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Thursday 27 October 2005

Jeudi 27 octobre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 October 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 octobre 2005

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT
AMENDMENT ACT (HASTINGS
AND PRINCE EDWARD REGIMENT
MEMORIAL HIGHWAY), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES
PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS EN
COMMUN (ROUTE COMMÉMORATIVE
HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD
REGIMENT)

Mr. Parsons moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name a portion of Highway 62 and Highway 33 the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment Memorial Highway / Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun pour nommer une section des routes 62 et 33 route commémorative Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Parsons, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): Before I start, I would like to introduce five guests we have with us in the members' east gallery who are representatives of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment: Joe Schamerhorn, Merv Rowan, Jacqueline Rowan, Bob Wigmore and John Sherry. I would ask you to join me in welcoming them.

I am quite convinced that in this country we do not flag-wave enough. We have the world's greatest country, and we do not recognize often enough the work, the pain and the sacrifice that has gone into making it that. So with this being the Year of the Veteran, I think this is an ideal opportunity for us to recognize on a permanent basis the cost that has been paid for our country.

We talk about our freedom, but freedom isn't free. Freedom required sacrifices by innumerable people, and I

would suggest the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment ranks at the top as representative of those who have made a difference, not just in our province or our country but in our world.

Another thing struck me too, I will confess, in the last few years. I noticed that one of the Legion magazines I received, which contained the notice of my own father's death, listed hundreds and hundreds of other World War II veterans who have left us. So as we watch us move from one generation to another, it becomes increasingly important that we establish a permanent provincial record in memory of the sacrifice of others.

There are many things I don't understand in this world, but two of them that have struck me relating to this issue are: I cannot imagine our world if the allies had lost; I cannot imagine what our lives would be like in this country and others; and I also cannot imagine being 18 or 19 years old in 1939 and making a decision to enlist, not knowing what that would ultimately entail, but knowing that these young people possessed so much love for their country that they willingly volunteered by the thousands. We don't appreciate that now, the sacrifice that was made by these young people.

There are innumerable individuals—I keep saying Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, but quite frankly we call it the Hasty P's and that is a sign of great affection—who have done heroic acts. But I believe that when they enlisted, they became heroes. At that instant in time, they were prepared to put the needs of their community and their province and their country ahead of their own personal lives. I would suggest that every individual who has ever been associated with the Hasty P's is a hero.

The history of the Hasty P's goes back a long time. In the year 1800, the first regiment of Prince Edward militia was raised. Four years later, the first regiment of the Hastings militia was raised. That's how far back in time this regiment has provided service to this country. In World War I, although we had regiments, the powers that be made the decision to break them into small numbered groups and send them overseas, so there is no record of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, but there certainly were hundreds and thousands of individuals who served in various numbered units and provided exemplary service to our country at the Somme, at Ypres, at Hill 70—it goes on and on.

When they returned, they returned to a country that did not significantly recognize the need to maintain healthy armed forces. It has been said by those far wiser than me, and I concur, that the best way to ensure peace is to have a well-prepared military. During some very

difficult years when our armed forces were neglected, there were dozens and hundreds of individuals who continued to train in the militia, with inferior equipment and inferior uniforms, at great personal sacrifice, so that when World War II broke out, we had in place the backbone of the forces we needed to defend our freedom.

In World War II, although the regimental name was Hastings and Prince Edward, there were individuals from all over the country who enlisted and became members of this regiment, but the vast majority came really from the Bancroft to Picton area, through the two counties. They served with great distinction overseas. They were involved initially in a poorly thought-out decision by individuals in Ottawa to send them to France ill-prepared. They returned to England and trained there, and then in July 1943 the Hasty P's landed in Sicily. At that time, they won eight battle honours. Battle honours are not given lightly or frivolously.

There is a book out by Farley Mowat called *The Regiment*, the regiment in which Mr. Mowat himself served. I'd like to read a quotation from him that refers to the beginning of the war, when they were ill-prepared. This country was ill-prepared for war, and he says:

"Yet there was one hidden weapon: one ignored by most of those who calculated the military strength, ignored by the very government itself—and yet a weapon infinitely more powerful, and more ready than any in the official armoury. It was called the militia."

After Sicily, this corps of individuals, plus the hundreds who came forward to volunteer, landed in Italy on September 3, 1943, and battled—and I don't use the word lightly—battled up the Italian peninsula, winning 20 battle honours at an absolutely fearful cost. In 1945, the regiment was then moved and took part in the liberation of Holland.

1010

There can be some question as to why we shouldn't pass this bill and name this highway. I can think of only two reasons. One is, as some may suggest, the cost. Given the sacrifice, that's not a point I'm going to argue; it does not merit an argument. The second one is that this bill may cause other regiments or squadrons to ask for the same thing, and my response is, I hope so. We need to be reminded daily—absolutely daily. This bill would allow for signs so that our young people, on the way to school, every day would pass signs reminding them of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment and what they've done. The regiment is not gone. This is not a dead regiment. There are people who continue in the militia to be ready, if needed.

We have so many attractions in our everyday life. There must be temptations to do other things. The individuals who devote their time now are heroes. Our young people need heroes. Movie stars and rock stars are not heroes. Heroes are those who formed our country and helped to preserve it.

At the end of World War II, it appeared that perhaps the days of the military were over, that they were no longer needed and that the Hasty P's were no longer

needed. I would like to read from the end of the book about what happened at the end of World War II when the troops returned from Europe. The preamble to this is saying that the regiment is dead, and Farley Mowat wrote:

"It was not dead.

"Nor, in the years ahead, shall it ever die and be forgotten. In the rock ridges of Hastings the men who go to the mines, and to the lumber mills, and to the clapboard cabins, are not dead. In the broad and vivid fields of Prince Edward the men who go to the lowing cattle; to the budding orchards and to the warm stone houses are not dead.

"And in the day of need these men shall come again, as they have always come, to build anew out of their flesh and spirit that entity which is the living symbol of their strength—that living home which is—The Regiment."

I ask for support to recognize the very reason why this Legislature is able to sit here today and debate in total freedom: because of the sacrifice, those who gave the supreme sacrifice, those who came back but came back different people, having seen things that you and I don't understand, and having had their lives and their families lives altered. The very least we can do as an honour to these individuals is to strike a living memorial to their contribution to our province.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Thank you very much for giving me the time this morning. I want to commend the member for introducing this bill to the Legislature. I know Mr. Parsons to be a committed person of great passion when he takes on a cause, and I certainly want to indicate that we will be supporting this bill to rename portions of Highway 62 and Highway 33 the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment Memorial Highway. I also want to welcome members of the regiment who are here this morning and thank them for joining us.

Mr. Parsons articulated how he felt that we don't do enough in this country, in this province, to honour those who have sacrificed so much so that we may be free, as he said, to debate matters such as this in this Legislature or anywhere else in this country. I can tell you that I share that point of view completely with the member. I want to indicate that we officially became a country in 1867, but it is said by many that we actually became a nation during the First World War at places like Ypres and Vimy, when the contribution of Canadians was seen and known by the entire world. It was there that we stood as a nation, united to fight against the forces of tyranny. Of course, that was continued in the Second World War. Our veterans have made such sacrifice. As Ernie says, they were boys. Many were not men when they went to war, they were boys who made a decision that they would sacrifice or be willing to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of others.

So it is clear that we do not enough. It is not about glorifying the act of war, because none of us does and none of those veterans does. I remember when I was a

boy that we used to go to the Legion parades, the Remembrance Day parades. My father was a veteran of World War II; he served in the SD&G Highlanders. You know, most of those men in those parades in those days were actually younger than I am today, and there were of course many older men as well who were veterans of the First World War. Nowhere in my riding are there any veterans of the First World War with us any longer, and there are only a handful in this entire country. But the men who walked in those parades walked with pride, not pride about war, but pride about serving their country, and they had every reason to be justified in that pride.

