister is yelling at me. He had an opportunity to demonstrate his support for seniors. It's something that our government did when it put retired teachers at the table to deal with their pension plan, and we believe that is a principle that all governments should embrace.

But the importance of today's announcement of course is the growing number of seniors in our province who continue to live longer. By the year 2016, there will be more seniors living in this province than persons under the age of 14, and by the year 2026, there will be over three million seniors living in our province. So we have some serious challenges.

Good government is government that responds to the future needs of its province, and I'm proud to have been part of a government that established an entire menu of services and programs which the minister very kindly enumerated for us.

The Alzheimer's strategy, which our party developed: We're still waiting for the government to do a multi-year financial commitment to continue that outstanding—world-leading, I might add—work.

Elizabeth Podnieks and her work on the abuse strategy: Again, we are looking for the multi-year funding commitment that they received from the previous government.

The Memory Project: I can say publicly that the minister has supported and continues to support it and

they are expanding that wonderful program that was begun a few years ago, and I thank him for that.

There are, however, some concerns on the medical front on which seniors are speaking to their government, and this needs to be covered. The chiropractic support that was removed is an issue of concern for seniors on fixed income, as are physio support and accessibility to that outside of a hospital setting and the fact that today in Ontario there are still long-term-care facilities that don't allow podiatrists in to provide those important services to seniors.

We have a recent study coming out on waiting times in our province that indicates that a disproportionate number of older women are put on longer waiting lists for hip and knee surgery in this province than are men, and there seems to be no strategy to assist seniors in that.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): That's ridiculous. That's absurd.

Mr. Jackson: I will give the minister the actual copy of the report from Sunnybrook hospital.

The minister may also be interested in knowing that his waiting time strategy will have some adverse effects for seniors. Yes, on the one hand there will be greater access to hip and knee surgery, or in this instance cataract surgery, but I got a call last night from one of my senior citizens whose two-year wait for a cornea transplant, which will affect her potential blindness, something her cataract surgery won't—her cornea transplant has now been put on a three-year waiting list because of the government. The government didn't set out to increase waiting times and cause this to happen. I'm not suggesting that. I'm suggesting that when you don't consult with the OMA and don't consult with seniors' groups in this province, these are the kinds of things that happen to the delivery of health care for seniors in our province.

On the issue of the drug plan, the budget and the minister have stated publicly that they have to engage in a cost-containment strategy for the Ontario drug benefit plan, \$3.3 billion annually. They have budgeted less than 10% this year, and yet the growth is between 14% and 15%. So the minister has a challenge, but hopefully that does not result in reduced access to medications, something which Lillian Morgenthau and Bill Gieberzon and members of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, 50-Plus, have been lobbying the government not to do on behalf of seniors. The Ontario Pharmacists' Association has done that.

As you can see, there are many, many issues that are of concern to seniors. As the minister has suggested, I am also very pleased today to announce my 19th annual seniors' seminar in Burlington. We get no fewer than 450 to 500 every single year to our seniors' seminar. Our MC again this year is Gordie Tapp, the Canadian and Ontario Award recipient. He will be turning 84 years young on Saturday as the MC of our seniors' seminar. I encourage all members to engage in similar programs in their communities.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased on behalf of New Democrats to recognize seniors' aware-

ness month in Ontario. New Democrats salute seniors whose past working life and volunteer life have made and continue to make an enormous contribution to the social, economic and cultural fabric of Ontario. I think about veterans whose enormous courage during World War II gave us the freedom that we enjoy today. I think about the miners, the steel and mill workers, forestry and construction workers and engineers who were involved in the development of our transportation systems and public institutions; the health care professionals, educators, public servants and emergency service personnel who started our colleges and universities, developed our health care and public services and put in place the protection and emergency services to respond to safety and crisis issues. I think about the painters, the writers, the musicians, authors and filmmakers who've expressed what Ontario is to the world.

We are in debt to Ontario's seniors for their past accomplishments and for their current contributions in so many organizations across so many fields in Ontario today, so the province is much richer as a result of their efforts.

Seniors, through their organizations, also advocate around issues which are important to them. I would be remiss today if I didn't talk about a brief that Ontario seniors, through their organization United Senior Citizens of Ontario, gave to this government. I just want to focus on their health concerns in particular:

“(1) Delisting of services: Delisting of services vital to seniors such as physiotherapy, audiology, chiropractic treatments and ... the frequency of eye exams is detrimental to seniors' health. At a time when health care dollars are scarce, USCO feels this is a short-sighted policy and not a cost-effective way of managing health care. The USCO implores the Ontario government to re-examine these issues.

“(2) Over- and undermedicating: Over- and undermedicating continues to be a problem for many seniors. The USCO recommends that the Ontario government create a task force to review current and previous research to devise a strategy to combat the inappropriate and unsafe use of medication.

“(3) Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests: The Ontario government pays for mammograms to prevent breast abnormalities, as a preventive measure. Costs for PSA should be covered for the same reason. At the present time, only PSA tests done at a hospital are covered by OHIP,” and the wait lists are long. “The USCO again reminds the government that this is an injustice that needs correcting....

“(5) The ... Ontario health tax: The ... Ontario health tax is contrary to the health care benefits this province's seniors have received for many years. It is unfairly imposed and mathematically incorrect. A lower-income earner pays a higher percentage of their income than a high-income earner does. The government must re-examine this tax. It is wrong, and the USCO strongly urges the government to withdraw this undesirable tax....

“(7) Macular degeneration: Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in older adults. The USCO

again strongly urges the Minister of Health to finance the more aggressive and effective treatment available for 'wet' macular degeneration: \$7,000 to \$10,000 per eye is a high price to pay and is beyond the means of most seniors to retain their vision....

"(10) Disabilities and in-home care: Some degree of independent living is preferable to residing in nursing homes wherever possible. The USCO encourages the government to look closely at improved long-term, in-home care to accommodate individuals who need some degree of assistance but not the full care of a nursing home."

In that regard, this government should have long ago scrapped the current regulation in home care that ties homemaking services to personal care needs. It is grossly unfair that a senior or disabled individual can only qualify for help with laundry and for housekeeping and for homemaking if they also have to require help with a bath. Many seniors don't need and don't want help with a bath, but they certainly could use homemaking services to remain independent. This government should bring in a regulation to change that.

1430

Where is this government's long-term-care legislation? The minister last November promised legislation early in the spring. We haven't seen any legislation; we haven't heard about any legislation. We certainly haven't seen a timetable for introduction of a bill or for public hearings or for clause-by-clause—nothing.

Where is this government's promise to reinstate minimum standards of care in long-term-care homes in this province? Before the last election, this government promised it would reinstate the 2.25 hours of hands-on care per resident per day in long-term-care homes. Then, last October in the estimates committee, the minister said that his government had no intention of doing that. I can tell him that those unions who work in long-term-care homes think that we need 3.5 hours of hands-on care per resident per day. Where is the government on this important issue?

As we celebrate Seniors' Month, I remind the government that there are many issues before it that affect seniors. They should get down to the business of dealing with those important issues.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. There are many small discussions going on, and I'm having extreme difficulty hearing members. So if we could reduce these discussions. If it is necessary for you to have them, you may have them outside.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I want to return to the issue of fundamental

privacy concerns that exist with respect to your adoption legislation now before this House.

It is clear that this legislation is still evolving. You are still amending your bill, I guess as recently as yesterday's hearings. To me, together with the concerns of the privacy commissioner, this underlines the need to make sure that we get this right, which you're trying to do, and so am I. Will you consent to working together with all parties to ensure that your bill strikes the right balance between making it easier for adoptees and birth parents to get information while at the same time ensuring that privacy rights are respected where desired?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): The Leader of the Opposition probably will know that three weeks ago I approached the members from your side of the House and asked if in fact your members had any amendments to post for the bill. We did the same thing with the NDP. This was well before they were due to go to committee. The member should also know that if we had received amendments in advance, it would have given us an opportunity to have our legal department look at them. We wanted to take the time so that we could do it properly and take them seriously. I think the member's seatmate will recall our conversation around amendments. We have been very happy to work with all members of the House.

The history on this issue is that in the last 10 years that I've been here, and five years before that, the majority of members from this House, at about 90% of all parties, had supported the bill, which included retroactivity and a no-disclosure veto. We are prepared to work with all members of this House, and we have indicated that in the past.

Mr. Tory: I'm sure there's improvement that could happen on all sides here, because I would point out that on Monday, I think we got 40 pages of amendments we'd never seen before, and it was in fact after the very same deadline that was imposed upon us. But that's not really the point here.

Today, a Globe and Mail editorial on this subject echoes the concerns raised by our caucus in the House and by the privacy commissioner, trying to get that balance right. The editorial says, "As the Ontario government moves to strip the time-honoured privacy of women who gave their children up for adoption ... If those birth mothers beg, and plead, and manage to convince a panel that they would be in real danger, they might, just might, be able to retain the privacy that they and others have relied upon for many decades."

Dealing with the most common example of a woman who gave up a child and was assured of confidentiality decades ago, do you think they should be forced to come to a tribunal and beg for the privacy they were guaranteed, particularly when you have already stated in advance, in your comments to the press, that birth mothers seeking to preserve past secrecy aren't the people who should be granted a veto by your proposed tribunal? Do you think that's right?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I need to read to you just an excerpt from a letter that I received: “In the 15 years that I have been involved in reuniting others I have reunited mothers who were raped. All of the mothers that I have found in the last 15 years who were raped had a reunion with the exception of one....They neither chose rape or adoption in the first place. They did not blame their baby for something that was not their fault. They were loving women who were able to embrace their now adult child in a reunion.”

I would remind the leader that, in this instance, it was not with the help of the government. They were found by their own means with no protections such as a contact veto.

“Further to this I have worked in incest cases where the two parties reunited. No, it was not easy and it required support....

“I take great exception to anyone promoting shame, fear and secrecy when it comes to rape. Research shows as far as domestic violence, rape and incest that in fact secrecy and shame contribute to the trauma.”

I read this for one express purpose. There are all sides on every piece of the issues that are being delivered today. Whatever the circumstances, there is more than one opinion on this. That’s why it has become difficult and we are taking the time we have taken.

Mr. Tory: I appreciate the fact that we’re all taking the time. I guess it comes down to, as you said, making some choices.

I gave some examples yesterday to the Premier and the minister which I believe merit some consideration. For all the good this bill can achieve, there are still some serious outstanding privacy concerns. Yesterday you mentioned that many of the details, including all the aspects of how your tribunal would work, will be left for people to figure out in secret after your bill is passed. It will be done without the involvement of this House and out of the view of the public.

I would ask you now, Minister, will you take the time to get it right, and work with all of us on all the details as to how this tribunal will work in order to ensure that the right balance is struck between those who wish information about their identity and those who wish to ensure their privacy is respected and maintained? Will you do that?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Let me give you another example. I’ll quote from a letter I received.

“My birth mother was very receptive when first contacted even though the circumstances surrounding my birth were and remain very painful for her. She was sexually assaulted and has still not dealt with the trauma after all this time. Was that the story I wanted to hear? Of course not. We are always warned”—or were warned—“by ... family and friends: What if there is rape, incest or your birth father is an axe murderer? We expect the worst.

“But I have dealt with the truth. It is as much a part of me as the colour of my hair.... That is what adoptees seek. The truth about themselves....”

The reality is that we are prepared, with the amendments we have tabled, to strike a fair balance with this new law. We believe we have to make it as easy as possible for everyone. We don’t intend to bring harm to anyone, and we are striking a balance so that we will not. We are also following other jurisdictions where we have a record of experience where the no contact has never been breached.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr. Tory: My question again is to the minister. The fact is we’re not doing anything consistent with what others have done in this country.

I have a copy of a letter that was sent to you two weeks ago from a birth mother. She was too frightened to reveal her name, but I want to read from the letter:

“We gave up children for adoption decades ago with the promise that the files containing our identifying information would remain sealed. I was promised this in a courtroom before a judge, represented by a lawyer, a frightened teenager who was still living the nightmare of an unwanted pregnancy.”

She continues, “... we never would have dreamed that the government that we trusted to keep our past confidential would be the one so cavalierly opening up these records.”

I understand—I think we all do—what you are trying to do for the rights of those who want to know about their identity. Are you willing to extend the same consideration to the people who want their privacy maintained, who were told their privacy would be maintained and who don’t wanted to have to beg in order for their privacy to be respected and maintained? Are you prepared to do that?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I think this member opposite will know that the bill that was tabled originally in this House included the opportunity for adult adoptees to go forward to this board. The details of how the board would work we would lay out in regulation and we would do that very carefully with experts in this field and, in particular, the same experts who helped us craft this bill, like the child advocate, like the Attorney General and their department that dealt with these issues.

Secondly, once it went to hearings, we were very clear: We are prepared to listen to all sides to ensure we have that safety valve, that caution for anything and all that might happen. We have listened to that. We have now added to the opportunity at that board, for birth parents to attend, because we have heard there might be very extreme circumstances or harm, and we don’t want that. So we have added that amendment.

1440

We said in the beginning that a large chunk of the work will be after the bill becomes law, and it really is important how we strike the work of that board, who belongs to that board, how people go to the board, how we can make it easy for people so they don’t incur additional trauma. We’re prepared to do that work.

I would request of the Leader of the Opposition that if he has suggestions in that manner that he start to table

them with us because we are very prepared to take that information from him.

Mr. Tory: The minister outlines part of the problem here. She's just finished telling me, "We will do all that work. Just don't worry about a thing. It'll all be out of sight of the public, it'll all be out of the Legislature and we'll have the experts in," whoever the experts are, when in fact we're sent here to help make those decisions and to be involved in those kinds of discussions.

Another letter that I received, just sent in three days ago, states the case of two boys who were adopted from children's aid, both with special needs. The younger of the two came from an extremely abusive situation, suffered from malnourishment, physical injuries and emotional scars. Your legislation, as it is currently written, would require one of these two boys, on the occasion of his 19th birthday, to appear before your tribunal to beg that his privacy be respected so as to prevent his abusive birth parents from finding out personal information about him. Do you honestly believe this is an appropriate way to deal with this kind of circumstance?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Let me say that in the several months that we have worked internally to craft the bill, from the very beginning, we have looked at every single possible scenario, in particular from the eyes of the adult adoptee. This is why we created the bill that we tabled in the House.

I will also tell you that for every letter or e-mail we got in this kind of circumstance, we had 10 times the number from individuals who had a past that would be extremely difficult who demand information themselves, who insist on the passage of this bill, who do not want to see any additional amendments and who want openness. They themselves have said, "We demand information that for many years we have been denied." They call themselves second-class citizens.

We understand that, yes, it's difficult. Our intent here, and I hope that's what we have achieved, especially with the addition of the amendments, is to have a very balanced approach to take care of the extreme situations and to do it well.

Mr. Tory: I will admit to having received more e-mails from people who want the situation opened up than those that who have a contrary view, but the job we have to do here as legislators is to make sure everybody's rights, including those in particular of the minority, are respected.

The privacy commissioner, an officer of this Legislature, read letters, deeply personal letters, that she had received from people. Your amendments that were tabled do not address their concerns. A woman who was the victim of sexual assault and had a child as a result will still have to beg to have her privacy maintained; for adoptees who came out of an abusive situation, it's the same thing; and the more common instance of a woman who had a child out of marriage and had to give it up will still have to beg to maintain her privacy.