When I have the honour of joining the remaining veterans in those parades today as a member of provincial Parliament, many of those men are still there, but they're old men now. They're not young men any more, they're old men. They walk slower, they don't march with the same power and strength that they used to, but they still have that same pride on their faces of having served their country. That is something that I think we all need to take note of, because as those men slowly but surely leave us, we have to have these permanent memorials to their work and their sacrifice, not only in this province but in this country.

When I talk to those veterans, they know the tremendous risks that were taken when they enlisted for those battles overseas and their service overseas. But to a man, every one of them would do it again if asked to serve again because of the importance of defending freedom and liberty against the forces of Nazi tyranny.

As we enter constituency week, which will be Remembrance Day week, this House does not sit, and I know that members of this House on all sides will be visiting Legions and memorial services in their constituencies, because it's an opportunity for us—and I view it not only as an opportunity, but an obligation—to clearly state unequivocally our appreciation and our thanks for the sacrifice and the efforts they made for our sakes. No sitting member left in this Legislature could have been a veteran of either one of those wars, so it is our opportunity to thank them for something that we could not possibly understand in the way that they do, and the sacrifice they were willing to make.

I think it is important that I mention these very wonderful occasions when we put aside the partisanship of this House to draw together and be unified, as our men were in those wars, and say this is something that not only can we all support but we must support. As Mr. Parsons said, there are only a couple of reasons why anyone could oppose. When you look at the cost, how could we ever repay those people who were willing to make, and many who did make, that ultimate sacrifice, who have not marched in those Remembrance Day parades because they didn't come home?

1020

So not only on November 11 but every day of the year and in this, the Year of the Veteran, it is so appropriate for my colleague to bring this bill to the Legislature, and I certainly trust it will receive the support it deserves.

Speaking of the non-partisanship, I recall that last year I brought a private member's motion to this House, unanimously supported by this chamber, renaming a bridge in my riding after a police officer, Senior Constable Phil Shrive, who was killed in the line of duty. Again, on that day there was no partisanship. It wasn't a divided House, it was a House united, and I trust we will have that today as well.

I want to read a poem that was written by Major Alex Campbell, who was a member of the Hasty P's, as they are affectionately known. It's called Prayer Before Battle. Major Campbell wrote this during a lull in battle, and he was later killed in Ortona.

When 'neath the rumble of the guns,
I lead my men against the Huns,
'Tis then I feel so all alone and weak and scared,
And oft I wonder how I dared
Accept the task of leading men.
I wonder, worry, fret, and then I pray,
Oh God! Who promised oft
To humble men a listening ear,
Now in my spirit's troubled state,
Draw near, dear God, draw near, draw near.
Make me more willing to obey,
Help me to merit my command,
And if this be my fatal day,
Reach out, Oh God, Thy guiding hand,
And lead me down that deep, dark vale.
These men of mine must never know
How much afraid I really am,
Help me to lead them in the fight
So they will say, "He was a man."

As I said, that was written by Major Alex Campbell, a member of the Hasty P's.

If I can reiterate, this is only one small but important act, one small but highly symbolic and worthy deed on the part of the honourable member, to bring this matter to the Legislature so we can support it united and ensure that this highway—and hopefully, as time goes on, many, many portions of our highways—can be named in honour of such great people so that when my children, and grandchildren, if we're so blessed, and other people yet unborn travel the highways of this province, they will take notice and they will remember the great men who offered those sacrifices.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I rise today and commend the member for Prince Edward–Hastings for the bill he has brought forward. The naming of a highway seems to me to be wonderful. I just wish that all of us could do even more than what he is suggesting, but this is a wonderful thing: the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment Memorial Highway.

As has been said by other speakers, this is the Year of the Veteran. This is the year that so many people are starting to look back at the history: the history of the First World War, the history of the Second World War, of Korea and the police actions. It is a time when Canadians are starting to appreciate and understand, I believe, in a

way that they have not for a generation, the significant role that veterans and those who fought for this country have played, the role they have in our freedom, the role they have in our democracy, the role they have in the building of Ontario and of Canada.

It is wonderful to see this, because it was only some 10 or 15 years ago, when I was a relatively new member of the Royal Canadian Legion, when I was inducted into the Legion and marched forward and became an associate member, that many veterans there lamented that people had forgotten or were forgetting the sacrifice that so many of them had made. They talked to me about the kids not understanding in the schools any more, that the history wasn't taught, that they were afraid people would forget, that a generation or generations would go by and no one would remember about the Canadians' role in the Second World War, their fighting for freedom.

I'm very happy today with what has happened, because the federal government, the provincial government, school boards across the country, literally everyone, is starting to recognize these veterans for who and what they were. They are starting to recognize the sacrifices of those who died. They are starting to know of the great battles. They are starting to know how an entire continent was liberated.

As I said, it was about 15 years ago that I was approached by a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 10, Todmorden branch in East York, and was asked to become a member. I had really not given it much thought before that time, to tell you the truth. I had never really given thought to being a member of the Royal Canadian Legion, but I was eligible to be one because my father had been a soldier. I took them up on their offer and went there, and it has been a really remarkable experience to me throughout all of these years to go and sit with the Legionnaires, to talk to them about their struggles, about their dreams, about their goals, about their hopes, and to see even to this day, when the average age in my Legion branch is 83—that's the average age of those who were veterans of the Second World War. Some are older and a few are younger—some of those who were in Korea are a little younger than that—but the average age of those who actually put on a uniform and were full-fledged members is 83 years of age.

I've talked to them about their experiences and it has reminded me so often of things my father told me when I was a boy. He did not ever glorify war. He never told me much about too many of the battles or people who died, but he did talk about going to many places. He talked often about the Hasty P's—that's what he called them. I don't think I even knew that they were the Hastings and Prince Edward group; they were just the Hasty P's. He talked about them because he was in many of the same places that they were. He was in Sicily and Italy and France and North Africa and Germany, and he was there at the liberation of Holland. He spoke highly of the Hasty P's, about their bravery. He spoke about the liberation. He spoke about people who were thankful for what all of the Canadians had done.

It is ironic, I think today, that after the war he came back, and we lived in Toronto and Scarborough, but when he retired, he went with my mother to the Bancroft area, and they are still there. They went to the heart of Hasty P country. He lives today among and with many of those veterans. He goes to the Legion branch from time to time in Cardiff and in Bancroft to be with members who I'm sure served with the Hasty P's.

It is a fitting tribute today that the history of Canada be told. It is a fitting tribute that those who sacrificed will be remembered. It is a fitting tribute for those who carry the proud badge, the proud shield of the Hasty P's, that they continue to be recognized, that their regiment continue to not only exist but to flourish.

As the numbers grow smaller—and sadly, they do. Sadly, each year on Remembrance Day, when I go to the remembrance at either East York or the Beach—because in my community there are two competing ones trying to vie for the number of people. I wish I could get to them both, but unfortunately they are both held at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, and I alternate between them. But as I do, I see the identical phenomenon. I see men and women who are getting older, but they walk with the same pride. They walk with their heads held high.

The crowds on the sidewalks break out into spontaneous cheers. People are thankful and the people remember. The schools are again teaching about our veterans. This, in one small way, will go to help all of us remember the sacrifice of those young men and women all those many years ago, and the role the Hasty P's and all soldiers played in making this the great province and the great land we enjoy.

1030

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a real honour to be able to speak to this bill for a few minutes, not only because it's so important to me and to the people of Ontario but also that part of the highway goes through my riding, so it's doubly important.

Just before I speak to the bill, I want to congratulate the member from Prince Edward—Hastings. I should also let the member know—I think it's in the second paragraph—that Sicily is not a country; it's part of Italy. When you say Sicily and Italy, I would hope that—

Mr. Parsons: When did that change?

Mr. Rinaldi: I just wanted to clarify that.

On a more serious note, I believe there is more perspective to this today. As you know, I'm an immigrant. I wasn't born in this country. I'm very fortunate that my father-in-law, who is a veteran, is still living and my father, who was a prisoner of war in Italy, is still living. My father-in-law clearly tells me about what they went through. The challenge is that I can't get my father to talk about it. My father lives in Canada, in Ontario. He's thankful for the work these folks did because he lives the free life we all enjoy. So it is difficult in a way, but on the other hand, it's a really happy ending because we enjoy what we enjoy today. That's a personal challenge I face, that I will probably never really find out what my

father went through when he was in Sicily. That's where he was captured, and it could have been this regiment. Nevertheless, the ending was great and we are all honoured to be here to talk about it.

The other thing I must say is that as I get older—I'm not that old yet—we tend to appreciate what these folks suffered during those days. You know what? As a young country, as a young province, we're not doing enough to remember what they did, and with initiatives like this, I know that my kids—I have six and a half grandkids—are going to appreciate it. I know they will because I know how much I appreciate parts of history that 10 years ago—that close, 10 years ago—I probably wasn't that interested in. I don't know if it's old age that makes you more interested. But we need to do more because we still have a very young country and a very young province and we need to do that. I'm delighted that Mr. Parsons brought this forward. I totally support it and I agree that we need to do more.

In the minute or so I've got left, yesterday I was privileged to represent this province in Kingston, where the seventh stop of the Memory Project Road Show took place. I had the pleasure of meeting a number of veterans who were bringing forward their stories, their artifacts, their memorabilia. This province invested about \$200,000 to catalogue, from about 500 of these veterans, their story, their history, their memorabilia. Our kids and grandkids are going to be able to flick on the Internet and get the whole story. I spent about two hours yesterday with my father-in-law. My duty was to represent the province. It's a good thing I went, because it was really enlightening to see these folks tell their story, bring in their artifacts. They were taking photographs so they could digitize them and put them on the Web. I believe the last stop is in Ottawa next week, but at the end of the process 500 veterans are going to be honoured forever.

What we're doing here today with naming this piece of roadway that we travel is just another piece of the puzzle. We, as legislators in this province, need to do a lot more. I look forward, during my tenure here in this Legislature, to do as much as we can to remember the folks who made us what we are today.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I too would like to commend the member for Prince Edward–Hastings on his private member's bill to name a portion of the highway in his riding, and to welcome to the gallery the members who came today.

The amendment has an honourable aim and recognizes the enormous contribution made by Ontario veterans. Veterans have contributed to their local communities, their country and to the cause of freedom and peace around the world. I always say there is not enough done in our country to recognize veterans and to remember. Bringing forward an amendment to the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to honour the proud history of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment is a fine way to keep the memory of our province's veterans in the forefront of our minds.

As we approach Veterans' Week during the first week of November, we proudly wear the poppies that are sold

by veterans and their families. Speeches will be made in Legion halls and schoolchildren will gather in special assemblies. I know that I participate in the services in my riding for the entire week. The two minutes of silence on November 11 will be observed by the people of Ontario as they gather at the cenotaphs, cemeteries, public parks, city halls and places of worship to honour the memory of the Canadians who died in the world wars since Confederation.

Like the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, I encourage all Ontarians to recognize our military history long after Remembrance Day has passed. By naming these public spaces, we are making every day Remembrance Day. This summer in my riding—part of my riding includes zone F-4; some of the gentlemen in the gallery might know some members from my riding. They had a two-day celebration in Lindsay at the armouries—many municipalities had armouries back then. I also come from Mr. Sam Hughes's riding. He established the armouries there. They did a great display. They had two days and they had a great public response. They set up displays and taught the young people, and I thought it was a fabulous event.

My father, Bill Scott, was an MP from 1965 to 1993, representing the riding of Victoria–Haliburton, and was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. He was always a strong advocate for veterans throughout his tenure in the House of Commons. My grandfather Scott fought in the First World War and we lend his uniform out to many places, on display, to help educate the public. Those two days in Lindsay brought back a lot of memories and they also gave us a chance to learn—it was the 109th Battalion that most of the members from my riding went to. Leslie Frost met the people from the Haliburton and Victoria areas over in Barrie at the training camp. After the war he decided to make Lindsay his home and then went on to be the MPP there and the Premier of Ontario. We have a great legacy in our riding and we like to share that as much as we can.

Also, to mention the other people who were involved in the Second World War, it was a total war. Everyone participated, with scrap metal drives and Victory Gardens; women went overseas and farmers left their farms and worked in some of the factories in our area and sent over supplies; they left the lumber camps also. I have 15 Legions in my riding—not just zone F—and I was happy to participate in the celebrations of all of them this year.

I'm pleased to see that through the reserve infantry regiment of the Canadian Armed Forces located in Prince Edward–Hastings, the legacy of proud military service is being kept alive. The citizen soldiers who train part-time as these local armies take their valuable free time to work hard throughout the year at the land reserve. They participate in rigorous training and may even risk their lives when called out on peacekeeping missions.

1040

The tradition of Canadian military service is not without its dangers. Approximately 650,000 Canadians served in World War I and nearly 69,000 died. In World

War II, a million Canadians and Newfoundlanders served in the Canadian Armed Forces, the Allied forces or in the merchant navy. More than 47,000 lost their lives. More than 26,000 Canadians served in the Korean War, and over 500 of those died. About 125,000 Canadians have served in peacekeeping missions since 1947, and more than 100 have died.

Not only would this act recognize the honourable contribution made by the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, which includes 31 battle honours for its heroism and valour, but it would become part of our greater duty to teach our young people to respect and revere the debt we owe to our veterans.

I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. He certainly has total support from our caucus. I am glad he has brought it forward, and I hope to see more of this in the future.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I should say to Mr. Parsons that I think you may have started a trend here today, because it's such a good idea. We are all going to want to name portions of our highways after regiments in our own ridings, and I think a very good thing that would be.

I had the honour just recently of welcoming, along with my colleagues from all parties, women veterans in this province here on Persons Day. I thought it was quite fitting, in this, the Year of the Veteran, that on Persons Day—I'm sure you will recall that there was a time when women weren't considered to be persons—we celebrated the fact that women did become recognized as persons, with all the rights and privileges that go with that, and we recognized the women veterans from both world wars.

We all have an opportunity to talk about our own parents and our own grandparents when we have an opportunity to talk about the importance of the incredible sacrifices that you made for our country—and indeed for freedom in the world—and about our own history. I am from Newfoundland. I talk about my grandfather, who is long deceased now, and the fact that he talked so little about the war. He was in World War I. We hear that a lot about veterans. You see such horror, that we can't even begin to imagine. His name was Frederick Emberley, and my mother, his daughter, is alive and kicking at 80, and doing well. He was a wonderful man and he was profoundly deaf. All I know is that the ship he was on was torpedoed and a lot his mates died. He survived and had injuries and was deaf as a result of whatever happened there. That's all I know, and that's all my mother really knows. We'll never know his experience.

I want to say that I understand when my colleague Michael Prue becomes teary-eyed when talking about the sacrifices that you made, because we know that we are so privileged. I feel so privileged. I've had a wonderful life. I've had a wonderful youth, and as I get older, my children and grandchildren have a wonderful life. We know it's because of your sacrifices, and we know that we cannot forget.

I think it was—I'm trying to find a quote here—George Santayana who wrote, "Those who cannot learn

from history are doomed to repeat it." It's your history that we have to learn from. We cannot allow, as we all get older and pass on—and it's happening to all of us here; we're moving on—that our young people, my children and my grandchildren, ever forget. I would say that it's even more critical these days when we see war on TV, and it looks like a video game with these smart bombs and "poops" going off, and that's all we see. But you know. You were there, and you know the horrors of what really goes on, and that it is a tremendous sacrifice. The young people who die or are coming back from war now to the US and Britain and other places around the world with terrible injuries—it is a tremendous sacrifice.

I don't think I've ever met any bigger pacifists than veterans, because you know that it should be the last extreme. The war you were involved in, and World War I, were times when freedom, democracy and people's lives had to be preserved and saved, and you had to go to war to do that. We appreciate everything that you and all of those who aren't with us today have done, those who died in both those wars and all the other wars that have been fought for good causes.

The other thing I want to say—and it's been mentioned by some here today—is the incredible work that veterans do in our communities. Perhaps it's because you fought so hard to preserve our democracy and our communities that you recognize how important it is that we maintain strong communities. We see veterans involved in every aspect of our communities. From raising money for the poor and for people with disabilities to getting involved in children's events, veterans are there, everywhere.