You can't tell us any details of how this will work because you've admitted—you've been honest—you

don't have those details; you're going to work them out in secret. For the sake of these people who will not or cannot speak up, I am asking you to work with us to address what I admit is a minority of the cases, but a minority whose rights deserve to be protected and respected. Will you do that?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will also acknowledge—and I appreciate that even in his own caucus, like probably many people out there, half of your members voted for the bill and half of them didn't. I understand that the half who opposed it do have issues. We believe we're addressing those. I also can tell you, from my years in this Legislature, that when we create the law, there are many of those details that always appear in regulation, and that's where the lion's share of the work goes. I appreciate, too, that the individuals we have worked with—these experts in the field, the Ontario Children's Aid Society, the child advocate's office, the Attorney General, which works in these areas—worked diligently on this bill and understand the nature of what comes next in regulation.

Let's be clear: We have said from the outset that this is about the right to information, not the right to a relationship. We insist that finally, after many years, adult adoptees finally have access to information. It is about time that someone respected their rights, because for many years they were not being respected.

SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

"Unjust, oppressive and wrong": That is how the Ombudsman describes the McGuinty government's treatment of families with disabled children. He says that these families are in crisis. Why? Because, as he says on the cover of his report, parents are forced to place their children with severe disabilities in the custody of children's aid societies to obtain necessary care.

On Monday, you stood in the Legislature and you gave those parents a solemn guarantee. You promised to help; you promised to make things right. Then two hours later, those parents discovered that the McGuinty government had filed court documents with the intention of continuing to oppose and fight those parents and their children.

Minister, why are you telling these parents and their disabled children one thing in public while behind closed doors you continue to do everything you can to fight them and oppose them in court?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): We are ready to reunite these families. As I said two days ago, the children's aid societies are ready to make the calls and reunite these families. It is the families' lawyers who have some concerns about our government contacting the families directly. I hope this is

resolved very, very quickly, because we do have a plan to reunite the families and restore parental rights.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, you might like to know that the families' lawyer, Mr. Doug Elliott, is here today and he is quite willing to meet with you or the Attorney General or anyone else who wants to say one thing in public and then do something else behind closed doors in court.

But I want to send you a letter. This is a letter that was sent to you just a couple of weeks ago by one of the parents, and it starts out,

"Dear Minister: ...

"When your [party] was in opposition, you supported our claims. We were pleased to see you form the government because of that support. No doubt many of our families voted for your party...." The letter goes on to ask you—no, it pleads with you—for a meeting so that you can stop the court battle and you can settle.

Minister, you didn't even respond to this letter. You didn't respond; the Premier didn't respond; the Attorney General didn't respond. How can you say that the parents and their advocates are holding this up, are stopping this, when they are pleading with you to settle the issues?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: The Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Yes, we are ready to go and ready to implement the direction that the minister indicated earlier this week. But I have to say to the member that I'm surprised. It is a truly unique former Attorney General who brings counsel into a legislative chamber and tries to turn a matter that is before the courts into a matter that is before the Legislature.

I say to him, which is it to be, Mr. Hampton? Are we in this House going to determine how governments are to govern, or are we going to have that debate take place in a courtroom? We say—and your government said when you were in power, and the previous government before that and the one before that have always said—that it is a democratically elected Legislature that ought to determine how governments govern and how governments treat issues like how we serve parents of disabled children. We will certainly continue to stand for that principle.

Mr. Hampton: It was this government that filed the court documents. It was this government that said, "We don't want to settle."

I want to read from this letter. This is from the mother of a disabled child.

"I ask of you, Minister, to meet with me face to face to review the issue and resolve the problem without further litigation. Clearly, if the political will exists, the cruelty of forcing families to surrender custody to access services will end. We the Ontario families are now and always have been available to you to assist in identifying solutions to the problems....

"On behalf of all families involved, I am requesting a meeting with you, our minister, to review the existing

issues and to discuss possible resolutions that will assist the families."

This doesn't sound to me like families who want to fight in court. This doesn't sound to me like families who are holding up a resolution. It was this government, after telling these parents you were going to help them, that ran down to the courthouse at 4 o'clock and filed documents saying, "We'll see you in court." So don't try to tell these parents one thing in public—

The Speaker: Thank you.

1450

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The families, represented by counsel, brought an action against the government of Ontario. The Superior Court of Justice ruled that in fact it was plain and obvious that the claim for damages and negligence could not succeed and confirmed that the court would not interfere with ministerial decisions with respect to how the government would govern. Then the plaintiffs, represented by counsel, appealed that decision. They appealed that decision to the Divisional Court. The Divisional Court made a ruling. The ruling is one that we are appealing in this court.

What are we doing as a government in terms of how we are assisting disabled children? The minister has stated exactly what we are doing. We are working toward reuniting their families. I will say to you that I will hold up this government's record with respect to the treatment of children against that government's record any day.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the minister of Children and Youth Services: Minister, I want to send you two reports in the *Globe and Mail*. One is a report from the front page that says the Ontario government is to settle a lawsuit with corporations for \$63 million. The other is a press report that says, "Quick Return of Disabled Children in Jeopardy." What it seems like is this: When it comes to settling with these poor corporations, like IBM Canada, Fujitsu Consulting (Canada), Teranet Enterprises and EDS Canada, and paying them \$63 million, the McGuinty government can't move fast enough, but when it comes to disabled parents and their kids, you have been fighting them all the way for two years. That is why they went to the child advocate, that's why they went to the Ombudsman, and that's why they went to court, because you have been fighting them and delaying them and blaming them all along. Minister, will the McGuinty government stop blaming these parents and their advocates, and will you finally do the right thing?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I have taken the advice of the child advocate and other experts in the field and, yes, of the Ombudsman, and we're ready to go. We have a plan. We are ready to restore parental rights immediately. Children's aid societies are right by the phones waiting for the go. And we will be responding to the direction of the Ombudsman's report in the next two weeks over the rest of his recommendations. We're ready to go, and just like the AG said, I'll put my record against that government's record any time when it comes to children.

Mr. Hampton: The reality is that the parents' lawyers are there to protect their rights. They're there to make sure that the McGuinty government doesn't pull a fast one. Let me give you an example of a fast one. This is what I guess one expert had to say about this terrible situation: "You are breaking your own law, Premier. You are failing these kids. Will you agree today to at least restore funding for special-needs agreements, or will your government continue to put corporate tax cuts ahead of the interests of our special-needs children?" Do you know who that was? Do you know who said that? Michael Gravelle, chair of the McGuinty government caucus, said that. That's what he said.

Now, when these parents sent you a letter asking for a meeting, you wouldn't even meet with them.

The Speaker: Question?

Mr. Hampton: When they pleaded with you to meet with them, you wouldn't even respond.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Member on the government side, could you come to order, please? I'm trying to hear the leader of the third party complete his question—in 10 seconds.

Mr. Hampton: You see, Minister, what these parents are puzzled by now is that before the election, you were all on their side. You've had two years to do something about it, but it seems the only place you're willing to meet them now is in a courtroom. Tell me, Minister. You say you're ready to go. When are you going to settle?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: We're ready to go. We were ready to go to have parental rights restored by Friday. We're ready to go, within a few weeks, to address the remaining of the Ombudsman's recommendations, as well as the advice from the child advocate and other experts.

I would like to remind the honourable member that he voted against taking those tax cuts away. He voted for the corporations. So it is a little bit—I can't say the word; it's non-parliamentary—but it's a little bit rich that he would say that to us now.

As well, under those two former governments, children's services were cut. We put in \$100 million in a year and a half for special-needs children, the biggest increase for special-needs children in the history of this province, more than 15%. We're proud of our record.

Mr. Hampton: I want to tell the government that the budget I voted against is a budget that's going to give the banks a \$1-billion capital tax grab—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Can we get to the question now?

Mr. Hampton: The budget I voted against is a McGuinty budget that's going to give the banks a \$1-billion capital tax cut over the next 10 years.

Minister, I want to read from this mother's letter again. She said, "We have been carrying on a lengthy and expensive court battle that has placed additional strain on the families and government resources. We are hoping that you will work with us to come up with a humane solution. If you will not, we will continue our struggle.

We believe that a direct meeting is necessary in order to avoid many more years of this battle."

Minister, can you tell me, can you tell the people, did you meet with these people? Did you even respond to their letter?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: My response is action: By Friday, we were ready to have restored their parental rights; over \$100 million in new monies for special-needs students. Those actions speak louder than any words that the member opposite could take out of his mouth.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services, who's also responsible for women's issues. My question is this: The privacy commissioner spoke with the minister's office regarding her Bill 183 many months ago. The minister has stood in this House on several occasions and said that she has taken the advice of this commissioner. Yet on Monday, hours after the minister tabled her amendments, on the very day we were dealing with clause-by-clause movement of this bill, the commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, indicated that the privacy rights were not protected with this amendment, as the minister has said.

Minister, there is a specific group of child victims who are adoptees in this province. They are predominantly women. They were in many cases raped; they were sexually assaulted, physically abused, and in some cases were the victims of incest. Do you not believe that this unique group of adoptees, child victims, deserves to have an unfettered right to a disclosure veto for their own personal protection?

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Let me say this: We have for many months as a government and for many years as a House, on bills that have come before this House regarding adoption, consulted with the privacy commissioner. As a government, in our consultation with the privacy commissioner, she has acknowledged that while her office does not have purview over adoption—it is not part of her work—we have wanted her advice regardless.

Moreover, she has stated repeatedly in letters to others in this House, and certainly to us, that this ultimately becomes a social policy decision of the government. She's made that clear to us. We have asked her advice because we need to understand what it is that we do.

We also understand that her position has been one of no retroactivity and a disclosure veto. We have said again that were we to accept that, we simply wouldn't have a bill before the House, because we do believe in the rights of children. We do believe, just as the United Nations found in their Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which they said that the supreme right must be a child's right to information—that in fact led to the development of our bill. We respect the myriad—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Final supplementary.

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Mr. Jackson: The United Nations does not support any notion that allows child victims of sexual assault and incest to be re-victimized by a panel of adults sitting in decision on whether or not they suffered emotional harm in this province. That is why we have a Victims' Bill of Rights in this province that says you do not have to go before a tribunal and prove that you suffered emotionally as a consequence of a tribunal decision. Minister, your veto in its current form is wrong for these individuals, for one simple reason: Many of them don't even know they were sexually assaulted or that they were the victims of incest as small children and infants.

Will you, Minister, today agree, as I raised in committee yesterday, that upon reaching the age of majority, an adoptee has the right to have access to their CAS files so they will then know if they wish to exercise their veto for disclosure, for their own personal protection. I remind you, these are mostly women who were victims of abuse as infants and children. I ask you, how will they know how to make an appeal if they don't even know the circumstances of their abuse? Will you release the files and will you allow that to occur in legislation?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: Let me say what none of us in this House can do. None of us can pretend to speak with one voice on any of the circumstances such as this member is describing today, because for every example we have also heard hundreds of others, children with their own histories, some of them terrible histories admittedly, who are demanding that this bill pass and are demanding that it be passed quickly. They have been waiting for years for this.

I have to say that the goal of the government, and what I think we have struck in terms of balance with this bill, is that for those exceptional circumstances, we will develop the easiest way for them to gain what they need by this board. But ultimately, we have said from the beginning that people have a right to information, not a right to a relationship.

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

Hon. Ms. Papatello: We have introduced a no-contact proviso in this that has worked in every jurisdiction in which it exists. We are standing on that experience. We understand that there may be issues, and we are doing our due diligence—

The Speaker: Thank you.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, you know that today is Injured Workers' Day. You also know that over the last decade, corporate bosses have done quite well: billions in rebates from experience rating and reduced WSIB premiums. In fact, WSIB officials have done quite well. The number of WSIB officials receiving over a hundred grand a year has increased significantly in that decade. In view of that, is the government willing to commit today, on Injured Workers' Day, to legislative

changes to address the serious and critical matter of poverty among injured workers?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'd like to acknowledge on this day the presence of many of the injured workers I spoke to outside, and I have spoken to injured workers on a number of occasions throughout the province.

The member is right that over the last 10 years, two previous governments, the one of which he was a part and the Tories who followed, took inflation protection away from injured workers. For more than 10 years, money was taken out of the pockets of injured workers. They left this government and the board with a terrible mess to clean up.

Restoring fairness, dignity and respect to injured workers is what we intend to do. The board has been working very hard over the last 18 months on restoring fiscal health. Today, they take some steps toward that greater fairness, because the board announced a change in the way it assesses benefits.

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

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It is ensuring that more money for workers who receive CPP benefits, as well as WSIB benefits, will end up in workers' pockets, because they are not deducting all of the CPP benefits from the calculation. That's more money for injured workers—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kormos: The wringing of hands and the "Oh, I feel your pain" speech does nothing to alleviate the poverty amongst injured workers. Injured workers across Ontario have been signing petitions. If a couple of pages will come here, I'll send you some of them. They're addressed to the minister, saying that since 1996 the cumulative increase in the cost of living is 22.7%. To the Minister of Labour, please, pages. During that time, the cumulative increase in benefits to injured workers has been only 2.5%. That means that these injured workers have seen their benefits slashed by 20% in the last decade.

Before the last election, your party, the Liberals, promised to introduce a fair inflation factor to protect workers' benefits from inflation—legislated inflation protection. Today is Injured Workers' Day, a chance to keep your promise. When are you going to produce that legislation providing full cost-of-living protection for injured workers?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: These are interesting. It says "since 1996." Where was the "I feel your pain" speech from the member when his party reduced inflation protection and took money out of the pockets of injured workers in 1994? Why has he only started in 1996, when he knows that he and his government were responsible for reducing inflation protection?

We told injured workers during the campaign we'd help restore the damage. The first step is restoring the financial health of the board, because all workers in the province depend on that board. We're doing that.

Today's CPP announcement was a good first step, but it's not all. We've heard the workers. We have given the board until September 30 so we can improve return-to-

work and labour market re-entry policies which they've spoken about. The decision-making process, the understandability of the process and restoring—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

FIREARMS SAFETY AND CONTROL

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. This past weekend, Brampton suffered an appalling tragedy. A 21-year-old and a 17-year-old youth were shot while biking home from a basketball tournament. The 21-year-old youth is currently recovering in the William Osler Health Centre and 17-year-old Dwayne Lloyd was fatally wounded.

Minister, the citizens of my riding are concerned about the safety of their community and the safety of their children. What is our government doing to prevent these gun crimes and protect our communities?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member from Brampton Centre for her question. The level of gun violence in Ontario over the last two years is worrying and unacceptable. I'm pleased to say that the work of the special anti-gun and gang unit, which was announced last year by my colleague the Attorney General, is underway. This year, it is made up of senior police with expert knowledge.

Since this government was elected, 50 new crowns have been added and we have committed crown resources to the anti-gun and gang unit. There are currently 12 prosecutors in the Toronto region with specialized training in prosecution of firearm offences. We are taking a leadership role and we are working closely with the police and levels of government to reduce gun-related crime and prosecute those responsible for the proliferation of firearms.

Mrs. Jeffrey: Minister, unfortunately this is not the first tragedy involving firearms that has affected my community. Last month, Livvete Miller, a widow, a mother of four and a constituent of Brampton Centre, was killed when men armed with guns opened fire on a crowd of over 200 partygoers in a Toronto nightclub. Is our government giving law enforcement officials the tools they need to fight crime?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: The government continues to support the OPP's provincial weapons enforcement unit, which in 2004 was responsible for taking over 1,800 guns off the streets and out of the hands of criminals. This government will continue to work with our municipal and police partners and support local strategies that help prevent and fight crime.

We also announced, when we made our announcement about the 1,000 new police officers, that some of those will be dedicated to dealing with guns and gangs. We also just yesterday passed a bill in this House that makes it mandatory to report gunshot wounds. This is something that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Police Association, the Ontario Medical Asso-

ciation and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards have asked for because they need that as an added tool to help them deal with those people who are related to gunshots.