I have to say, as Mr. Prue said earlier, that when I go to Branch 10, which is the branch in my riding of Toronto–Danforth, and go to the East York Civic Centre—yes, we still have the ceremonies at East York Civic Centre; even though, technically, there is no more East York, there really is still an East York—the services that we have every year on Remembrance Day are very moving in that community.

I find unbelievable and heroic the way some of these veterans are extremely old now. Some of them stand there, and it's always cold, isn't it—the time of the year? It's cold, and sometimes it's rainy. We politicians and other dignitaries are all dressed up warmly, standing on the stage for the ceremonies. But it's the veterans who are out there in not-so-warm clothes, in uniform, who have to stand absolutely still throughout the ceremonies, in the freezing cold at times, getting wet, some of them are in their 80s—I've seen some in their 90s—standing there perfectly still, looking dignified; standing there, still doing their duty. They are proud to be there, and they are proud to come forward on Remembrance Day to be part of the ceremonies that remind us all not only of their sacrifices—because I find there is not much ego involved; you talk very little about what you sacrificed—but their role in preserving our democracy and our freedom. They want to be there, and they are there to show the world that we must care, we must always remember and we must never forget.

This motion before us today will help us to never forget. Thank you for this opportunity.

1050

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a real privilege for me to speak on Bill 5 this morning, because Peterborough is the home of Moro Company for the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment. If I could dedicate my remarks today to four good friends of mine: General Maxwell Clarke and Sergeant Tony Basciano—General Clarke and Sergeant Basciano both served from 1939 to 1945—and two good friends of mine, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Clarke, the general's son, and Lieutenant Bruce Anderson, who served very capably during the post-war period.

Sergeant Basciano's is an interesting story: In later years, Sergeant Basciano found out that his older brother was on the other side, a member of the Italian army during the Battle of Ortona. For him, he found out later in life that war was indeed hell.

Tom Brokaw, who some of us know as the nightly anchor for NBC news, wrote a book about his father's exploits in the American army during the Second World War called *The Greatest Generation*. When you think of our contribution—in 1939 we had a nation of 11 million people, and by 1945 we had one million men and women in uniform, the greatest contribution on a per capita basis of all the Allied nations. Sometimes we forget about that because, as Canadians, as Ontarians, often we don't talk about it. But it's through the bill put forward by my friend Mr. Parsons that indeed our younger generation will come to understand the history.

I always thought the most inappropriate remarks ever issued by a person in public life were by Lady Astor at the end of the Italian campaign, when she referred to the people who served with the Allies in the Italian campaign—as I said, most inappropriately—as the D-Day Dodgers. A number of Canadian personnel, of course, came up with the song about that to the famous tune of Lilli Marlene.

When you think about that Italian campaign and you read some of the chapters in a book by Ted Barris called *Days of Victory*—I just want to refer to one section of that book. Referring to the battle of Ortona, it says: "Also injured in the campaign en route to Ortona was a young lieutenant from Peterborough, Ontario. Fresh out of the University of Toronto, Allan Park had joined the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, the Hasty P's, and served with the 1st Canadian Division through Sicily and Italy during the summer and fall of 1943. Just a week before Canadian troops entered the outskirts of Ortona, Park engaged a German machine-gun position.

"Allan and one of his snipers got right up under a German machine gun," an eyewitness wrote. "Then, while it was still stuttering above his head, he reached up to grab it. At this point, a German sniper, 600 yards away, killed the sniper who was with Allan and shot Allan through the head."

This was documented by a fellow Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment member, Farley Mowat.

It goes on to say, "The fighting in Ortona was like no other thus far in the war. Beginning on December 20," 1943, "the battle became a virtual 'slugging match' between the Germans' 1st Parachute Division and Maj. Gen. Chris Vokes's 1st Canadian Infantry Division, transforming Ortona 'into a miniature Stalingrad.' The narrow streets proved too vulnerable for Canadian tanks as they were easy prey for German mines or paratrooper raiding parties. The infantry battle lines became incredibly blurred. Sometimes, without realizing it, Canadians and Germans were hunkered down just yards apart; on occasion the front line could be drawn between one row house and the next or between one floor and another."

That certainly highlights very clearly the essence of the Italian campaign: some of the toughest battles during the Second World War. Members of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment distinguished themselves to the nth degree during that battle. Post-war, they went on to serve in NATO in 1951 and 1952. During the ice storm of 1998, reserve unit members from Belleville, Cobourg and Peterborough assisted eastern Ontario when they were sorely needed to look after citizens.

Without a doubt, the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment has one of the greatest histories in Canadian military annals.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I am proud to enter the debate today in support of my colleague and friend Mr. Parsons. I am a son of Hastings, from Trenton. I went to high school in Belleville and married a girl from Marmora, so that's why I decided it would be fitting for me to join in this debate.

Farley Mowat said it best in the book *The Regiment*, that I want to quote. With the children here today—children; we're talking about these men and women here. We're paying tribute to them today. I'm going to talk about what they went through so that we would have a free country. I'm talking about a chapter called "The River of Blood," the battle for the River Moro, before the Battle of Ortona: "At 2100 hours, in the wet night and in a silence that was doubly ominous, the men of the lead platoon descended the slopes and felt their way across the muddy slough that was the valley floor. Luck was with them, and the absence of an artillery barrage played in their favour for the enemy received no warning of the attack. The platoon forded the stream and began moving painfully towards the black shadows of the northern slope while behind it, the remaining two platoons came forward.

"Suddenly the tension snapped. A single enemy machine gun rippled into hysterical life and at once a dozen flares, some green, some blinding white, lifted and hung above Able company. The signal was instantly answered by the muted and distant thunder of the enemy guns, and by the violent outcry of 20 or more machine guns emplaced on the high banks. A shimmering curtain of tracer swept the valley and within seconds the enemy artillery and mortar shells began to fall in thundering salvos, their flashes outlining the scene with terrifying clarity.

“There was no cover on the valley floor.” Commander Kennedy ordered a retreat. The battle waged back and forth.

Later in the battle, “Kennedy, watching from a high knoll on the south bank, glimpsed victory ahead. But there was bad news with the good. A troop of tanks which had descended into the ravine hoping to cross the river near the demolished bridge and so support the infantry in their assault over the crest of the far bank, reported itself hopelessly bogged down. The loss of the tanks was catastrophic, for the enemy had many tanks and would assuredly use them for a counterattack against the naked infantry men if these should manage to scale the northern slopes.

“In every battle there comes a moment when the certainty of the commander is shaken, when his doubts become agonizing, and when the weight of his responsibility becomes intolerable. The commander who thinks of his troops only as ciphers is sometimes spared this moment, but Kennedy was not spared.

“From his observation knoll it appeared to him that Dog company had become too deeply involved on the left flank, and was in danger of being overwhelmed. The failure of the tanks to get across made it seem certain that any local success which might be won by the infantry would be transitory and liable to be turned into costly defeat. Charlie company, on the valley floor, was clearly unable to get forward to assist Dog, and the weight of the enemy defensive fire seemed to be increasing, rather than decreasing.

“Remembering that this was not the major battle but still only a diversion, Kennedy gave in to his doubts and ordered the two companies to withdraw.

“Charlie received the message and obeyed. Dog, with its radio out of order and all three platoons running hog-wild in the centre of a disorganized enemy position, neither heard nor could obey, and Kennedy found himself in a terrible dilemma. His choice was this: to sacrifice Dog in order to preserve the rest of the regiment—or take up the battle again with all of his resources in order to extricate that unfortunate company. He hesitated for no more than five minutes.

“The battle that had been declared over, began anew.

“The carrier platoon, dismounted and acting as infantry, had been sent out to try to cover Dog company’s retreat—now it was told to cross the valley and get astride of the road behind Dog company. Baker and Able companies were ordered to take Charlie company’s original objectives. Kennedy himself joined Able company and crossed with it.