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SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. We learned from the Ombudsman's report that troubled parents were required to relinquish custody of their severely disabled young children in order to get the care they need. I have a simple question: When did your senior officials learn about this practice, Minister?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I actually knew in opposition that this was occurring. What I didn't know was the extent to which it was occurring. The child advocate first brought that to my attention, and we've been working on this issue since then. The Ombudsman, of course, brought much more evidence to light.

Mr. Baird: Minister, in supplementary, when this practice was brought to my attention in January 2001, it was immediately addressed. The Ombudsman said, "These responses provided real solutions ... and are to be applauded on that account alone." Minister, I want to know when you and your senior officials learned about this repugnant practice of requiring parents to give up custody of their severely disabled children for them to get the help they needed. When did you learn about this practice and when did your officials learn about it?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: It's really interesting. I can almost accept the questions from the NDP, but from the Conservatives, the party that cut services to children, that cut mental health services to children, that wouldn't even allow the officials to say the words "poverty" or "child care" or "research"? That's what they did. We've put in over \$100 million for special-needs children alone. We have increased child care like never before. We are, for the first time, going to be doing research so that we can, for the first time—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I hope you want the answer to the question, member from Nepean-Carleton, but shouting at the minister is not the way.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: For the first time, part of the ministry of children services will have a research line so that we can begin to collect the data we need so that we can do our job. You were more interested in cutting taxes than in increasing services for children. We're interested in increasing services for children, and you know it.

OMERS PENSION FUND

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. For

far too long, there have been serious problems with the governance structure in OMERS. In fact, from the first day your government was elected, OMERS stakeholders have been pushing you to try to make some reforms. All of them together—CUPE, OPSEU, CAW, IBEW, OSSTF and firefighters—have been doing so, but you didn't take them seriously and you didn't take an inclusive route. Instead, you sat down with one group and ignored the concerns of all the rest. Your process was all wrong, Minister, but you still have a chance to fix it. Will you finally do the right thing and set up an inclusive table where all the stakeholders who are involved with OMERS can come up with a governance solution that meets all their needs, not just those of one small group?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Let me first of all say that we're the first government to do anything about this particular situation that the municipal employees in this province have been crying out for for at least the last 10 or 15 years. Certainly the NDP didn't do anything about it while they were in power, and during the Conservative years absolutely nothing was done about it. We've basically taken this step, in part, to implement the OMERS board report that was done in 2002. During that period of time, I've met with a number of different individuals. I will continue to meet with them. I've met with CUPE on at least two occasions.

The bill has been given first reading, and the reason why it has been given first reading is so that it can now go to a legislative committee so that all representations can be made by all those interested parties, both on the employer and the employee side.

Ms. Horwath: Minister, we're not talking about what's in the bill. We're talking about the process and what was left out of the bill. Unfortunately, you had a very bad process. It ignored the concerns of the majority of plan members, CUPE members, who alone represent 44% of all plan members.

As I said, you've made the mistake, but there's time to fix it now. You can finally do the right thing and set a table where all the stakeholders can jointly discuss and come up with a plan that meets all of their needs, not just the needs of one small group. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me just say that I totally agree with the member who said that the New Democratic Party fully supports OMERS autonomy. Who said that? The leader of the third party, Howard Hampton. I am with Howard Hampton on that.

We are the first government to take this step. It has taken us 18 months to get there, but the other governments that were in power before us did absolutely nothing on this situation, even though the OMERS board and the various stakeholders within OMERS, both on the employer and the employee side, have been calling for this kind of action. We're starting a process that will be an open process, and it will be done by a legislative committee. We hope that all of the various stakeholders will come before the committee and set out their position

so that we can come up with the best kind of law that's possible.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. As you know, water quality is a very important issue for the people in my riding of Huron-Bruce. Not only is good water quality important for households, but it's also very important to the farmers who use it to keep their crops and livestock healthy. I'm very pleased that our government is committed to clean water.

On May 19, 2005, in a statement to this assembly, you acknowledged the five-year anniversary of the Walkerton tragedy. Five years ago, seven Walkerton residents died and over 2,000 others became ill as a result of water contaminated with E. coli.

Minister, yesterday you were in Walkerton. Could you please tell this House what you brought there and update the House on how this town is coping after the tragic event five years ago?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to have the opportunity to say that I brought much more away from Walkerton than I brought to Walkerton, although the people there are always very happy when a minister of this government comes to support them in their initiatives.

The people of Walkerton have done a tremendous job on the five-year anniversary of the tragedy. There were events yesterday that were designed to commemorate that event. There was a memorial garden in memory of the victims established at Mother Teresa school. I was able to be at that ceremony.

The citizens concerned from Walkerton had arranged for a water and health symposium, and people from across North America came to talk about water quality issues and how we can ensure that water is safe in communities across North America. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was present last night to give a resounding address that very clearly indicates why we must be vigilant about protecting our environment.

Yesterday I opened the Walkerton Clean Water Centre. This is a tremendous turnaround point for the people of Walkerton. They want their community to be associated with clean water in the province of Ontario.

Mrs. Mitchell: I can't say it enough: Clean water is so important. Your presence in Walkerton really made a difference to that community, Minister.

Most of us take water for granted in this country because we are blessed with an abundant source of fresh water. Water is our most precious resource, and we should do everything that we can to protect it. Clean water means a healthy Ontario.

Yesterday, the chief drinking water inspector released his report. I don't need to remind you that we campaigned on a platform that promised Ontarians water that they could trust, water that would be protected from stream to tap. Minister, what progress have we made on

clean water standards since we were elected to ensure that Ontarians can trust their water?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I think it's very important that we do take some time in this House to talk about the report of the chief drinking water inspector and the information that he has made public for all the people of Ontario to know about water systems in their communities. I think it is important to note that there are declining numbers of orders that are being issued to municipalities; however, I will not be satisfied until we have zero orders issued for municipal drinking water systems.

To that end, and for that reason, I have asked the chief drinking water inspector to work with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and also the Ontario Water Works Association to assist them to achieve our goal of no violations of the 130 regulations that are in place for water system operations to meet. I'm very pleased to report that now Ontario has a chief drinking water inspector, public reporting of the performance of drinking water systems, an advisory council to recommend improvements of drinking water, increased numbers of drinking water inspectors and the strictest training and certification regimen for operators in North America.

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RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Tourism is one of Ontario's major industries. Recreation vehicles, or RVs, allow people to travel the country in comfort, as you know. Parks to accommodate these vehicles are springing up all over the world. Unfortunately, your ministry has created vehicle registration policies that are punitive to RV owners and financially crippling to RV dealers. It may indeed fly in the face of free trade regulators. Minister, why do you feel it's proper for your ministry to arbitrarily change the accepted date of manufacture of RVs when registering these vehicles?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I will take this question under advisement. I would be more than pleased to get back to the member on this issue.

Mr. Runciman: This shouldn't be a mystery to the minister. We spoke to officials in his office several times over a month and a half ago. We asked your staff at the time for an explanation of your RV registration policies and we're still waiting. Clearly you haven't even been advised. I guess that's the way you respect the opposition members of this House, apparently.

Back in 1979, the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration established that with vehicles manufactured in more than one stage, registration reflects the year when the final product is completed, and the same rule applies to other Canadian provinces. But in Ontario, your ministry ignores this policy and dates a vehicle based on when the chassis was manufactured. Therefore, a 2005 RV instantly becomes a 2004 RV with

the resulting loss of value. Minister, why does your government have a policy that runs counter to every other jurisdiction in North America?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: All I can say on this issue is that this is the policy that was set by the previous government and your colleague—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Minister, just allow your other minister to respond without interruption.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: The member on the opposite side says he wants the right answer, not a cheap shot. I said I will take that under advisement and will get back to the member. If that is not acceptable, I mean, what else can I say on this issue?

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Minister of Labour: On June 30, Midtronics Canada is going to be closing their North Bay operation, putting their employees out of work and sending those jobs, as it is, to China. It's bad enough that these workers are losing their jobs, but Midtronics is also refusing to pay severance wages. Many of these workers will have been with the company for over a decade. They don't know what they're going to do. Minister, what are you going to do to help these working women and men get the severance they deserve?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): As the member would know, the first thing that should be done is that the workers should contact the Ministry of Labour office and ensure the employment standards inspectors know what the issue is. The fact of the matter is that, for many years, employment standards in this province were not being enforced. In fact, there were a total of 97 prosecutions of employment standards violations between 1990 and 2003. In the past year, we decided we would increase enforcement and we more than doubled the number. There are almost 250 prosecutions instituted. But that's not all, because a special collection unit that was set up, under the previous administration, as a test pilot, has been expanded throughout to cover all matters in the province. So where monies are owing, we're much more effective at collecting them. I'm looking forward to the member making sure the ministry has details of this issue, so that if there are violations of the act, it can be properly dealt with.

Mr. Kormos: Minister, Midtronics Canada—and you really should know this—is a boss that has shown contempt for working women and men and for the laws that are supposed to protect them. This company has refused to give its employees their due vacation time so that those workers can look for new work. They've also exploited the 60-hour workweek, the one that you've kept alive, so they could keep production up at the same time as they're planning to shut operations down. They've whittled the workforce down to 45 jobs, and now they claim that they don't have to pay severance.

Minister, these workers deserve far better. The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers has asked you to close the loopholes in employment standards laws that permit this boss to deny these workers their severance. Will you at least do that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The member would know that the most effective way to help workers in situations such as this is to make sure that they immediately contact the local office to make sure that the government protections which exist through the act are immediately brought to bear. Legislation and regulation is great, but that doesn't sound like it's going to address the type of situation that he outlines. So if it is real concern about the workers, get their claim into the local ministry office. It can be investigated and worker protections can be extended.

The fact of the matter is, we rolled back the 60-hour workweek, which their party objected to and voted against. We brought in family medical leave. We're enforcing the act. We're inspecting as never before. The Employment Standards Act and protections for vulnerable workers are being protected as never before. We're proud of that record.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): My question today is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, and I know the minister has been ignored today by the opposition, so he's looking forward to the opportunity.

As you are aware, the previous government for years made promises but failed to deliver on much-needed infrastructure investments in areas such as health, education, transit, transportation and justice in this province, even though these are important areas of investments within my riding of Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge.

Last week, Minister, you took the opportunity to announce ReNew Ontario, a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure plan to help increase investment in Ontario's public infrastructure, and specifically those same areas that were neglected for far too long.

My constituents hold these areas in very high regard and are interested in knowing what this government is doing to help modernize and replace infrastructure assets in many areas in these sectors. In particular, they remain interested in the Durham consolidated courthouse, promised by two previous governments but not delivered—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to thank the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge for the question. The member is quite correct: Both previous governments neglected Ontario's infrastructure for far too long. The contrast is that our government has set out a vision and a realistic plan that focuses on the priorities that Ontarians have set for us.

Ontarians have told us that health care, education and economic prosperity are important priorities for this province. Unlike the last government, we listen to Ontarians. Under ReNew Ontario, our five-year, \$30-billion plan to increase investments in Ontario's public infrastructure, our government will ensure that these investments are made in key priority areas. We need to build our infrastructure better, smarter and faster, and to do this, we have a made-in-Ontario approach that puts the public interest first. ReNew Ontario will invest in the areas that matter most to Ontarians, while accommodating growth—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Arthurs: I'm pleased that we as a government have the courage to invest in the future of this province to ensure that the high-quality services Ontarians need and deserve will be there for them when they really need them.

Now that they know the government cares about their future and is listening to their priorities in health, education and economic prosperity, they'd like to know the kinds of investments we're considering in each of these various areas. Within ReNew Ontario, what is the McGuinty government doing to ensure the province's hospitals and schools, its post-secondary education, its roads, its transit and its water systems are ready for the future and for the anticipated growth in fast-growing areas such as Durham region?

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Hon. Mr. Caplan: I know all members of this House will be interested and will want to listen to the answer. If we want to meet the needs of a growing and aging population, if we want to help our economy grow strong, the status quo simply isn't going to work. The government and its partners will invest more than \$30 billion in Ontario's infrastructure. We're going to encourage our pension plans, like our teachers' pension plan and OMERS, to invest in Ontario's infrastructure.

Working together, we will invest—and I want members to pay particular attention—\$5 billion in health care and hospitals by 2010; more than \$10 billion in schools, universities and colleges; \$11.4 billion in public transit, highways and borders and other transportation; more than \$600 million in affordable housing; more than \$1 billion in the justice sector. Our first such project, as the member pointed out, will be the Durham consolidated courthouse. Of the \$30 billion—

The Speaker: I'm sure you can do that tomorrow.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you for that consideration, Speaker. I do appreciate it.

My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, you would know that today in Barrie the Society of Energy Professionals is bringing to your attention the great risk that's in the transmission grid in Ontario. In fact, they made announcements last week about the May 27 situation, which was a massive short circuit at the

Milton switching station. You should also know that that 2,000-megawatt blip had consequences to our economy and to the safety of people in Ontario. For instance, the cost to NOVA Chemicals could be in the neighbourhood of \$25 million, and there were others. I'm certain you would know that.

But what the energy professionals really want to know and to bring to your attention—they're very concerned that you don't have a contingency plan in the event of a power interruption in Ontario. Minister, my question to you is very simple: What is your government doing to ensure that the citizens and indeed the economy of Ontario are being protected during any interruption, and what are your contingency plans?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): What we're doing, first of all, is undoing everything the Tories did in the last eight years. Let's review that record. Is there a contingency plan in place? Yes, there is. Even the society themselves—let me quote what they said yesterday. They said: "I'm not willing to go as far as to say that it would have been avoided if we were there, because I believe that's an overstatement."

I'd urge you and everyone else to turn down the rhetoric. Both parties should get to the table. This economy was not threatened and the blip was not caused by that. There is a robust contingency plan in place in the event of a strike. I hope that won't occur. I don't believe it will at this point, but let's see what happens.

I'll further say to the member opposite that that type of allegation—that somehow that blip was caused—is nothing but pure fearmongering. It's not supported by the facts; it's not supported by the reality. The reality is that when the blip happened, it got fixed immediately, and it was only a blip. What could have happened didn't happen. What should have happened did happen. The system worked, it responded, in spite of the mess you left public hydro in.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'm urged to give another supplementary, but it's the end of question period.

PETITIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many owners of seasonal trailers kept at campgrounds have raised their concerns over the impact of property taxes on seasonal trailers and the unfairness of imposing a new tax on persons who use minimal municipal services;

"Whereas this new tax will discourage business and tourism opportunities in Ontario and will cause many families to give up their vacation trailers altogether;

"Whereas the administration of this tax will require a substantial investment in staff, time and resources across the province of Ontario;

"Whereas some representatives of the recreational vehicle industry, campground proprietors, and trailer owners have suggested an alternative sticker or tag system to establish fees for seasonal trailers;

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

"That the Parliament of Ontario immediately abandon the assessment and taxation of recreational trailers used on a seasonal basis in 2004; and that the government of Ontario consult with all stakeholders regarding the development of a fair and reasonable sticker or tag fee that would apply to recreational trailers used on a seasonal basis."

I affix my name in full support.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding the Credit Valley Hospital capital improvements.

"Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now, and 514 beds by 2016; and

"Whereas the Credit Valley Hospital bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

"Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fund-raising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility able to meet the needs of our community;

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

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department, and to better serve patients and the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite."