“Within an hour Able and Baker companies were across, had climbed well up the enemy-held slopes and had dug in with an unshakeable determination not to be driven back into the thundering inferno of the valley.”

Over six years, this brave regiment fought these types of battles so that we could stay the country that we are today: free, noble and brave, because of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment. There is nothing more we could do than to honour that sacrifice.

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

Mr. Parsons: I want to thank each of the speakers who spoke to this bill. I was very pleased to see young people enter the west gallery, because I can remember the war, not because I was there, but because of conversations with my father and my father-in-law, who both served. My children can remember the war, having had conversations with their grandparents who served. We have an 11-month-old grandson. My father and my father-in-law are gone. For my grandson, I have an obligation to pass on to him. For these young people, they don’t remember war, and I hope they never, ever remember war, because of the sacrifices of individuals such as we have in the members’ gallery.

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We have an obligation to honour the commitment that we will remember. What we will remember will happen only if we take positive, concrete actions to ensure that that happens. The Year of the Veteran is superb. The memorial that will be constructed in front of this Legislature so that all schools visiting will walk past and see the sacrifice that was made so that this place could exist and represent freedom is a superb idea. But I believe all through Ontario we have an opportunity so that each and every day our young people, and us, will be reminded of the sacrifice that was paid—I say by the men and women who served but I’m almost tempted to say boys and girls. When I look at my own children and I think of when I was 18 and 19, they were so very young and so many of them are forever 19 and 20 now.

I appreciate the support given by all members in this Legislature to establish a permanent reminder to our citizens of why we enjoy the freedom we enjoy.

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Liberal government enter into an agreement with the city of Toronto to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and urge the federal government to become an equal partner in this agreement as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Churley has moved private member’s notice of motion number 3. Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Ms. Churley: I appreciate Mr. Peter Kormos giving me his spot this morning because of the urgency of this resolution.

This past summer, I was appointed chair of the NDP strong neighbourhoods task force. The task force was set up to advocate for the provincial government to become a partner in implementing the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, a plan of action that was authored by the city of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto, with help from both the federal and Ontario governments. It’s an amazing report. The report is “to stop neigh-

bourhood decline and improve the prospects and safety of both residents and the city as a whole.”

I understand that there have been some very positive things said about the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy by the provincial Liberal government in the past months. That gives me and those who are here today from the local communities and front-line agencies optimism that this resolution will be adopted. The urgency is because December 2005 is the deadline to have an intergovernmental agreement in place to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. It's important that we here today debate this and urge the provincial government to move forward.

Today's debate and the vote come on the heels of a motion Toronto's policy and finance committee passed last week in support of this strategy. I believe it's before council for a vote. It hasn't happened yet but I'm sure that it will pass. One part of this motion expressly calls on provincial and federal government support in implementing this blueprint for neighbourhood renewal. This strategy cannot be fully enacted without these two other levels of government providing resources and reforming government policy. By passing the resolution I'm proposing, the provincial government would be answering the city's call with a clear commitment to make this strategy a part of its new deal for Toronto. By entering into this agreement, the province is also articulating that it is serious about playing a critical role and addressing the root causes for problems that undermine the city's long-term prosperity and safety. If they go unaddressed, trends like the ever-growing gap between rich and poor and the rising levels of violent crime involving youth will continue.

The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy is a plan to revitalize neighbourhoods impacted by poverty. Research shows that over the past years, more and more neighbourhoods in Toronto are facing increasing challenges, that there's a scarcity of assistance available to help those communities improve local conditions and that if urgent action is not taken to prevent and stop neighbourhood decline, all of Toronto and eventually this province will be affected. We're starting to see some of this now.

Despite the economic growth Ontario experienced during the 1990s, the prevalence of poverty in Toronto has increased in the past decade. In 2001, there were 120 areas of concentrated poverty; in 1980, that number was only 30. The rise in poverty is the product of different converging factors, ranging from the loss of manufacturing jobs to foreign-trained professionals not being able to gain work in their chosen professions once they arrive here, even though they are promised they can get jobs in those professions when they come. We meet them day after day as security guards and taxi drivers, doing whatever, because they can't work in their own profession. So they're living in poverty.

Another instrumental factor is that the cycle of poverty has become harder and harder to break because the infrastructure of programs that we refer to as the social

safety net has become thinner and thinner. In the past decade, the provincial and federal governments have cut social services that help people and communities regain their footing and then downloaded those programs to cash-strapped municipalities that have seen their infrastructure funding cut at the same time. It's a downward spiral that we have to fix, and this report gives us a blueprint as to how to do this, working with the communities. More and more people have been falling through the ever-growing cracks in the net rather than being caught by it, which is what it's supposed to do.

The geography of poverty has also changed, giving rise to the inner suburb. As a result of individuals and families with low incomes moving to where housing costs are—or at least used to be—somewhat lower, many of these new areas where poverty is concentrated are found in the former municipalities of Scarborough, North York, York, Etobicoke and East York. Living in these inner suburbs puts people at an even greater disadvantage, because social services, employment centres, youth drop-in programs and community centres, which we have the luxury of having here in downtown Toronto—we fought hard for them for years, and had them—do not exist. They are historically not concentrated in those areas. Having few local services and supports makes it even harder to change those prospects.

I want to say, and underscore, that it is a mistake to stigmatize the communities identified in this strategy. There's a natural tendency to think that because a community needs help, it is not capable. This is an incorrect assumption. I know that some of the communities that were identified in this report felt stigmatized, and some people in those communities told me that. I want to say here today that all of these communities are incredible, with incredible people who are working hard to help themselves in these communities. When you go to these areas, as I have with my leader, Howard Hampton, to consult with people, particularly youth, you will witness incredible community grassroots work that is very impressive. I want to draw on just one example of such grassroots efforts.

In the gallery today we have members from the Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services agency. This outfit is a result of local residents mobilizing to provide settlement services to the diverse newcomer population that settles in the east end of Toronto. BCS has been up and running now for close to five years and it is completely volunteer-driven. It does great work in response to the community but has very limited resources. The demand far exceeds its capacity.

That is what this strategy is all about: helping communities help themselves. What has been missing in the equation for so long is government commitment to these neighbourhoods, because local residents and grassroots organizations need support so that they can expand the work and difference they are making.

1110

When consulting with some youth from the black community, the Tamil community, we heard time and

time again from youth who are working with other youth, from high school students, from their parents who are struggling, some with two to three jobs, their kids in school—the Safe Schools Act, which is not working for them any more—they have nowhere to go and nothing to do most of the time. What this report is all about, and why it's so strong and why we have to act to make sure that the provincial government does its bit in this multi-faceted response is to put those resources in place, and it calls for working directly with the communities.

Mr. Prue and I were in Crescent Town recently to talk about this report and to say to that community that it is a fabulous community, it is a great community. I have been to so many community events in that area over the past little while. It's a very active community that's working very hard to help itself. And through no fault of their own, they do not have the resources, the community centres and the other community resources, to help them, and this is what this report is all about. It's saying to all levels of government that we have a responsibility to help these tremendous communities, who are doing so much to help themselves, but they do not have the social programs and the resources to do what they know needs to be done to help their own communities. I hope I will get support from all members in the House for this resolution.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I will be joining in this debate along with some other members from the Liberal Party, the government, today. First of all, I want to commend the member from Toronto–Danforth for bringing forward this resolution, which basically calls for the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy to be implemented and to try to get assistance from the provincial and federal governments.

I want to say that my background, and the background of the member from Toronto–Danforth and other members who are here today—Mr. Prue is here and he represents the riding of Beaches–East York, a former councillor; we served on council together—we all went through the recent amalgamation of the city of Toronto back in the late 1990s. What we really saw and were frustrated with was a lack of communication with the provincial government.

I think that's changed a lot nowadays. We've seen the gas tax, where a portion is going to municipalities. We've seen a proposed new City of Toronto Act. We've seen the Attorney General and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services try to deal with some of the crime issues in the city of Toronto. These are all positive steps.