I send this to you via page Emma.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Honourable Michael Bryant is minister responsible for democratic renewal; and

“Whereas the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General of Ontario, is elected to safeguard our justice system on behalf of the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas the ministry of our Attorney General may not be aware of the serious and important issues facing individuals involved in areas of the justice system even though the Attorney General’s ministry is continually monitoring;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General, for his in-depth investigation of the Ontario judicial system and [to] make the public aware of his findings immediately.”

I’ve also signed this.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here, and I’d like to thank Deanna Gopie of Castlebridge Drive in Mississauga for sending it to me. It’s to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it’s about banning smoking in public places in Ontario. It reads as follows:

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

“Whereas some 16,000 Ontarians each year die of tobacco-related causes; and

“Whereas the inhalation of direct and second-hand tobacco smoke both lead to health hazards that can and do cause preventable death; and

“Whereas more than four out of every five Ontarians do not smoke, and this large majority desires that enclosed public places in Ontario be smoke-free at all times; and

“Whereas preventing the sale of tobacco products, especially to young people, and banning the use of tobacco products in public and gathering places of all types will lower the incidence of smoking among Ontarians, and decrease preventable deaths;

“Be it therefore resolved that the Ontario Legislative Assembly enact Bill 164, and that the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care aggressively implement measures to restrict the sale and supply of tobacco to those under 25; that the display of tobacco products in retail settings be banned; that smoking be banned in enclosed public places or in workplaces, and banned on or near the grounds of public and private schools, hospitals and day nurseries; that designated smoking areas or rooms in public places be banned, and that penalties for violations of smoking laws be substantially increased.”

I support this petition. I affix my signature to it, and I’ll ask Alexander to carry it for me.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): It’s my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Honourable Michael Bryant is minister responsible for democratic renewal; and

“Whereas the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General of Ontario, is elected to safeguard our justice system on behalf of the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas the ministry of our Attorney General may not be aware of the serious and important issues facing individuals involved in areas of the justice system even though the Attorney General’s ministry is continually monitoring;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Honourable Michael Bryant, Attorney General, for his in-depth investigation of the Ontario judicial system and [to] make the public aware of his findings immediately.”

I’m pleased to sign and endorse this on behalf of Bert Werry and Peter O’Brien from my riding.

1540

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition here, and I’d like to especially thank four people for sending it to me: Meg Hughes of Forest Bluff in Lisgar, Yvonne Link of the Collegeway in Erin Mills, Kay Dryden of Falconer Drive in Meadowvale, and Mary De Almeida of Snowflake Lane in Trelawny.

It’s to the Ontario Legislative Assembly with regard to the Credit Valley Hospital’s capital improvement campaign, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and a Halton-Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now, and 514 beds by 2016; and

“Whereas the Credit Valley Hospital bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility able to meet the needs of our community;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department, and to better serve patients and the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite.”

This is my home hospital. I support this position, and I’ll ask page Graeme to carry it for me.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I wasn't sure we'd get a chance to do this petition. The member from Mississauga looked like he had a speech going there.

A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close the Rideau Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the Rideau Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the Rideau Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep the Rideau Regional Centre open as a home for people with developmental disabilities and to maintain it as a 'centre of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I support this petition, and I send it down to you with Benjamin.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario is currently experiencing a severe shortage of tradespeople;

"Whereas potential plumbing apprentices are being turned away due to lack of available apprenticeship positions;

"Whereas the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act only allows an additional apprentice for every three additional journeymen employed by the employer in the trade and with whom the apprentice is working;

"Whereas the number of skilled journeymen available to train apprentice plumbers is rapidly declining as baby boomers reach retirement age;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend RRO 1990, regulation 1073, the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, such that an additional apprentice may be employed for each additional two journeymen employed by the employer in the trade and with whom the apprentice is working."

HALTON RECYCLING PLANT

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

"Whereas noxious odours from the Halton Recycling plant in Newmarket are adversely affecting the health and quality of life of residents and working people in Newmarket; and

"Whereas local families have lost the enjoyment of their properties for themselves and their children, face threats to their health and well-being, and risk a decline in the value of their homes; and

"Whereas for the 300 members of the nearby main RCMP detachment, as well as other workers in the area, the odours are making their working conditions intolerable;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Minister of the Environment take immediate action to halt all noxious emissions and odours from the Halton Recycling plant, and take all steps necessary to force Halton Recycling to comply with environmental rules, including closing the plant if the odour problems continue."

As I am in agreement, I've affixed my signature to this, and I'm happy to give it to Luke to deliver to the table.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I have a petition entitled "Stop Gouging Consumers at the Pumps":

"Whereas gasoline prices have increased at alarming rates; and

"Whereas the high and different gas prices in different areas of Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship on hard-working families;

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

"(1) That the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government immediately freeze gas prices for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate; and

"(2) That the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government and the federal Martin Liberal government immediately lower their taxes on gas for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate; and

"(3) That the Ontario McGuinty Liberal government immediately initiate a royal commission to investigate the predatory gas prices charged by oil companies operating in Ontario."

I sign my signature.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I have a petition 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 fire-

fighters 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 protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

I’ve affixed my signature. I want to thank Dave Anderson of Harriston for circulating it.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I’m pleased to read a petition that was sent to me by, among others, Elaine West of Oakville, and I thank her for the petition. It’s to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and it deals with the banning of smoking in public places in Ontario.

“Whereas some 16,000 Ontarians each year die of tobacco-related causes; and

“Whereas the inhalation of direct and second-hand tobacco smoke both lead to health hazards that can and do cause preventable death; and

“Whereas more than four out of every five Ontarians do not smoke, and this large majority desires that enclosed public places in Ontario be smoke-free at all times; and

“Whereas preventing the sale of tobacco products, especially to young people, and banning the use of tobacco products in public and gathering places of all types will lower the incidence of smoking among Ontarians, and decrease preventable deaths;

“Be it therefore resolved that the Ontario Legislative Assembly enact Bill 164, and that the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care aggressively implement measures to restrict the sale and supply of tobacco to those under 25; that the display of tobacco products in retail settings be banned; that smoking be banned in enclosed public places or in workplaces, and banned on or near the grounds of public and private schools, hospitals and day nurseries; that designated smoking areas or rooms in public places be banned, and that penalties for violations of smoking laws be substantially increased.”

I completely agree with this petition and I’m going to ask page Devon to carry it down for me.

1550

OPPOSITION DAY

PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I move that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

To conduct legislative proceedings in a way that reflects the values of all Ontarians, such that all members of the Legislature conduct themselves with the highest degree of professionalism and respect for their fellow members;

And, that the government recognize and respect the legitimate role of the opposition parties, all means of ensuring government accountability, and the importance of meaningful public consultation when formulating public policy.

In looking at the motion that we put together to try and get the subject of decorum and civility and the effective functioning of this Parliament put on the record, I would acknowledge that perhaps it should have said that the Legislative Assembly call upon itself, so we weren’t looking like we were saying that this was all at the feet of or on the shoulders of the government, because I believe that the points I’m going to try to make today—and I’m sure that colleagues on all sides will as well—speak to the role and the functioning of this place. Therefore, the responsibility for trying to do something about it rests with all the members who are in this place.

I want to just deal with the question of what I’ll call behaviour, for lack of a better word, and with process. I’ll start with process.

By the way, I want to admit up front, because I think it’s important to be honest about these things, that the concerns I have about process didn’t get invented or didn’t start with the election and swearing in of this government. The last time I was here, working for former Premier Davis, was 20-some-odd years ago, and I think it’s gone on over a period of time, under successive governments since that time. But if you look at the concerns I have about process, which speak to the effectiveness of this place and the meaningful accountability and the importance of real consultation and so on, I think all the changes are heading in the wrong direction.

Let’s start with committee hearings. The government is fond of saying—and I will admit that I haven’t actually counted it up, but they’ll say, and I’ll take their word for it, in the spirit in which I’m trying to have this discussion today or take part in it—that they have sent out to committee more bills, as a percentage, than perhaps previous governments did. But to me, when you do that and you send the bills out for one day of hearings on a matter that may affect a very large number of people, and it’s not advertised and it’s done on two days’ notice, in some respects, sometimes you’d almost argue it’s worse than not doing it at all.

I think of the example of Bill 186, the bill affecting Peel, and the fact that the people showed up there—that

was a bill that affected one million-and-some-odd people in the region of Peel. When they came to the public hearings, they had I think two days' notice. The only notice they received was on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Web site. I'll say to you, Mr. Speaker, that that is a very excellent Web site. But if you said to me, "Are there a large number of Ontario citizens anywhere, whether it's Peel or anywhere else, who check it with great regularity to see what's up?" I would say, "I don't think so." In that sense, for the government members to have said that day, "Well, don't worry. We gave lots of people notice because we put it on the Web site," it's not the kind of approach I would talk about in saying we need to have meaningful public consultation. I don't think it then really allows the government to take credit for the fact that that bill went to a public hearing. It's not real public consultation. I know we can't have endless public consultation on that or any other bill, but to say one half a day in Mississauga and one half a day in Peel, advertised only on the government Web site, with like 24 hours' notice—I mean, come on now. What kind of real public consultation is this?

I look at other things. Again, it didn't start with this government. The freedom-of-information laws and the degree to which there are responses given in a timely fashion, or at all, to requests made by the opposition, or by the public, for that matter—don't take it from me. Take it from the survey that was just in the *National Post*—I guess it was done by a lot of the leading newspapers in Canada—where Ontario didn't get the worst mark, but we sure didn't get an A either; I think we got a C. They said, "Look, a lot of stuff people have the right to see."

I remember asking about the ministers' expense accounts that were tabled here today, and I was told, "No, no," that they had to bring in a computer consultant and various other things. All I said was, "Just send me over the very piece of paper that the financial departments relied upon in writing the cheque to the ministers, which we know was done months ago. I'll just take that, because if it was good enough for the guy writing the cheque, it's good enough for us." But no, there has to be a computer consultant and months of time taken, and you get blacked-out pages and so on and so forth.

Then we get the order paper questions, which I think have become, frankly, a farce. The other day, as part of our discussions about the ongoing proceedings of the House, we said we wanted to have those answers. Lo and behold, the day after we asked, they all mysteriously appeared. Well, if they were ready to be given to the opposition who had asked, why weren't they just given on a timely basis? Part of what allows this place to work is that the opposition and the media and others are entitled to use these tools to get information.

Those are the process concerns, at least a brief summary. I have a short time, because many of my colleagues and members on all sides want to speak on this. I think that is an indication of some of the process concerns I would have that are just causing this place not to work well.

I would have said that more time spent in genuine public consultation, more time spent where the members in committee could actually work over the details of a bill and so on, would be more productive than some of the time I see being spent in here. I'm new here, so I shouldn't have an awful lot of opinions about that, but I'm just saying an early observation would be that.

Now, let me just go through the matter of behaviour, and I want to incorporate my concerns about process with my concerns about behaviour. I came here obviously having grown up in a family, as we all did, I went to school, had a professional career as a lawyer and then a career as a business executive and all kinds of experience in the community working for community organizations. Nowhere in my life did I behave in the way people behave here. Nowhere in my life previously was it tolerated. Nowhere in my life had I learned how to behave that way, ever, anywhere, even when the doors were closed and there were no television cameras and you were not in the highest calling that people have in public life. So my concern is, why do we do that here? I guess I want to just try and answer in the remaining time, why is it better that we should not continue to do what we're doing here?

I think the first and foremost reason is about public confidence. I think it is not befitting what we do here to have the level of behaviour descend to what it has descended to in this House. I can compare it even to what I saw when I was here 24 years ago under Mr. Davis and all that I've watched in between. Ask anybody, and I've asked many people. Even members opposite have spoken to me and said there is no question, for those who have been around a long time, that things are not as they used to be.

But forgetting about that, it is not befitting what we are sent here to do. I think it is therefore going to erode confidence in us as people. I said to the media one day a couple of weeks ago how disconcerting I found it when I went door to door in my by-election and found people saying to me, because I was now a politician—and they weren't directing it at me in particular; they were directing it at all people who were in politics: that we were all people who were basically beneath contempt. I think what we do here and the way we act here contributes to that. People see it and they say to themselves, "Why should I have respect for people who conduct themselves that way?" I think it reduces respect for this place. I view this—and I think all the people who are here do—as the most noble place you can be, serving the public, doing the public's business, addressing, albeit with differences of opinion from time to time, issues of interest to the public and issues of concern to them. I think it reduces confidence in that, and I think it reduces confidence in the work we actually do. Whatever the results are, even when they're good, confidence is eroded in that result just because people say, "You're behaving like people who are juveniles and are disrespectful of us, the people, and of the place you're in, so why should we respect you, why should we respect that place, and why should we respect the output of that place?"

My second concern is about, for lack of a better word—it's a business kind of word—productivity. I don't think there's any question at all but that the prevailing behaviour and atmosphere here reduces the productivity of this place. We are here, I believe—I came here, from my career in business, to help, working with other members, solve real problems for real people. I just think we can't afford to dismiss and demean the people who are here and spend a lot of our time and energy doing that. We need their talent and their energy on all sides, to address some of these huge problems that don't have easy answers. On the discussion we were having today about adoption, I would be the first to say, and I tried in my questions—I try as often as I can—to say, "Look, I understand this is not a simple issue with an easy answer." But can't we find a way to have a more civilized kind of dialogue about these kinds of things and work together instead of, as I've said in the media, trying to pretend this is some sort of video game where what we're trying to do is do in as many people on the other side as we possibly can?

Thirdly, leadership by example: Why does it matter? You know, there are families and businesses across the province. There are school kids who come in here and fill these galleries every day. Don't we have a responsibility—I'll answer yes—to behave in such a way that we set an example for those people whether they're here or watching or just hear about us? I can tell you that since I have been talking about this and have been on radio and television and in the newspapers talking about it, I've had a tremendous degree of response from people without regard to partisanship. They've said, "Keep doing what you're doing," because they're embarrassed by what they see in Parliament in Ottawa, they're embarrassed by what they see in Parliament here, and they would like to see some changes. They think it's right, and they think we should not just be talking about it but doing something about it.

I've noticed this week, for example, and I'm not sure whether it was because there was a resolution on or because we're getting closer to the end of session, that it has been quieter here this week. People have told me it's quieter since the time I've arrived here. I'm not sure whether that has anything to do with my talking about this or whether it's just a good time, but the bottom line is that whatever it is, it's working. If there's something in this water they hand out every day, maybe that's it.

1600

I want to read you an e-mail. It's an e-mail that came from a young boy. I had a school group in this week from a school in my riding, Mount Forest Public School. When they were in, we chatted about this and that, they made a wonderful presentation about veterans and other things and then they told me they'd had a Parliament in their school. I, of course, said, "Which one is the Leader of the Opposition?" and a young lad by the name of Scott Donald, who's in the grade 4-5 or 5-6 class at Mount Forest Public School, identified himself as the Leader of the Opposition. I said, "Scott, would you do me a favour

today and watch question period"—they were here a couple of days ago—"and tell me what you thought of it all and how you think I did? Because I'm the Leader of the Opposition too."

I just want to read to you an extract out of his e-mail to me. It's not all complimentary to us, either. "We were surprised how much people were talking and not paying attention to you or to other people speaking. Even in your own party, people were getting up and walking across the room, reading a newspaper, talking together, laughing and calling out. We wouldn't be allowed to be like that in our school House of Commons. In our section"—I think he means the section up there in the gallery—"the security guard wouldn't let us wave, point, laugh, talk or stand to see better."