There was tremendous frustration, as a former councillor in the city of Toronto, because of the fact that the province just didn't listen to us. I remember at one point when it reached its darkest point. The mayor of Toronto at that time was calling the Premier a liar and Premier Harris was responding with all sorts of other name-calling, and at some point the name-calling brought in other members from the provincial government. I think one of them was Chris Stockwell. I don't know who was

the monkey grinder; one was called a monkey grinder and one was called a monkey, and it was just bad.

We don't see that nowadays. We see the mayor of Toronto, David Miller, working very closely with the Premier, and they have a good working relationship. They respect each other. There are challenges, of course, at the city level, at the provincial level and at the federal level. I think that we're moving in the right direction. Can we go faster? Perhaps. Have we helped the situation? Definitely. Was the situation worse before this present government was here? Absolutely. We are on the right road. We are improving, and I think we need to focus now on trying to do some things for Toronto. The report that came from the policy and finance committee speaks clearly of adopting a strong neighbourhood strategy to bring investment into various neighbourhoods. Interestingly enough, a number of those neighbourhoods are in Scarborough and, in fact, within my own riding, so of course I want to see something like this happen. I think there's a need for this, and I would support something like this that would let Toronto, Scarborough and Scarborough Southwest see better delivery of services and improvements in various other things that exist right now regarding infrastructure gaps and other problems.

I know there are members present here who are not from Toronto, and I'm just going to say something about that because they always say, "Why do you have to talk about Toronto?" There are only 20-odd members here from Toronto, and the rest are from outside of Toronto. This transcends all three parties, and it's an issue that I think Toronto members from all three parties have to deal with. I don't think there are any Toronto members from the Conservative Party, but I know that the NDP and the Liberals have members who represent various ridings in the city of Toronto.

Toronto absorbs various problems from other parts of the province. For homeless people from Timmins, or someone who wants to leave Timmins or North Bay or Windsor or the Ottawa area, where are they going? They come to Toronto. When I had the opportunity to be a city councillor and I would talk to some of these so-called street kids or squeegee kids, what I found out is a lot of them were not from Toronto. They came from other cities; they came into Toronto. Toronto had to provide the social services, Toronto had to provide the bedding, Toronto had to provide the food and Toronto had to provide the support system to take care of these kids, these young people who would come down from other parts of the province. So it's not just a Toronto issue; it's beyond that.

What we've seen in the past few years with the amalgamation and the fact that the previous provincial government really hammered Toronto heavily is that we at Toronto city council had to deal with some tremendous challenges in trying to get the city up and running. I know the member from Beaches–East York knows about that, and myself as well. It was very difficult to bring about a functioning city.

I could go on for much longer, but I know there are others from our side who want to speak to this issue and give a different perspective on it. But I just want to say that I support it. I think that the federal government needs to chip in even more than they have, and I think that the city of Toronto as well needs to be serious about putting the financial resources into this. The provincial government has given money to the city, has given the gas tax, transit funding and has given help to the city of Toronto, and all sorts of other things which were badly lacking when Mike Harris and Ernie Eves tried to run this government and this province.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I am pleased to join the debate on the motion brought forward today by the member for Toronto–Danforth: “That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Liberal government enter into an agreement with the city of Toronto to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and urge the federal government to become an equal partner in this agreement as well.”

I didn't realize the deadline of 2005 that Ms. Churley had mentioned, and wants it to be part of a new deal with Toronto. There has been mention that over the past summer, and just recently, we've all been witness to the tragic consequences of violence and youth violence on the streets of Toronto. I don't believe that any member of this Legislature believes that the status quo is acceptable. We all need to do more.

It is quite commendable that the United Way has participated in this task force, which helps identify those parts of Toronto where social services are most out of step with the local needs. I'm pleased to see that the recommendations from the task force recognize the importance of people in those communities who play an important role in implementing the solutions.

As I was learning more about this effort to identify at-risk communities, I was struck by how our urban and rural communities are so different in so many ways but so similar in many ways. I represent a predominantly rural part of the riding but have been in Toronto on and off for the past 20 years of my life, working in and out of the city, as well as in the rural communities in my riding.

1120

It's true that communities across my riding and across Ontario have been struggling for years to obtain access to many of the services that some people in the larger cities take for granted. While we're debating the need for targeting resources in Toronto, we should not forget the areas outside Toronto that are facing access problems. I have a lot of groups in my riding that do a wonderful job of working with youth in the riding and in engaging more community groups in this long-term fight to make our communities stronger and safer.

I want to acknowledge Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Kawartha Lakes-Haliburton. I know that Big Brothers and Big Sisters were here last week. I was incredibly surprised at how many members in this Legislature have been involved with Big Brothers and Big Sisters over

their years of strengthening their communities and helping young people.

Children's social services of Victoria county; the city of Kawartha Lakes parks, recreation and culture division; the city of Kawartha Lakes Boys and Girls Club has done a tremendous job and are expanding; the Climax Climbing Club—clubs I didn't know existed until I really got into being an elected member here. Even the curling clubs in our area do a great job of adults bridging to youth and getting them involved in activities. The John Howard Society of Victoria, Haliburton, Simcoe and Muskoka; the karate groups of Kawartha Lakes-Haliburton; the 4-H associations, which are celebrating their 90th anniversary this year, but have been strong community members in educating our young into strong leadership and leaders in our communities; Kinark Child and Family Services hosted their first water festival this year. They're all part of engaging youth and teaching them skills to become stronger and more responsible leaders.

I could go on with many. With the veterans here, I wanted to mention that we have several associations of cadets in my riding, the Girl Guides of Canada, junior firefighters, many hockey teams, Scouts Canada, Brownies, Sparks etc. which are all engaged in the communities. I think they're examples of how communities need to become engaged.

It is admirable that Ms. Churley has brought this motion forward to stress that all levels of government have to partner with communities, if that is our goal.

I was involved a little bit with Operation Springboard here in Toronto. They have 15 locations in Ontario, and they've touched thousands of lives of youth and adults. It's a social service agency that's strongly rooted in the community with a multifaceted approach and a close relationship with the criminal justice and social service systems, given their well-earned reputation of legitimacy and hard-fought history, working toward safer communities for over 30 years. I think there is 5% recidivism rate with Operation Springboard.

There are a lot of programs out there that we can certainly take guidance from. There was a program called Choices...Straight Up, an approach to crime prevention, a very innovative program that spoke to youth in the communities. I know Operation Springboard mostly from their work in Toronto, but they have worked with over 700 at-risk children and young adults. In addition to the efforts to curb crime, Operation Springboard hosts community development and volunteer programs that assist youth to find employment and maintain the positions that they earn, which undoubtedly contributes to a sense of safety and well-being among all members of the communities.

I know that Regent Park is written up a lot in the newspapers, and rightly so. It is without doubt one of Toronto's most diverse and resilient neighbourhoods, which thrives on a strong sense of community spirit. It was built over 50 years ago. It is one of the oldest publicly funded housing communities in Canada, with

12,000 people living in Regent Park and surrounding area. They have rent-geared-to-income units, home to 7,500 people, 50% of whom are children under 18 years of age.

The community is rapidly deteriorating. Buildings need major repairs and upgrades. There has been a massive revitalization effort from the residents' association. They need volunteers, and members of the community are coming out to help them rebuild Regent Park. They are shining examples.

To outreach to different cultural communities in Toronto is wonderful, but the solution to the problem of youth violence in our communities is not simply the pouring of money into programs that address the inequitable distribution of social services and infrastructure. The solution also includes the need to send a clear message to those communities that these crimes are serious and that there are real consequences in store for anyone who has a gun in the commission of a crime, and that's not something that's happening right now. Building more recreation centres is a good thing, but a far more effective thing to do would be for all levels of government to send a clear and strong message that our society will not tolerate this type of behaviour.

We've heard the government tout the grand plan for 1,000 more police officers on the streets, but we still have not seen those 1,000 police officers on the streets. We have to create a safe environment so that municipalities can work with levels of government so that the communities feel safe.

It's important to support the principle of targeting resources to areas in need. The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy is part of that, but we also have to create safe neighbourhoods, and with individuals who commit crimes, especially youth crimes, show that we need strong penalties but that we also need to work with community groups to show the damage young offenders do to their communities and how it affects people at all levels.