I thought, isn't it ironic that he would have noticed that? You can see them up there; they're very diligent in their job, our wonderful security people, at going at the first hint of anything—standing up, scratching your ear or whatever. They're up there being told they can't do that, and when they watch what's going on down here, almost anything goes. Short of physical assault, almost anything goes. I think there's a lesson in that, in terms of the observation of Scott Donald, Leader of the Opposition at Mount Forest Public School: leadership by example.

Fourthly, a return to better days. This sounds like a nostalgic notion; maybe it is. You can't turn back the hands of time, but if we can't get along better in here and do our business without the acrimony that has set in and the sharp edge that is its constant nature, then I think it will be absolutely beyond contradiction that we won't be able to work together to solve the real problems. I think that when people tell me it used to be different, that's what they mean: There was a day when you could sit and talk about issues; when you could even just sit together and share experiences. That was because the atmosphere here was such that you could do that. Today it's harder. It happens, to some extent, but it's much harder. I don't think that's wrong.

I was asked as recently as five minutes ago out there—it's about the sixth time I've been asked by the press—whether I'd had a call from the minister, her officials or anybody else about the adoption matter, to embark on discussions about how we might address some of the concerns we're raising. I said, "You and your colleagues ask me about that all the time. I can tell you right now, the number of calls I've had since I became the leader of this party, from anybody in the government of Ontario—from the cabinet or any official of the government of Ontario—is one. I had one phone call two weeks ago from Ms. Cavoukian, who phoned me to talk about this issue. No other minister has ever called."

I'm not suggesting they should be occupying their time phoning me all the time, but I am the leader of the official opposition. If there are issues that we might more expeditiously and productively deal with in this House, especially difficult ones, I would have thought there would be a phone call, a note or somebody coming over and saying, "Can we talk about this?" Certainly, that's

the way you deal with it in every other aspect of life, everywhere: business, family, school, everywhere. Here—no way; no such phone calls. People laugh; the Minister of Energy got up the other day and said I was talking about some sort of a Rosedale tea party. Well, that's part of what I'm talking about here. I am talking about us finding a way to do the people's business in a civilized way, to work together as they expect us to do, in the public interest, and to try hard, while we will disagree many times, to address the public interest and to find ways we can solve those problems in the public interest together, instead of what they see here, which is the sort of video game thing to which this has degenerated.

My final comment is this—how am I doing?

Interjections.

Mr. Tory: See? I'm just wrapping up, because there are others who want to speak. He said a minute; you said 30 seconds. I'm taking the minute.

I think the other reason why we should address this is that there clearly is a better way. We've seen it in the past; we've seen it in other Legislatures in this country. There are people in this House on all sides who have told me they've been to Alberta; they've been to Quebec, where, frankly, Mr. Speaker, you'd never have to get on your feet and say, "Order." The word is hardly ever spoken, because people understand that they're there to do the public's business and to do it in a civilized, productive and respectful way.

I will conclude by saying this: I believe it is simply a matter of will, on all sides. We don't get any prizes over here for perfect behaviour, nor does anybody on any side of this House. It's a matter of will. I said the other day, talking to Carol Goar, "If we went out and did a survey of 100 of our constituents or 1,000 of our constituents, I have absolutely no doubt what the results would be in any riding of 103 in this province. They would say, 'Clean up your act. Do better.'" So if you know that's true—and I'll bet you there will be no one in this House who will stand up and disagree with this—then it becomes a matter of whether we have the will, whether we think the role we have to play here is important enough, whether we think that productivity and leadership by example, confidence in public institutions, confidence in politicians is important enough to do something about it.

By talking about it, all I'm trying to do is take a first step, to lead by example in the way I conduct myself and in the way I try to work with my colleagues to encourage that kind of thing to happen. I think it's important. As I say, the resolution perhaps should have said that we call upon ourselves, all of us, to do this, and if so, I apologize and should have reworded it that way. But I think the message is clear: It's all of us to do it, all of us to have the will, and then just get on with it.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want to indicate that New Democrats join in their support of this motion. I am fortunate, along with some others, to have been here long enough that I recall a period of time that the sponsor of this motion refers to in his comments.

A couple of observations. One, there was a time where the debate in here was as bitter and divisive as any debate could ever be, but nonetheless there was a level of regard reflected in the demeanour of individual members that didn't denigrate, and where *ad hominem* was the exception rather than the rule.

I recall a time before time allocation, when there were no limits—Mr. Bradley and I have spoken about this often—on the lengths of speeches or the length of time that someone could hold the floor, for instance. I recall members from time to time holding the floor for literally day after day after day after day, to the point of weeks on end. But I say to you that in that period of time—and it wasn't a lengthy period of time while I was here when that standard prevailed. During that period of time where there were no limits on the length of speeches and where there was no time allocation—there was the common law closure but no time allocation—I'm convinced that more legislation got passed.

Why would you keep the floor? Why would you maintain debate on an issue? It wouldn't be a matter of talking out the clock. It would be a matter of wanting to attract attention to a particular piece of legislation or a particular government policy. The fact is that when legislation is passed in the course of two or three days of second reading debate, a very, very compressed press gallery—and others will know what I mean by that as well; there are far fewer editorial staff working for newspapers, certainly here at Queen's Park—has all that much more difficulty, with scarce editorial space in the paper, in getting particular messages out. So there was a time when members, yes, and parties and caucuses would spend a great deal of time drawing attention to a particular issue.

But it also meant that when there were relatively benign matters, matters that could be dealt with in a more perfunctory way, they were dealt with in a more perfunctory way. No limit on speaking time, no time allocation standing order, yet more legislation was passed, and we're not talking about an absence of partisanship or overt conflict in ideology and philosophy.

I remember a time—and I'm not that old; I'm not as old as Mr. Bradley, for instance. I haven't been here as long as Mr. Bradley either, but if I remember, he certainly will. I remember when during the course of major addresses—for instance, when a caucus leader, a party leader, spoke, or when lead-off speeches were being made, assuming, of course, that those lead-off speeches contained legitimately something akin to an expression of the party's position on a particular issue—there was an unspoken accord about not heckling. Oh, no; that's not true. There was the occasional heckle, because I remember a time when the heckle was witty, when it was rare, and when it, perhaps best put, reflected that historic spirit of parliamentary debate and verbal duelling as compared to—I trust Mr. Tory is speaking of this as well when he addresses this issue—the rather embarrassing phenomenon of hecklers not realizing that it's their job to embarrass the speaker, as compared to them-

selves. And that is certainly third-rate heckling on a good day. It is.

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Look, am I going to plead innocence? I am not about to confess guilt, but I'm not about to, at the same time, stand here and say, "Oh, I have never found myself a party to any of these things." Of course I have. Interestingly, like some others, I came here from a background in court. That's where I spent four and five days a week in my work before I came to Queen's Park. I thought, like some of the other people here with similar backgrounds—I'm not talking about as an accused, Ms. Broten, I'm talking about as counsel, although there were times—I spent four to five days in court, at least 48 weeks out of the year, and I came from a professional culture where I thought it's not complicated if you get your facts, if you research the background, if you look at precedent, as lawyers like Mr. Tory are inclined to say. Where you present your argument in a reasonably logical, rational way, you expect people to listen to it, and you might just have a chance at persuading fair-minded people to support your case.

Of all the inappropriate backgrounds to come from, to come to Queen's Park, it's true. In the course of thinking about this debate, I recalled reading *A Capital Scandal* by Fife and Warren, their overview, and it's both entertaining but very astute. *A Capital Scandal*: It was published back in 1991. Robert Fife, of course, is a journalist. They talk about that regrettable comment by Pierre Trudeau, and that was the occasion of Trudeau's now-famous pronouncement about parliamentary nobodies:

"The opposition seems to think that it has nothing else to do but talk.... The best place in which to talk, if they want a quorum, is, of course, Parliament. When they get home, when they get out of Parliament, when they are 50 yards from Parliament Hill, they are no longer honourable members—they are just nobodies."

They go on to criticize Brian Mulroney for displaying the same sort of disdain for individual members of Parliament. Mulroney is reported to have made the comment: "Albertans will have to decide whether they want this," referring to his own cabinet members, "or some backbenchers," sneeringly.

I have often had occasion to note in speeches and have made reference to the Trudeau comment about mere backbenchers are but nobodies once they're 50 yards from Parliament Hill, and over the course of my time here, it's more notable than not that cabinet ministers can be but nobodies sitting in their seats. When you look at the style of government—I'm not going suggest it began with this government. As a matter of fact, I think I was here when it began. Enough said. I think I was here when the style began of government by the Premier's office.

Some of the clerks recall that period too, and of course they're non-judgmental about it but for their memoirs, years down the road. I witnessed—I was here at a very fortunate time for me—that transformation of Parliament to government not just by executive, but to government by Premier's office and even more tragically, increas-

ingly, government by non-elected persons, a very regrettable transformation. This province certainly didn't lead the way because the notable culprits, Trudeau among them, were people who did that on Parliament Hill. I don't say this out of any particular partisanship or malice; it's been well documented by how many political observers and historians.

I have seen this Parliament when bills not going to committee was the exception rather than the rule and when the committee wasn't just a matter of lip service—"Oh, we'll have a couple of days of committee"—but when some committees, although it sounds bizarre now, actually went out of their way to generate attendance, to whip up work for themselves. They did. Mind you, I suppose it's much more difficult, it's harder work, when you do that. But the pay rate here—I don't want to get into that debate, but nobody here is earning the minimum wage. Some of the staff probably are when you count the number of hours they work, but no elected person. Elected people are reasonably well paid in this country, and certainly in this province. So I remember that.

I remember the transition, the transformation, the metamorphosis of committees to the point—and I think other members will share this as well—where increasingly members of the public who came to committee would walk out of that committee room shaking their heads, saying, "What the hell did I just get myself into? Why did I," or their team of people or their community group or their professional association or what have you, "spend hours and hours analyzing a piece of legislation, come here to Queen's Park, prepared legitimately, bona fide"—they're not lobbying for one cause or the other, but in a bona fide way trying to assist, free, no charge, the government, a Parliament, to improve a piece of legislation.

I was a witness—a much younger MPP, I tell you, skinnier and darker-haired—to the transformation of the public who have attended a committee increasingly walking out and shaking their heads, the public chastising the committee for not listening, literally being bold enough to chastise them as members would chat, do crossword puzzles, doodle and write notes to Lord knows who, or get up and wander out in the midst of—and I understand that people from time to time have to get up out of the committee. As I get older, it happens more frequently to me. But think about it. I'm talking about a member of the public, somebody for whom coming to Queen's Park and appearing in front of a committee is a big deal, and it is a big deal; it should be a big deal. They've worked darn hard on that submission, and they've done it for nothing. They come into that committee room and they're talking to two out of—what is it, 12 members? Seven, eight, nine members? That's not very impressive, is it?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): But we listen.

Mr. Kormos: Oh. There is a heckle, an interjection, which Hansard will now record, from Khalil Ramal of London-Fanshawe, so typical of the attitude that's expressed.

I was a—you can't say freshman any more, but what do you call them?—novice MPP back in the Peterson government of 1987. I came here in 1988. It's been remarkable how over the course of but those few years I've witnessed such an incredible turnover here at Queen's Park—Norm Sterling yet a few years more, and Jim Bradley a few more years himself in terms of witness. It's the exception rather than the rule that newly elected members find themselves re-elected, by and large. And I was blessed, I suppose, because I got elected to an opposition seat. I had mentors in my caucus—along with other caucuses, I should indicate. I was so fortunate. I was here and I watched Ian Scott, I watched Nixon, people like that. I watched Andy Brandt. I watched Norm Sterling and Bob Runciman at their youthful best. But I was very fortunate to have been the beneficiary of some—to name the New Democrats, they're legion: David Reville, for those of you who recall him, and so many others.

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I was so fortunate to have been mentored by some very skilled parliamentarians, really skilled. It didn't take me long to learn that when you're asking questions in question period, you don't go for Bob Nixon or Ian Scott; why waste your time? You go for, as the TV show says, "The Weakest Link." Have you noticed lately? It's a strategy that hasn't been lost on the New Democrats even to this day.

I saw effective people and I, quite frankly, spent more than a little bit of time listening rather than talking. I think that served me well. I have seen the—dare I say it?—cockiness of people who are cursed, and I will say it's a curse, of being elected directly to government, because ambitious people elected directly to government, more frequently than not, have no understanding of what the opposition's job is.

I say this to you: I have seen good governments and bad governments—no, I'll put it this way: I have seen governments in good times and in bad times. But I tell you, bad government has more likely been the result of an opposition that's been cut off at the knees or eunuched or muzzled than it is anything else.

One of the things that I urge our groups when they tour the chamber to have pointed out to them is up there, where you see the two symbols in the plaster work—I don't know what the proper name for that kind of plaster work is—the friezes. Facing the government—and the symbolism shouldn't be lost on people—is the owl, reminding government members to exercise wisdom. The rump can't see it. That becomes apparent from time to time. Facing the opposition members is an eagle, reminding opposition members to be vigilant and to be tenacious and to be tough and to be fierce.

Question period, one of the most important parts of a legislative day, but one hour—and I appreciate that there are practices and variations of those practices from Parliament to Parliament—is the property, in my respectful view, of the opposition. It is the one hour per legislative day—well, not really, because we have these darned evening sittings, which constitute a legislative day and

deny us an opposition period, which is why New Democrats have never supported sitting in the evening. We genuinely do not believe that there should be a legislative day, but for on consent, without there being a question period. Question period is that scarce and the most valuable and the most important element of a democratic Parliament. I really believe that. I believe it not only because I read it in any number of good works about Parliaments, but because I believe that my few years here have demonstrated that to me.

That's not to say, I suppose, that government members shouldn't participate in question period, and it's not to say that when government members participate in question period, they should be calling upon their colleagues as ministers to resign or to throw themselves on their swords. But surely one of the least impressive portions of question period is the proverbial lob balls from government backbenchers, when in fact there isn't a single government backbencher who doesn't have something important to ask a minister about their riding or about an issue about which they are particularly passionate. I'm not suggesting, once again, that government backbenchers—even though some of my colleagues suggest that I did that to them when they were in cabinet and NDPers—should be calling upon their minister colleagues to resign. But surely that scarce one hour a day of question period is useful for backbenchers who want some profile to important issues for them or for their ridings and for their constituents.

I understand, oh, how many years later, that spin is spin. We all know what the books say and what the professionals teach you in those spin doctor courses on how to answer questions and how not to answer questions, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's pathetic enough when the answer is inadequate; it's even more pathetic when the question is inadequate and does not serve any of us well, least of all, in my respectful view. And I've done it; I've been a government backbencher asking my colleagues questions. They didn't find it pleasant. There was no love lost from time to time. That's OK. You know what? At the end of the day, who are we most beholden to? We really are most beholden to our constituents, aren't we, the folks who send us here to Queen's Park? I don't get overly sentimental about Queen's Park and about being here, but when you think about it, there are only 103 Ontarians at any given point in time who have the privilege of doing this; 103 out of 11 million, 12 million folks.

Warren and Fife also bemoan the decline, not of oratory but of speaking. There are government members here—newly elected ones as well; there are long-serving ones who impress me and there are newly elected ones who impress me; some of them are here now and some aren't—who I am convinced would flourish if given the opportunity to take to the floor more often, I really am, and who I am prepared to sit and listen to, were they to be addressing particular issues. But, Lord Jesus, to listen to any more of those canned speeches is painful. It's painful for us, it's painful for the audience, it's painful

for the pages, it's painful for the Clerk's table, and it surely is agonizing for any thinking Speaker.