I applaud the member from Toronto–Danforth for bringing this forward, hearing its sensitivities, and we should all work together to help the communities be stronger.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I am pleased to rise and speak in favour of the motion put forward by my colleague from Toronto–Danforth. The United Way reported, in its report about the new face of poverty in Toronto, that in 1980 there were 30 areas of the then municipality of Metropolitan Toronto that could be described as being poor areas, that met the definition of poverty. In the year 2001, sadly, unfortunately and through a great many factors, that number of 30 has jumped to 120. So there are four times as many poor areas in the new city of Toronto than there were in Metropolitan Toronto just 20 years before.

People can ask why this has happened. I guess there are a lot of social, economic and political reasons why it did. First and foremost, housing downtown got very expensive. It's an expensive place to live now, and where

the downtown core was once sort of the heart and where poverty could be defined, that is no longer necessarily the case. Poverty is now seen in what are called the inner suburbs, those places of East York, York, Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke. That is the new face of poverty. You don't see it downtown any more, although you will still see, of course, poor people there and the homeless tend to congregate in the downtown core. But the real face of poverty in Toronto today is very different than it was back in 1980.

There is a reason for that. It is because of the expense of living downtown. The cheaper apartments and places where people could live were in the inner suburbs. These are apartments that were built in the 1950s, through the early 1970s and up into the late 1970s. Those apartments became available. Although they're older, they tend to be cheaper and people move from the downtown core to the cheapest units. They didn't go all the way out to Mississauga, Durham, York or Halton, because that's too far for many people to commute to work who don't own cars, but also because those new communities have new and expensive housing. It's very difficult and there are not many apartments being built out in those suburbs. So people moved to the inner suburbs and the inner suburbs were completely at a lack to provide for them. Whereas all the social services and safety nets were downtown in the past, they're not where the people are now living.

1130

The TD Bank Financial Group called this "persistent, deep pools of poverty." How did these deep pools develop? People moved to where the cheaper housing was, and there certainly are no resources. But I think politicians at all levels have to be part of the blame here too, because policies that were implemented in the last 20 or 25 years have not helped the cause of those who are poor. There have been and continue to be cutbacks and freezing of welfare rates. There have been and continue to be a clawback of monies from the poorest of poor children, whose families have to give back money that was intended to alleviate poverty. This province claws that money back and continues to do so. There has been a dearth of social housing built in this city and in this province for many years. In fact, I think last year, the last year for which there are statistics, there were only 26 units of social housing built in the entire province, and all of those were in aboriginal communities, not one being in the city of Toronto.

There has been, of course, the downloading of public and social housing units from the province to the municipalities, and in this case to the city of Toronto, which quite frankly does not have the resources to maintain them adequately. There have been and continue to be problems with the school boards in all municipalities, but with Toronto being singularly unable for a number of years to offer up their properties for after-school activities. This is changing somewhat and I am thankful for that small change. But for many years there was nowhere for the kids to go because the schools, quite literally in the inner suburbs, were the only community

centres that might have been available and they were closed due to lack of funding.

Last but not least, in a city as expensive as Toronto, the minimum wage, which was frozen for so many years, remains so inadequate, so preposterous, so unbelievable. I question any member of this House to stand in his or her place and say—a person who earns the minimum wage, works 40 hours a week, would take home approximately \$300 a week before taxes; that is about \$15,000 a year. Where an average two-bedroom apartment is more than \$1,000 a month, that literally takes all the money that a person who works full time would earn, and if they have a family to provide for, quite frankly, I don't know how they do it. I don't know and I don't think anybody in this chamber would know how they do it either.

These are the problems that are faced.

The United Way listed nine communities that are very much at risk. Those nine communities they listed are Victoria Village, Dorset Park, Eglinton East, Scarborough Village, Black Creek, Westminster-Branson, Crescent Town, Steeles and Kennedy Park. Since the writing of this report, four additional communities have been added. I want to talk about just one of those communities: the community of Crescent Town, which is in the riding of Beaches—East York, a community, a neighbourhood that I have had the privilege of representing now for 17 years in one capacity or another.

Crescent Town was built in the early 1970s. It was one of the last large rental unit projects built in the 1970s, and it was built on a condition by the then borough of East York that Crescent Town had to be self-contained. You see, East York didn't have any money in those days to put in a community centre for 10,000 people. They didn't have the money to provide all the facilities and amenities that 10,000 people coming in to the borough at that time would need. So they made the developer of Crescent Town build their own facilities. Crescent Town to this day has its own club. It has its own handball courts and swimming pool. It has a drop-in centre that is used by the kids. But the residents of Crescent Town pay for that themselves. Not one cent has ever been given by the borough of East York or now by the city of Toronto, or by the province, to Crescent Town to upgrade or keep its club going.

I have to tell you that after 35 years it is very difficult to offer that facility in the way that it should, and the kids are looking for something better, I hope, than a 35-year-old facility badly in need of some repairs.

That neighbourhood has been a strong neighbourhood. Over the course of all of those 35 years, there have been many changes. The community, when it was first built, was just like most places in Toronto predominantly British, north European stock. Those are the people who lived there. Today it is a very vibrant multicultural community, and a very large number of people from a South Asian background live there. It is in fact, I would suggest, an immigrant community.

The school that was once overcrowded has been rebuilt, and to the credit of the people of Crescent Town

and the students of Crescent Town, that school, which was always kind of low on the scores, this year, for the first time that I ever remember, was actually above the Toronto average. So, many kudos to the educators and to the parents and kids in Crescent Town, who have shown that they can do it.

But they need our help; they need our help I think desperately. There are some youth problems beginning to manifest. There are many landlord issues, of course, with the state of buildings that are 35 years old and could have been, and should have been, kept in better repair.

One of the members speaking earlier was surprised at why this is coming forward and why there is such urgency. I think I should read out why, because the United Way task force set 10 conditions. Eight of those conditions that have to be met for us to alleviate poverty in Toronto—and to start working on these nine, and now 13 or 14, communities—are provincial in nature, involve the province.

Recommendation 10—I want to read it out in its entirety—says why this is important:

“The task force recommends that the three orders of government commit to the following timeline for implementation of the Toronto neighbourhoods strategy:

“By December 2005, governments”—and that means us—“will have:

“(a) established the intergovernmental table;

“(b) confirmed the neighbourhoods for initial investment;

“(c) identified and committed resources to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy;

“(d) established the strong neighbourhood investment board;

“(e) established the strong neighbourhoods unit; and

“(f) established the local neighbourhood investment partnerships.”

Of course, most of that hasn't been done. The city of Toronto has done most of that, but the province has yet to do it. Hence the urgency of this resolution, because by December 2006 and every year thereafter, governments will issue annual reports under the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. I believe the Premier has committed himself to do that. We have got to get our act together. We have to get moving on this.

We have an obligation to our poor communities, we have an obligation to our city and our province, I believe, to make sure that those communities in most need get the resources they need. In so doing, we'll build a stronger city and a stronger province. We will do much to alleviate poverty and much to alleviate violence if we proceed that way.

I am going to stop now because I want to leave some additional time for my friend from Toronto—Danforth, but I hope that this passes unanimously.

1140

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I first of all would like to recognize the member from Toronto—Danforth in bringing forward this resolution, “That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Liberal govern-

ment enter into an agreement with the city of Toronto to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and urge the federal government to become an equal partner in this agreement as well.”

I'd like as well to commend my colleague the MPP from Scarborough Southwest on opening the government's comments on this.

We in the government certainly support strong neighbourhoods and the report of this particular task force, which I understand was filed on June 30 this year. In particular, perhaps one of the highlights of the directed energies of this report is that 13 neighbourhoods have been singled out for particular recognition, and hopefully improvement over time. One of those neighbourhoods—number two on the list, I believe—is Jamestown, which of course is a neighbourhood within my own riding of Etobicoke North and certainly has had its share of needs and risks. One of the things about this particular report, and perhaps this overall strategy—first of all, there's a great deal to say and not especially a great deal of time in which to say it. As T.S. Eliot said, “Time present” allows “but a little consciousness.”