Warren and Fife bemoan the absence of speech-making, of people genuinely addressing issues. I bemoan the overly used fraudulent point of order. You know exactly what I'm talking about: the point of order made either by a member who doesn't know what a point of order is or by a member who wants to get their name in Hansard that day, and I say there's a far better way to do it. Rise to your feet and take a role in the debate.

There's only one way to overcome this, of course. Look, I think there are some government members—cabinet ministers do what they've got to do and they're paid better than everybody else for doing it, but there are some government backbenchers in this Parliament whose wings are being clipped, and they may not know it, who are being shackled, and they may not appreciate it, and who are being dealt with through a junket here or there—go here on behalf of somebody or there on behalf of somebody—or, “We'll make you the vice-vice-deputy chair of the regulations committee.” You know what I'm talking about. That should be of concern to us.

Let me say this. My Speakers go back to Hugh Edighoffer, and that's not really that many Speakers ago. Hugh Edighoffer was as partisan and capable a Liberal as there was. I was very fortunate in this regard too, I really was. Not only did I have strong mentors within my own caucus and elsewhere in this Legislature, but I had a Speaker who, whether he did it consciously or not, certainly knew how to assist a young tyro member in (1) learning the rules and (2) learning effective procedure. Hugh Edighoffer was a darned good Speaker.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): He was a master.

Mr. Kormos: An interjection by Hampton: “He was a master.”

Mr. Hampton: He was.

Mr. Kormos: And he was. Hampton says again, “He was.”

But that was a valuable and important experience for me, it really was. I am extremely grateful to Edighoffer, because he was a tough Speaker too. He wasn't full of bluster, he didn't fly by the seat of his pants, but when he stood up, people sat down.

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If there's one thing that has to happen if there's going to be an effective Speaker, all of the other rulings aside—people who are more into things like hockey or refereed or umpired sports will understand this as well—it is that when the Speaker stands up, people have got to sit down or else there is no control over the process, over the House, over the members whatsoever.

I am more than concerned about the fact that in this chamber a Speaker can stand, for instance, and never mind newly elected members who may not know the standing orders as well as they will in years to come, but experienced cabinet members will continue to speak over the Speaker.

There was a time, as I read it, that when a Speaker was challenged in that sort of way by his own people—this is

before the so-called democratically elected Speaker—that Speaker had to resign. That Speaker had lost the confidence. In other words, if you defied the Speaker in that way, you didn't get thrown out; the Speaker resigned because the Speaker had lost the confidence.

I believe that one of the ways—perhaps the motion was tragically misworded in referring to the government. Mr. Tory has already spoken to that. I can't imagine anybody in this House not supporting that resolution, but if there's a message at all, it's got to be a message that this House deserves: a Speaker who is firm, who is clear, who doesn't plead with members for their compliance, but who commands it by virtue of the support we have to have for a Speaker if that Speaker is going to be effective.

I call upon the Chair to reflect on the fact that the Chair has a very significant role to play. How many times has the Chair stood up during any time of day—question period, along with orders of the day—and called upon people to restore order? Well, that sort of whiny approach to speaking, to being a Speaker, isn't what's going to restore order. I put to you, sir, that the Speaker could clean this House up in, oh, I would say two sessional days' time. No trouble at all. Two sessional days. Some clocks could be cleaned awfully fast.

I'm not about to pretend that New Democrats have not taken advantage from time to time. Certainly I don't expect any of the Conservatives to pretend that. I don't expect any of the government to pretend they haven't taken advantage of less than firm rulings on the part of the Speaker—inconsistency.

I'm far less concerned about the language that is used, the King's or Queen's English, in the course of aggressive and active debate than I am about a demeaning style of debate. You know, you should know, I think you understand that I have not been pleased with the succession of rulings from the Chair that, for instance, restrict the type of language we use, because the old two-swords-length distance between the two sides is about words. That's why we have the two-swords length. We don't engage in fisticuffs and in sword fights. Well, the sword fights, no, but I'm sure there have been—it's those late-night sittings, which again are a problem in themselves. You know what they breed. Do they breed quality debate? Oh, give me a break.

I'm concerned about the ongoing restriction of the words that you can or can't use. You see, one of the things that I've had occasion to note so often—think about this, Speaker—is that it's perfectly OK to lie in this chamber, but it's not OK to call the person doing the lying a liar, is it? It's perfectly OK to lie in this chamber, but it's unparliamentary to tell somebody that they've told a lie. I suppose that's one of the Trivial Pursuit great ironies of the rules of Parliament. But we've witnessed an increased muting of voices, and I'm not sure that's a good thing. What that means is that when voices are muted and words are censored and members are gagged, they resort to other things, other methods and other styles and tactics of expressing displeasure.

Why, I spent overnight in here with a Liberal opposition member who refused to leave his seat. I supported him, along with other opposition members. The Conservative government was fit to be tied. They didn't know whether they were—well, they were fit to be tied. They didn't know how they were going to deal with it, because even natural requirements did not deter this member from sitting here throughout the night. New Democrats supported that member in his protest, because, you see, that was all that was left. Remember what had been happening? The House had been sitting 24 hours. The government wanted to expedite the passage of their legislation. The government didn't want to take the heat, and there was heat to be taken. I'm convinced, not that I can read minds, that there were some people who were members of that government who, in hindsight, regret having done that—not not taking the heat, but making the decision that they did. But of course, you can't put the toothpaste back in the tube, can you?

I remember a Liberal opposition member going to that length, and there are times when extraordinary measures are called for. I'm convinced that those times are less and less frequent if you encourage and facilitate and accommodate wide-ranging and free debate and if you also accommodate opposition members who are compelled—and not who feel compelled—to use their time in this Legislature to focus attention on a particular bill and upon a particular issue. So people should be careful what they wish for.

I remember a majority government supporting one of its members' calls to the Speaker to forbid symbolic ribbons, the mere colour, remember? That means now—although I think some common sense is starting to prevail—that people who show up, like union members wearing a little CAW logo on their T-shirt, have been forced to remove their T-shirts, literally to disrobe, and turn them inside out. Some yuppie can come in with an alligator above their shirt pocket—

Mr. Hampton: Lacoste.

Mr. Kormos: Lacoste, right—or wear some designer crap that they've overpaid for; Mr. Berardinetti will address that. That's what happens you're up with the carriage trade on Bloor. Come with me down to Queen Street East to buy clothes and you'll be doing fine, Mr. Berardinetti. Eight-dollar haircut, \$2 tip: Steve Baltich, Welland south. And you know what? If your wife wants to come down, he'll cut hers for eight bucks too.

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But you know, be careful what one wishes for. I have expressed—and I value the clerks' advice. The fact is, we need the clerks' advice. You know why? Because Beauchesne—what's the new federal one?

Interjection: Marleau.

Mr. Kormos: Marleau, all of these—and I've read this stuff. I've read these books. Sadly, I've read them. I've even read them again. But the problem is that these classic and current reference works on procedure can, from time to time, only serve to confuse, because this House has gone off on wild, woolly courses in terms of

precedent and unique, idiosyncratic little procedures for this House. I've prevailed upon the clerks, and I'd really welcome it—I think all of us would, notwithstanding the great amount of work—with their talent and their background, to prepare an annotated standing orders. Think about how valuable that would be, with precedent and understanding, because then perhaps it might be more useful, especially for newer members, and a little bit more pleasant to read. But sadly, Beauchesne and Marleau and Montpetit are of modest use, because what are classic precedents are no longer applicable in this House. And that's regrettable too. What that means is that a Speaker, who should be guided by clerks, might also want to find himself committed to bringing us back to some classic positions in terms of interpretation of the standing orders. It's extremely frustrating, when you read the standing orders, when you read the reference works, when they appear to accommodate the opposition member, but then you find out that a Speaker has inevitably, in the presence of a majority government, interpreted that particular standing order to be more restrictive rather than less restrictive vis-à-vis the member and his or her rights.

Look, I don't know if it's going to happen in Mr. Tory's or my participation as elected members at Queen's Park. It's a matter of will. It's a matter of new members getting some support and advice and counsel from older members in their caucus who remember when things weren't like they are now. And finally—and I can't emphasize this enough—it's a matter of us getting genuine leadership from a Speaker, leadership from a Speaker who, although he is in so many respects a servant of the House, a servant of the chamber, in terms of that service, should be providing that leadership. Not capricious, not whimsical, not how he or she happens to perceive the nature of things from one day as compared to the next, but with a view in mind of affording all members an opportunity to take the floor and engage in debate: strong, aggressive debate, adversarial debate, but debate that's accompanied by regard to other members.

Mind you, then there's some onus on the members to make sure they're not simply spouting some pathetic and horribly watered down and meaningless, flaccid spin line. So many of those high-priced spin doctors are so overpaid. Talk about wanting to get your money back. Seriously, talk about consumer fraud. Where's the minister of consumer relations when we need him? Trust me, it's overrated. And I watch the spin lines being mouthed from the scripts in committees; I watch them being mouthed from scripts here in the chamber. It doesn't help me learn a whole lot more about a member or his or her constituents or his or her constituency. That's just one of the things that's important about the chamber, us learning about each other's constituencies and the members and the constituencies that we represent. Like I told some of the injured workers outside today, there are folks in here who just don't understand what not having had an increase in their cost of living over the course of the last 10 years really means. It means a 20% reduction in their

purchasing power, right? There are folks in here sufficiently insulated from the real world that they simply don't know that. They don't understand that as part of their own reality.

Strong, effective leadership from a Speaker would be oh, such a good first start. And I say that if this chamber were to do anything in unison, it would be to call for that in a clear, clear united voice. Thank you kindly, Speaker.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I am obliged to participate in the debate this afternoon, which is on a rather interesting subject, particularly when we have witnessed some rather unparliamentary activity on the part of the party that the leader represents. I don't criticize that, because I have witnessed it over the years, and I'm not critical of members who have participated in that, but it's a little precious to get these lectures about decorum and lectures about how the House should work from a leader who is leading a party where there are people who clearly are prepared to speak out whenever they wish to, to accuse the government of lying, to accuse people of being crooks, to accuse people of being all kinds of things which are rather nasty. As I say, I have heard those and I have not been particularly critical of the individuals in that case in the heat of parliamentary debate, but I find it a little precious when I see that coming forward as though somehow there is someone who is well above that.

If we want to go back to some of the things in politics that have poisoned it, I can think of television advertising, which has poisoned some of the atmosphere as well. I remember very well an ad in the 1993 federal campaign of a Prime Minister being made fun of, a Prime Minister who had Bell's palsy. There was an ad put forward by the Conservative Party of the day that made fun of that Prime Minister, wanted to make him look stupid, wanted to make him look as though he wasn't acceptable to be a Prime Minister of Canada. That is part of the whole process as well, the poisoning of the atmosphere, and no party is innocent in that regard, may I say, in terms of negative advertising; no party is. But that's part of the entire mix.

I listened as well to a leader of a political party who put the boots to the opposition when they were in power, who took away virtually every tool that the opposition had to be able to oppose the government in a very good way. I want to pay credit. I'm not playing the game of divide and conquer, but the member for Lanark-Carleton, the longest-serving member of the Legislature, has spoken on many occasions about the rules of the House and I think has come up with some good suggestions, some of which, by the way, have been adopted by various governments.

One of the things that happened was that the individual role of the member was diminished considerably. The member for Niagara Centre made reference to the confining of speeches to a short period of time, the cutting off of that debate. When that happened, opposition members looked for other ways to block the

government, if you will, and used tricks which were simply not as effective in the long run, probably, and not as acceptable.

I watched time allocation after time allocation after time allocation of bills from this government. I think there's a reference made to it. From 1995 to 2003, the Harris and Eves governments used time allocation over 100 times. They may have felt they were justified in their own mind, but they used it over 100 times, a staggering number when we compare it to Bob Rae's government, which used it 24 times, and David Peterson, who used it a mere four times.

Under the Eves government alone, there were time allocation motions on over three quarters of the bills passed, and they allowed only one of these bills to receive third reading debate. Time allocation as used by the Tories did not allow committee hearings, in many cases, nor did it allow third reading debate. In fact, under Ernie Eves's government—I'm not saying Mr. Eves himself—only once did a time allocation motion allow for third reading. There were all kinds of closure motions, all kinds of opportunities to shut down debate. That did not enhance the role of the opposition, because I happen to believe that in our democracy the opposition has a very important role to play, and yet I saw a government that put the boots to the opposition constantly.

I well remember Bill 26, the bully bill, as they called it, which in effect threw everything but the kitchen sink into one particular bill and shoved it through the Legislature. The opposition took rather drastic action. They did not want to take that action, but took rather drastic action as a result of that. So when the rule changes took place, when government House leader after government House leader was ordered by the Conservative government to change the rules of the House, to diminish the role of individual members and to block the opposition from utilizing what were acceptable ways of slowing down the government and forcing the government to reconsider, that's when we started to see problems really arising in this House as members became frustrated as a result of that.

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When the government used over \$400 million worth of government advertising, which the opposition didn't have available to it, to promote themselves, to put the boots to the teachers on one occasion or another—this was partisan advertising used by the government—that certainly diminished the role and responsibility of this Legislature.

I believe that when cabinet ministers are able to allocate the amount of time for any bill on so many occasions, that's not good for the democratic process. That doesn't mean that there is never a case to use time allocation; there may well be. But I'm going to tell you that the change in this House came as a result of the change of the rules of the Ontario Legislature.

The first government I've ever seen use a tactic that I thought was totally inappropriate was the one that held the budget at the Magna offices. Here we have the On-

tario Legislature, where you're supposed to present the budget. The opposition speaks, the government speaks, and I'm always interested to hear what both have to say. But this previous government made a choice to have the budget presented at Magna, a private corporation. If that wasn't an affront to the Legislature, I don't know what was.

I remember, when the greenbelt debate was on, some of the accusations that were flying back and forth. I understand it wasn't the Leader of the Opposition who got up to ask these questions, but it was certainly what they used to call in the lexicon "henchmen," if someone other than the leader asked the question. They would get up and ask the nasty questions of the Premier, or the Prime Minister in the federal House, or certain ministers.

So I think there is a long way to go when we want to try to correct the problems that exist. But I think it is exceedingly important that we know why those problems arose and that we have some history and some context. When I read the op-ed piece in the *Toronto Star* about bringing civility back into politics, I said, "Who could possibly disagree with this?" But I do look at some of the history and some of the reasons we're presented with the situation we're presented with today.

I've seen members engage in activities which are very raucous, and I understand that, because sometimes the emotions are very strong in this House, and I don't condemn them for that. What we don't want to do is change this building into a corporate boardroom where simply no one is allowed to perhaps exercise some emotion from time to time verbally. I think it's important that those outlets be there. I have seen members here who are genuinely impassioned about subjects, and they have brought those subjects forward.

Are there days when the House is overly raucous? Of course there are days when that happens. Fortunately, most of those days are days which are few and far between, and it's focused largely on question period, as opposed to other times.

I've seen members send napkins over to the Premier. I've heard one member referred to as "George Smitherman, BS" by people in the House. I understand those things happen. It's retort that comes back and forth. But I just find it a little precious to get the lectures on these things. I'm not condemning. I don't want to condemn the Leader of the Opposition or any of his members for this, but I just find it precious getting a lecture on these things, when I see fault that perhaps exists at all times in this House.

I think we have an opportunity to improve the rules over the years. We've seen a lot more debate in committee that takes place at the present time, a lot more agreements between the opposition and the government on legislation proceeding, and that's the way, of course, it should be.

I suspect this resolution will be approved today. I can't think of anybody who is going to oppose this particular resolution. I suspect that members of the House will, as they always do, try to behave in the most appropriate

manner possible within the confines of the kind of raucous debate that emerges from time to time, but I think it's very important for the people of the province to know why we are in the situation we are in today.

I simply wish that those members on the government side who were so concerned about this some period of time ago, the members who sit on the opposition side at the present time and who were members of a government and didn't express those concerns, I wish they had expressed them. Perhaps they did behind closed doors. I want to give them their credit, but I wish they had been this outspoken when their own Premiers were putting the boots to the opposition over the years.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I only have a few minutes to speak in response to my colleague Mr. Bradley. I can only say that, in three years as a government House leader, I did not gain the kind of cooperation from the opposition that your House leader now gains from this opposition in terms of passing legislation. I suggest to him only that the reason we had to move time allocation was that we were pushed to three and four days of debate in this place, even on minor issues. But let's not go back. Let's go forward and think about what we can do in the future.

Mr. Kormos pointed out the tremendous power that is located at the leaders' doors, and mostly at the Premier's door. Change will only occur in this place with strong leadership by our three leaders in this place. In particular, that leadership must come from the government side. We've had over 300 votes in this place, and on only one occasion, on a very local bill, Bill 186, the Peel bill dealing with regional representation, have any of the back-bench stepped out and voted against a government initiative. We've had something like 300 to 400 amendments put forward in committees of this Legislature, and only on six or seven occasions have amendments been accepted in those committees.

I think that results from the fact that we have this kind of mind-set, particularly in government, that if we accept an argument, if we listen to debate and alter our path as we go down the legislative process from second to third reading, somehow we as government are showing weakness. Instead I would like to say that I'm very much proud of John Tory and his direction to our caucus that on occasion, many occasions, it is not that important to have solidarity on every vote that comes in front of this Legislature. It's more important for us on those particular votes, those votes that I would call medium- and low-intensive in terms of political outcome, that we listen to our constituents, that we listen to the debate and that we then cast our vote in that regard.

I would say to those who would say, like Eric Dowd did in one of the papers, that the Tories are divided—I responded to that column. I say we're not divided, but what we are doing here is showing the strength of our leader, that he can explain there are differences across our province. There are differences between our constituents who we represent, and it's only through a very strong Premier that we are actually going to get reform in

this place to make this a better place to legislate, a better place for representation. I would say, in pleading to the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, show some strength, allow your backbench to have some individuality, listen to the debate and make some of your decisions that way. That will lead to less cynicism and more support from the Ontario public.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke–Lakeshore): The last few speakers who have spoken have been in this Legislature a lot longer than I, but what I can bring to the debate, I think, is a perspective of coming from another world, a world where aggressive, heated debate did happen, but there was a difference. As a litigator in my previous life, everyone in the courtroom listened to what you had to say. They had to be silent as you spoke and made your case as aggressively and vehemently as possible. They didn't yell at you; they didn't call you names; they didn't say sexist or derogatory comments. They didn't try to get you off track in what you were trying to say. They did listen, and you had your opportunity to raise your case before the trier of fact, before a decision-maker—to, as Mr. Kormos said, try to convince someone that you were right and the other was wrong. The difference was, you weren't trying to convince each other. I was not trying to convince my colleague on the other side of the desk that my clients were right and his were wrong. I was trying to convince the trier of fact.

1700

In this Legislature, who is our trier of fact? Who are we trying to convince? We're trying to convince the people of the province that what the government wants to accomplish with a certain piece of legislation is the right thing to do for the province. It's the role of the opposition to bring forward their arguments about why it's the wrong thing to do. The decision is to be made in the outside world. But for Ontarians to truly understand the debate, what we have to do—something that in fact we're seeing today—is to speak in this Legislature about the topic that is under debate. It has been gruelling and long hours when we've had to sit in this Legislature late at night and listen to colleagues from all sides of the House talk about something that was irrelevant to the point we were debating.

I guess if I could raise one point, I would suggest that we should talk about the legislation that's being debated, and I would like to receive the comments from the opposition. The dialogue that Mr. Tory, the Leader of the Opposition, and Mr. Kormos, the member from Niagara, are talking about is not the debates that happen here, but they do happen. I have the privilege of sitting on the public accounts committee. On that committee, behind closed doors, there is a lot of discussion and compromise. Thoughtful progress is made by all members of all parties, and we reach resolution on every issue—what we will put in the report from public accounts. Unfortunately, the citizens of the province don't see that. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition, new to this place, probably has not yet seen how we function in those settings.

This summer, in an unprecedented fashion, on another frame, we had the emergency management legislation drafted by an all-party committee. For the first time ever, a committee was selected to draft substantive legislation, and we had some significant debates and dialogue amongst ourselves. We moved forward with a piece of legislation that we thought was reflective of the representations we had heard, and it was brought forward by members of committee.

So perhaps the dialogue and the phone calls that the Leader of the Opposition is wishing he would get don't happen in this Legislature. They didn't happen in the courtroom and they're unlikely to happen here. We can stop yelling, we can stop calling names, and that would really help in terms of the debate that happens in this Legislature, but the dialogue and the compromise and the very things that are being discussed, those things do happen in other parts of this building, in other aspects of what we do in this Legislature.

I also want to talk about many of the issues that have been raised with respect to committee hearings and recognize the fact that all major government legislation has received committee time. Bill 8 went to committee for 14 days, Bill 27 for eight days, Bill 31 for seven days, Bill 100 for nine days. So the history to get to this place where we did not see legislation go to committee in the past—we have broken that. Our government is committed to opening the Legislature to fuller debate and making sure that we have that substantive debate.

So I say, in closing, that I'm proud to be part of a government that has tried to change the way we do business in this Legislature since the last gasps of the Harris and Eves days. Dignity and decorum should be used with consistency and continuity, not when it's politically expedient. I guess that's what I would suggest to the Leader of the Opposition: Let's start to see some conduct that is dignified and represents the decorum that he speaks about. Certainly all of us would prefer to do business and represent our constituents in that type of forum.

The Acting Speaker: Before I call for further debate, there are a number of discussions going on. I have to say that in my four years here, this has been one of the better debates and I would like to hear it all, so I would ask that the other discussions, if you need to have them, take place outside, please.

I will recognize further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I join John Tory's call for legislative conduct to reflect a high degree of professionalism and respect. Much has been lost in this Legislature over my 10 years because of what I consider a two-pronged strategy from across the way to trump debate, allowing, first, bitter invective and, more recently, silence to trump debate.

It was an eye-opener for me 10 years ago when I experienced first-hand the angry interruptions and invective that have become commonplace. For 10 years, I, like many, have used the earphone to hear what's going on. I don't listen to the French translation.

I have in my hands here Hansard from one of my first two-minute hits in October 1995, and Hansard records that I was harassed incessantly by the opposition's attempts to prevent me from speaking. Ten years later, just last week—again I have Hansard—I'm responding to a Minister of the Environment statement, during which the Minister of Agriculture felt it was his chance to attempt to shout me down; again, all duly recorded in Hansard.

So for 10 years now I've been witness to what I consider, in many cases, a Liberal-spawned degradation of this House that's lowered the level of debate to what I describe as screaming monkeys, creating semantic bedlam.

As Mr. Tory said, taking his seat for the first time in the Legislature, I believe there is a better way. He said it again this afternoon, and there is a better way. It includes respectful debate, it ensures that we do what we were elected to do, that we speak on behalf of our constituents and on behalf of our stakeholders. We can't do that in an atmosphere dominated by screaming monkeys, nor can we properly do that when this government utilizes its other tactic to trump debate, that being what I refer to as the Liberal conspiracy of silence.

Just yesterday, my PC colleagues fought for me to have a one-hour speech on Bill 164, and during last night's Bill 164 debate from 6:45 until midnight, not one government member rose to deliver a logical explanation of their own legislation. Five hours, and not one Liberal speech, not even from the Minister of Health, who was here briefly before his comments got the best of him.

If this government doesn't care about debating Bill 164, for example, why should the opposition? Why even call for debate? So my advice, based on 10 years as an MPP, to cabinet ministers is, stop heckling private members' debate. Get engaged. Speak up. Engage in respectful debate, and speak up.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): First of all, I want to congratulate an opposition motion put forward. Usually, as you know, opposition motions are an attempt to embarrass the government. This one is in the interests of every single member here and the place in which we work and the environment in which we work and the respect we try to command in the public of Ontario.

I suggest that no party should point a finger at any other party, because I haven't seen one party in recent history that has elevated in any way the rights of any single individual member or the opposition. In fact, it's been the reverse, and I'll say this to my friends across the way: The last time it happened, when there were real changes by the Harris government, I was truly depressed personally as a member.

We carry on with the same rules now, and I know there have been some attempts by the House leader to open up things and do things in a different way. In my opinion, the rules inhibit. They have favoured the government to be more expedient in the passage of its legislation, and so the balance is not there. That fosters the kind of behaviour, in my opinion, that it gets. So

when an opposition member feels they haven't got the time, or they can be cut off, or time allocation's employed—although I don't think that has been done too often recently—I'd just say, then silly things happen and tomfoolery takes place.

1710

I would like to make a few suggestions. First of all, we talk about electoral change and about electoral financial change. The last bastion of change we have is legislative change, the rules that govern the way in which we relate to each other and proceed in this House. We are one of the worst—I'd say the worst—in all of the Legislatures of Canada, including the federal government. We're actually the worst. I'm embarrassed sometimes when I see some of the youngsters up there looking at us starry-eyed. We are political leaders and models for this society, and it's pure embarrassment. The first thing they say to their teachers when the teacher asks them, "What was significant about your observation?" is, "Gee, we could never act like that in our classroom."

I think we all have a responsibility to participate and make a contribution. I'd like to suggest that there be an all-party committee of this House that takes a look at some of the rules. Some of the things I would suggest they look at include the role of the Speaker; private members' bills should be called for third reading if they pass second reading, and be afforded the required committee review; and committees should be able to initiate up to two bills per session, not necessarily that they have to, but that they could.

Question period could be more effective and enlightening with less preamble to questions, and possible groupings of ministers for questions, as takes place at Westminster. That should be explored. There should be a standing committee on how rules and procedures govern the Legislature itself; consideration of bills be done prior to first reading, in consultation, and more outside of Toronto because this is the government of Ontario, although I wonder sometimes if it isn't the government of Toronto. I'll pay for that comment.

There should be a one-minute rebuttal for ministers to come back. I was in opposition and you can say whatever the hell you want to whatever is said in ministerial statements. Let's give the minister one minute to respond. I think opposition reactions would be more accountable and we'd be more responsible, knowing the minister can come back and say, "That's not particularly the way it is; here's what would happen," one thing or another. That's something to consider.

There should be an expansion of the two-minute response during debate to three minutes. With respect to tabling reports in the Legislature, there should be an opportunity for comment by the person presenting the report, with a couple of minutes for the opposition to comment on their experience related to the writing and drafting of that report.

I would like to see a special committee formed to study and recommend changes to the government, and I would like to see our government respond favourably to that. I know it's doing that in other areas of government.

I say this as a member who has been here 13 years, a place in which, Mr. Caplan, I feel that sometimes we don't listen very well to each other—right here. Isn't it ironic that on a day in which we talk about our work together—

The Acting Speaker: I was going to take the member's point as a point well taken. I think perhaps the minister should be listening to the debate and I would ask him to do so.

Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Let me just give the minister a moment to rush back to his seat.

Where do you begin on this? There are so many items I could be touching on, but I was quite taken—honestly, I don't want it to appear that I'm a fan—by some of the things the member from Niagara Centre had to say in his long address today. I think he touched on some very salient points. One of the things that I see—

The Acting Speaker: Honourable member, excuse me. I would ask the minister, please, you've been requested by me and by other members here. This is a serious debate. You've been standing there for a long time. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Yakabuski: One of the things is that I don't have a previous record to this House that I sit in today. I noticed that when the Minister of Tourism talked, he laid a lot of the blame on the previous government. I'm not going to comment on that, but I certainly will comment on what the member for Lanark–Carleton said, that we have to move forward. I think the government has to take a leading role in that respect.

What I've observed here—and I was quite surprised, quite honestly—when I participate in a question period is the dismissive attitude that the government has toward opposition questions. They're not really interested in answering them. There is a spin that goes on, and I do understand that, because some things they're not in a position to answer directly at that time and they may be working on some responses, or they're working on the development of a policy to deal with that particular question. But it's the dismissive attitude, the chortling, looking at the lack of respect to the opposition's question, sometimes to the point where, you know, "Do they not have any idea what they're doing over there?" Well, if it's important to the opposition, I think it should be important to the government to at least give time to that. The member from Niagara Centre spoke about that. There is no question that question period should belong to the opposition. He's quite right when he says that we listen to at least 15 to 17 minutes a day, I believe, of questions being lobbed at the government from the government side to their ministers, which are, quite frankly, an absolute waste of time of this chamber. I think the public would agree that we can be far more productive in this.

Now, Speaker, you and I had the opportunity to visit the assembly in Quebec, and it was so different. As a

matter of fact, the Speaker, monsieur le Président of the National Assembly in Quebec, never once had to leave his chair during question period—not once. Question period is only 45 minutes there, not 60 minutes as in here, but far more productive, because the Speaker never had to leave his chair, not a single time. As a matter of fact, the most he ever got to was to raise one cheek out of the chair and everything stopped. That's as close as he got to getting out of the chair, because there was a great respect for the Speaker in that chamber and also a respect on both sides of the House for the decorum that they would adhere to. There was no heckling on either side. Questions were asked. I'm not saying questions were answered, quite frankly, because it's all in French and I couldn't understand it anyway, but there was certainly at least civility in the debate or the period at that time.

I don't have a whole lot of time. We could go on about this all day, and I do want to respect the rights of other members of our caucus to talk about this, but there is a lot of work to be done, and I'm willing to do my part. You know, I do enjoy heckling. I do believe that sometimes it's important, but we would all forgo that privilege if this place started to work better. But I do believe it starts on the government side.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): I'm pleased to rise on this discussion. I don't think that anyone in this House—and I agree with the member from Ottawa that we should not be pointing fingers at all, because it's the pointing of fingers that is the culture of this place that creates the animosity that reduces the decorum. By the way, this has been noted as being the most raucous House in Canada, if not in the parliamentary world.

I was in opposition. I was here in opposition, and they were not good days to be in opposition. The restrictions and the changes in the standing orders were specifically employed to stop debate. I guess the respect that we owe one another in this place is not conducive when you have whoever is in power trying to stop the opposition from maintaining its role to hold the government to account. On the other hand, contempt for this Legislature was probably brought to its height when the budget was removed from this place. That was, in my humble opinion, contempt that was shown here in a way that had never been shown before, because this place is about conventions. We're in a fishbowl here. This is where the public sees us in action. And we can either portray that we are professionals, that we are here in the public interest—all of us, because each one of us is responsible for how we behave in this House. It is not the government; it is not the opposition. Each one of us is responsible.

1720

When I was doing some initial work on looking at the Legislature, one of the things that somebody told me was that this place is like the arena when one plays hockey. There are those who say that violence in hockey is not acceptable. Then there are others who say, "But that's part of the game. If you don't do that, then you don't

have a good hockey game.” That’s the same mentality, because it’s not about just the standing orders, it’s about the culture of this place, and the culture that has evolved is one of a combative nature.

The best assembly I saw was in Wales, and a number of members were here. I have to say that in Wales there was congeniality; there was civility in that place. I don’t know if it had anything to do with this, but 50% of the members were women. I would suggest, and I’m not saying that’s the only reason, that that might lend to maybe a different environment, a different atmosphere. How do we change culture, how do we change attitudes, when all we do in this House is try to point fingers at the other side? That’s the only way we seem to debate here. It’s not about the issues. I would suggest that if anybody was here last night and listened to some of the rhetoric in this place, it was appalling.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): You should listen to yourself.

Ms. Di Cocco: And this is what happens. We cannot discuss things because we have to do the one-upmanship.

I would suggest that none of us should be pointing fingers, that each one of us should take a look at ourselves and how we conduct ourselves day to day when we speak. This place creates an atmosphere where we have a great deal of passion about the things we believe in. That’s why we’re here, to protect the public interest.

I am pleased to be part of a government that has got the Democratic Renewal Secretariat with the intent that, as we move forward, we do bring more bills to committees. It’s not perfect, but more of our bills are at committees. We do not bring closure in our debate as often. That’s a little bit better. It’s not perfect; there’s still a long way to go. But still we wear the white hats and the black hats. In other words, from that side, anything we say here is wrong. That’s the attitude. We don’t change attitudes by rules. To change attitudes, there has to be a culture shift that takes place in this House.

This motion, at least today, has brought this discussion to bear, but I would suggest that the actions are what count. It’s not just the motion but it’s the actions that count long-term.

Mr. Runciman: I have very little time. I want to say, from what I have heard of the government members’ contributions here today, it’s regrettable that they seem to think that this resolution is somehow, in any way, shape or form, an attack on the current government. I want to assure them that that is not the intention of our leader, Mr. Tory. He comes in here clearly dedicated to making his best efforts and the best efforts of our party in this place to improve the operations of the assembly and its institutions. So I think it’s regrettable. Not all members opposite have taken that slant, but certainly I just heard it earlier.

The member mentions about having a greater dominance of women in the Legislature, and I think we would all want to see that happen. But that is no guarantee of peace and stability. I happened to sit in this place when Sheila Copps was a member, and I can assure all mem-

bers that Ms. Copps was certainly vocal and aggressive in terms of making sure that you knew her perspective on any given issue.

I’m into my 25th year here, and all parties have to share some degree of responsibility with respect to rule changes which have, I think, diminished the role of back-benchers, diminished the importance of this place, diminished the importance of question period. We all have to share responsibility, and we should all make a commitment to ensure that change occurs in the future to improve the operations of this place and to, I think, send out the proper messages to Ontarians that this is a place where we are here to do the people’s business and not to be attacking each other on a regular basis.

I think part of the problem—I may be wrong on this, but I was here when the Peterson government brought in television, and I think to some degree that has contributed to what happens in this place in terms of the overacting and the reactions of members on all sides of the House. We can’t go back on that. I don’t think we’re going to see that change. But I think it was a contributing factor. How much of a contributing factor, I really don’t know. It has happened at the federal level and in virtually all Legislative Assemblies across the province.

When we talk about changing culture and attitudes, I think that’s a difficult challenge. We have to try and accept that as individual caucuses and as individual members. But I think a great deal of responsibility, and I’m not trying to be critical here, has to fall on you, Mr. Speaker, the individual sitting in the chair, in ensuring that this place operates with some degree of flexibility, understandably within the rules developed in the standing orders and the rules of procedure. That is a very significant responsibility that you and your colleagues carry on your shoulders, and I think to some degree we have not seen that responsibility exercised to the degree that a lot of us would like to see it exercised over the past number of years.

In my time, I think the most impressive Speaker in this place was Hugh Edighoffer, a Liberal, a genuine gentleman, a great sense of humour, someone who understood the rules of this place and exercised his authority with great dexterity and won the respect of all sides of this place. Regrettably, we haven’t seen that same kind of performance. I don’t want this to be construed as criticism, but it’s a genuine regret on my part. Hopefully in the future, Mr. Speaker, we can look toward people like Speaker Edighoffer.

Interjection.

Mr. Runciman: I hear Speaker Stokes as well. Even though he raised the ire of some of his colleagues in the NDP, he did the job he was supposed to do. Anyone sitting in that chair, with the significant responsibilities that that carries with it, I think—I’m throwing that other additional responsibility on them, to ensure that in the future, you can do, Mr. Speaker, and your colleagues can do, a great deal to improve the atmosphere and the environment in this place.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I’m happy to join this debate in this very quiet House today. I

have to comment that it's very quiet today, so everyone is on their best behaviour, I take it.

I want to say off the top that I absolutely support this motion. I support civility. I support the idea that we would have real discussion, that members would be accountable for what they say, that we would not engage in hollow rhetoric and we would be civil with each other. I absolutely support that. The comments by the Minister of Tourism, the member for Ottawa Centre, the member for Niagara Centre—I think we have to pay close attention to the folks who have been here for a long time, understand how the rules work and understand how the rules have changed.

One of the reasons I'm here at all is that as a private citizen watching what was going on in Ontario, spending a fair bit of time in the galleries here, I saw that there seemed to be a change in the rules and in the way the public could engage with this Legislature and could engage in policy-making. That's one of the reasons that I decided I would run for office, because of the changes that had taken place over the last decade. So I'm very happy to be part of a government that's interested in more public input into public policy and is interested in being open to some of the kinds of changes that Mr. Tory is talking about and certainly would be willing to be part of that discussion.

But I think we have to be very careful. I say somewhat facetiously that the House is quiet today. I think we have to be very careful not to mistake polite behaviour for debate with integrity. I think we can be polite, but we can also be impassioned.

1730

When I listen to the member for Trinity–Spadina sometimes, when someone is speaking and he is making comments, I'm reminded of nothing so much as a Greek chorus. In fact, if this is a morality play, then the Greek chorus is there to give us some feedback and to create some energy. There is nothing wrong, I would say to you and to the people of Ontario, with politicians in this place having strong opinions, having strong feelings and not divorcing the two. We were elected as politicians to bring those to this place, not to belittle individuals, not to be derogatory, not to put people down in a personal way, but to bring our integrated selves to this place. Without that, if we divorce our emotions and our passion from our decision-making processes, we will make bad decisions. I believe that in many, many cases governments have made bad decisions because only the intellect has been engaged; the spirit and the heart and the passion have not been engaged. So let's not mistake quiet and politeness for good decision-making.

I am not advocating raucousness, although I was one of those kids, who, when I was in school, often did speak out at the back of the class. I know that will be taken with great surprise by my colleagues. Mr. Runciman's comment, when he was talking about a previous member in this House, Sheila Copps, that certainly she was vocal, aggressive and clear in her stances, sounded like a criticism to me. I think often when we talk about—and I will

say particularly women; we're not supposed to be aggressive, we're not supposed to be strong and we're not supposed to be really clear about where we stand. I completely reject that characterization. I reject that. I think it is our job. We are elected because we are passionate community people who understand issues and bring those positions to the House, and I'm not willing to give that up.

Having said that, I'm looking forward to the changes that we can bring to this place to make it a more meaningful debate, and I know we will have good advice on that. Thank you, Mr. Tory, for bringing the motion.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): It's an honour this afternoon to have a chance to speak briefly in support of this motion brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, on the issue of decorum in this place.

All of the members are aware that one of my responsibilities in this House is my role as the First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House. In English, this means that I serve as one of the assistant Speakers, usually on Tuesday afternoons. When I'm in the chair, it's my job to attempt to maintain order in the House and preside fairly and impartially. I want to thank members for their co-operation while I'm in the chair, and especially our table staff, without whom I couldn't do my job.

But I speak today not as a presiding officer of the House, but as a member who even after almost 15 years here remains in awe of this place, its customs, its traditions, its history, in awe even of some of the outstanding parliamentarians whose years of service have overlapped my own. I think of people like Bob Nixon, Ian Scott and Sean Conway; Bob Rae, Frances Lankin and Ruth Grier; and in our own party people I've admired like Bill Saunderson, Margaret Marland and Leo Jordan, who was here earlier this afternoon.

What did these MPPs share as common traits? Some were outstanding orators, some were blessed with towering intellect and ability, some had an outstanding record of achievement before coming here; others made their most significant mark on Ontario society after they walked through those ornate doors at the north end of our chamber. But one thing every one had in common was a sense of the paramount importance of our responsibilities and respect for this institution. When I say they respected this institution, I don't mean our treasured Legislative Building; I mean the provincial Parliament itself, the members of provincial Parliament as a collective and as individuals, each of us privileged to be here by virtue of a democratic, free and fair election.

Which of us here wouldn't be flattered to be favourably compared to any one of the former MPPs I've mentioned? I ask all of the members present now in the chamber: Would you want it to be said that you respect this institution and that you comport yourself with dignity and class during debates in this House? Alternatively, would you want it to be said that you were one of the members whose behaviour was so bad and found to be so lacking, even by the schoolchildren who come

here every day to observe the proceedings of our provincial Parliament? Surely each of us would want to be associated with the former group, not the latter. This is good news. In this Legislature, it seems to be getting better; marginally better, but better nonetheless.

I believe it began to improve noticeably after the by-election on March 17. Having represented the Wellington part of our leader's current riding from 1990 to 1999, I had the chance to spend a fair amount of time campaigning with him as he sought the right to take his seat as the Leader of the Opposition. One night during that campaign, I was driving our leader from Arthur to Mount Forest so that we could meet some more voters before stopping for the night. We talked about how elected members of Parliament and provincial Parliament had once been admired community leaders and now are seen by many as nothing but self-serving politicians, motivated only by the pursuit of power and perks. We talked about how the public perceives the behaviour of MPs and MPPs to be, at times, less than exemplary. He said to me that if he was elected, he wanted to change that; he wanted to do what he could to restore a sense of honour and decorum to this place and, in a broader sense, move toward earning again the respect and admiration of the electorate, which, regrettably, has been on the decline in recent years. The member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey was sincere about this on that winter night on Highway 6 in Arthur township, and he's sincere about it today. For that reason, he deserves credit and support for this motion from all members of this House.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I join this debate and this resolution in the spirit in which I understand it was intended, and that is that the debate within this House, the debate on the issues, should reflect the values of all Ontarians and the heart of those values: professionalism and respect. I make these observations not in any partisan manner, because this, quite clearly, is not a partisan issue. I join all those who have called upon this debate to be about values and not about partisanship. Elevating the debate, in my respectful submission, requires one essential foundation, and that is that every member have respect for the professional integrity of their fellow members. The heart of one's professional integrity is one's honour and personal integrity.

I came from a different professional milieu. I came from a courtroom. A courtroom is not a place for quiet discussion. It is a place of passion; it is a place of serious issue; it is a place where you can exchange, in the most direct way, serious issues that can affect one's life and liberty. But you must do so in a respectful way. I have said many times that the difference between this place and the courtroom is that in this place you can say anything about the professional integrity of an individual—you can impugn it, you can undermine it, you can strike it to its core—as long as you're prepared to stand up and say, "I withdraw." That's something that would never happen in a courtroom. The other thing, of course, is that in this place, what you say doesn't have to have a tangential connection to reality, which is a little different from a courtroom as well.

It is professional integrity which is the foundation for elevating the debate. Unless and until every member's debate respects the professional integrity and the honour of every fellow member, then we will never elevate the debate in this place. What do I mean by professional integrity? Of course, the L word is part of it. Striking another member's honesty is really striking their very being. When we leave whatever place we're at, whatever titles we hold, whatever degrees we have, whatever privileges we have, we have nothing without our honour, our integrity and our honesty. Using the L word, much like drawing a glass of water from the tap, strikes at the very heart of that, and yet it is done with regularity in this place; again, I say, not a partisan observation. It is done under cover of the immunity granted by this place—an immunity that exists to encourage the discussion of serious issues, an immunity which I believe exists to encourage debate, to encourage open discourse, but which appears from my brief observation to encourage nothing more and nothing less than the constant impugning and undermining of honesty, of integrity and of the very professional soul of members. It encourages this because everyone knows that as long as you withdraw it, there is no effective sanction. You can say in this House what you could never say outside the doors, because if you said it outside the doors, every private citizen has the right to take the recourse that the courts provide. But in here you can say it on television, you can get it reported, and it's covered by immunity.

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That fact is for me one of the most significant reasons that the debate has not been elevated in this House beyond what it is. I don't know what the solution is, and I suspect it is not about rules, regulations or undermining the immunity and the privilege that it grants us all to discuss serious issues in an open way. I suspect it is more about the professional approach we all bring to the debate of serious issues. I suspect that we could change the tone and tenor of the debate overnight without any change of rules. I suspect we could elevate the serious discussions in a heartbeat without any change of rules. But I am concerned that that will never happen unless and until we all decide that we can debate principle without personality and debate the substance without undermining an individual's integrity. We can all do that, and when we do it, we will elevate the debate. When we do it, we will truly reflect the values of all Ontarians, which, after all, is the reason we're here: to reflect the values of all Ontarians and to make their society a better place.

I suspect everyone will join in supporting the spirit of this motion, as will I. I suspect the challenge for us all is to reach that better place and to ensure that our debate is about the heart of the issue, the substance of the issue—the reason we were sent here—and not about personality and personal attacks on integrity. For those reasons, I will be supporting the motion brought by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): First, it's an honour and a privilege to represent the people of the riding of Durham.

This motion by our leader, John Tory, is a fine time for each of us to stop and reflect. Let he who is not guilty throw the first stone. I am humbled, and I admit that I have often and even many times crossed the line, and I put on the record my apology.

Looking forward, I commit today to stop and attempt to listen, learn and improve. Ideals of respect and civility will remain with me, and I commit to work hard to improve, as each of us should, not just for myself, but for the people I serve and, indeed, we all serve. It's my privilege to serve in a wonderful place, and this motion by our leader, John Tory, is a time for each of us to stop, reflect and move forward.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm very pleased to join this debate today based on the motion that has been put forward by our leader, John Tory. I want to congratulate our leader for putting this motion forward. I want to also compliment him on the efforts he has made since becoming a member of provincial Parliament in doing everything he can to change the tenor and decorum and civility in the House.

I've been here now for 15 years, and I have certainly seen this House go through different periods of time when people have behaved differently. But I can tell you that in recent months, since Mr. Tory has joined the Legislature as an MPP, I believe he has had a very, very positive impact. I see the tone and the tenor changing. I think all 103 members of this House are making a very conscientious effort to make sure that the behaviour of each and every one of us is consistent with the behaviour that our constituents in our ridings would expect of us.

I know myself that the residents in Kitchener–Waterloo expect me to come here and treat my colleagues with respect. They would expect that when I

ask a question my question would be responded to with the same respect with which I asked my question. They look at us, obviously, as role models.

At times I've been embarrassed personally because of the behaviour in this House when we've had school-children in the audience. I've subsequently received letters from teachers and from parents who were there with classes, who have expressed their personal disappointment at our behaviour. So I think what we are endeavouring to do today is important. It appears that all members of this House are equally committed to seeing a change in the behaviour and the decorum. I want to compliment everyone who has spoken to this bill today. I hope we can go forward and that we will see the change that is being asked for.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Tory has moved:

That the Legislative Assembly calls upon the government,

To conduct legislative proceedings in a way that reflects the values of all Ontarians, such that all members of the Legislature conduct themselves with the highest degree of professionalism and respect for their fellow members;

And, that the government recognize and respect the legitimate role of the opposition parties, all means of ensuring government accountability, and the importance of meaningful public consultation when formulating public policy.

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

This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1748.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Alvin Curling
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma–Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East /	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton-Est	
Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldeep (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron–Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham–Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark–Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds–Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Dufferin–Peel– Wellington–Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	London–Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Eglinton–Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Elgin–Middlesex–London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Erie–Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Nepean–Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Guelph–Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Haliburton–Victoria–Brook	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parkdale–High Park	Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Toronto–Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Waterloo–Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Whitby–Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakubuski, John (PC)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Curling, Hon. / L'hon. Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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