I'm reminded of the motto of the French Revolution, which was, “Liberté, égalité, fraternité,” which means, of course, as you'll appreciate, Speaker, liberty, equality and fraternity. That, I think, is perhaps the ultimate spirit of this particular report: liberty to reach one's full potential, to not have constraints of any kind, be they physical, emotional or economic; equality, again moving toward the phrase of Trudeau, “the just society”; and fraternity, or co-operative action between all levels of government—something that is particularly called for within this report. Of course, we realize that it's only by co-operation at multiple levels of government that we can really further all of our mutual interests. Certainly, we in the government support strong neighbourhoods, neighbourhood-building such as creating investment boards to better integrate service deliveries and investing in priority neighbourhoods including Jamestown.

Now, with respect, I would like to just say to the MPP from Beaches—East York, whose comments are always very thoughtful—I would nevertheless submit that his negative criticisms of the current government actually remind me of some of the American generals who always seem to be fighting the last war. As you'll recall, Speaker, it was in fact well documented that the Harris-Eves government led to multiple cutbacks and down-loadings, the consequences of which we are now dealing with. In what respect? Persistently low incomes, widening income gaps, of which multicultural communities are unfortunately particular representatives of, and the recent influx of guns and gangs—as you'll recall, Speaker, I invited to respect and to honour the father of a young man who was shot in my riding, one of three funerals that I actually had to attend, unfortunately, in my duties as the MPP for Etobicoke North—and just the generalized unequal distribution of services and facilities.

Now, there is so much to say, whether we're dealing with the \$23-billion gap, which unfortunately resonates

too much in the city of Toronto, particularly with regard to new Canadians; the issues with regard the guns and gangs, which I'm pleased to see that our government is now moving forward on with, for example, the provision of extra crown prosecutors as well as specific task forces that are devoted to this issue. In general, we need to, for example, mobilize our federal colleagues. The \$23-billion gap is something that is also well-known and is also perhaps publicizing itself throughout the press through Ontario. Ultimately, it's a gap that Ontario needs to have addressed, because a stronger Ontario, of course, leads to a stronger federation.

Speaker, with your permission, I would like to yield the floor to the colleague, the MPP from Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Speaker, I've been involved—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. The member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in debate on this motion brought forward by the member from Toronto—Danforth, and I commend her for doing so. I want to commit my support for this resolution. There's no doubt in my mind that all of us here in the Legislature share the objective of this resolution, and certainly we would, I believe, all be able to sign to the objective of the strategy that's been proposed. Strong neighbourhoods are the foundation of our society. Strong neighbourhoods are based on strong families, and anything we can do through public policy we should do as members of this Legislature.

Members have referred in debate to the important role the federal government will also have in ensuring that this strategy is appropriately funded. There isn't much we can do without the financial resources to implement the objectives as set out in this strategy.

I don't pretend to speak for all my colleagues. As this is a private member's bill, they will vote as their conscience would guide them, but I will certainly speak for myself and on behalf of my constituents. Although I don't represent a Toronto-centric riding, I do represent the riding of Oak Ridges, which is all of Richmond Hill, Whitchurch—Stouffville and the northern part of Markham.

I'm one who believes very strongly that the quality of life throughout the greater Toronto area, indeed Ontario, largely depends on the quality of life within the city of Toronto. In many ways, the city of Toronto is an indicator of the economic health and social strength of the rest of the province, so it must indeed be a focus for our government.

I would say this: I would encourage the city of Toronto, the province and indeed the federal government to give some serious consideration to an issue when I had the privilege of serving in the last government as Minister of Tourism and Recreation. In that capacity, I had responsibility for a number of portfolios that related to recreational activity, amateur sports and so on. One of the files I had asked our civil service to investigate was how we can utilize existing structures, facilities and infra-

structure within our communities that are perhaps being underutilized. A proposal that I had put forward we had designated as our open doors policy, and I refer to our schools within every community.

There isn't a community within this city, within the GTA or the province that doesn't have schools, be they public or secondary schools. These are facilities that have been paid for by the citizens of the city and the province. They should be the centre, in many ways, of our communities. The vision I had at the time was that every school be considered a community centre. There are gymnasiums, there are all kinds of facilities that can be utilized by investing in a program that opens the doors of these facilities. Think about it: the number of our young people who are on the street, having to hang out in malls, walking by a school that has a gymnasium and all kinds of facilities because the doors are locked. They are locked in the afternoon and on the weekends.

I would call on the government to seriously consider throwing open those doors. Let's make those schools the centres of our communities. Invest the dollars into those facilities so that in fact they can be utilized by the members of our community. I know the government is moving in that direction, and I have complimented the Honourable Jim Bradley for taking up on that initiative that we had begun. We have had those discussions.

Laughter.

Mr. Klees: Honourable members are laughing. Speak to the minister. We have had that discussion. He knows full well that was an initiative that was very close to my heart in terms of bringing it forward, and I commend the government for doing that. I know that we in our party will stand behind programs that will, in a substantive way, improve the quality of life for people in the city of Toronto, especially immigrants.

1150

In closing, I want to say this: If there's anything we can do to enhance the quality of life, particularly for the immigrant community in the city of Toronto, it's to give meaningful focus to ensuring that foreign-trained professionals and people who come to this country with trade skills have the opportunity to put those into practice and to earn a living for themselves and their families.

Mr. Zimmer: I'm pleased to rise in support of this motion. It's time for action here in the city of Toronto on these issues.

Let me just lay out a little bit of the background here. A couple of years ago—I think it was about three years ago that I got involved in this—there was the Toronto City Summit Alliance report, which very early on called for action on our neighbourhoods that require extra attention. That group produced a report entitled Enough Talk. That was a significant choice of title—Enough Talk—the implication being that we've talked about this for years and years, and we have to move forward. That Toronto City Summit Alliance set up a strong neighbourhoods task force to come up with some recommendations, recognizing that we've talked about this enough and it's time to move forward. Twenty-two community

leaders, the United Way, the corporate world, the community world and political leaders from the province released a report wherein they identified 13 neighbourhoods in Toronto that required, in their opinion, some real help to get themselves moving, to address the problems they face in terms of poverty, community services, crime, problems with children, education and all those problems. I read that report over carefully.

I must say that I had some sense even before the report was released about the issues the city was facing. For a number of the years, I was chairman of the Toronto Community Housing Corp. That's the social housing provider here in the city of Toronto, with 164,000 tenants spread over 61,000 or 62,000 units. We saw first-hand at that board the problems these 13 neighbours were facing in Toronto. We virtually had residents and apartment building tenants living in all of those neighbourhoods. Our board, our staff, saw first-hand what was going on. If you had been able to sit with me at some of those board meetings, your heart would cry out for redress of some of the issues we had to deal with.

I was very privileged to serve on that board with Mr. Nick Volk, who's here in the members' gallery. Nick, would you stand up? Nick Volk was a very distinguished member of the Toronto Community Housing Corp. He served Habitat for Humanity here in Toronto and for the past 30 years—that's more than the longest-serving member of this Legislature has sat in this body—Nick Volk has been an advocate for redress in Toronto neighbourhoods. I congratulate him for this. Nick Volk took me under his wing at the Toronto Community Housing Corp. and helped me to understand the problems that were facing our neighbourhoods.

What does the report entail? The report has three elements, three key components to its strategy: We need an intergovernmental agreement to ensure coordinated investment; we need commitment and agreement on target resources and how to allocate those resources; and we need to have a mechanism whereby if the scope of the existing programs and services is insufficient for the neighbourhood, there's some way to top up those services.

I was happy to be at the unveiling of the task force report on June 30. Mayor Miller was there. He obviously strongly endorsed it. I was there and I endorsed it on behalf of the Ontario government and particularly on behalf of the Toronto caucus. There was federal representation there that endorsed it.

We've had enough talk on this. We have to move forward.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Toronto—Danforth.

Ms. Churley: I appreciate the comments made from all parties this morning. As you may have noticed, I have gone out of my way to not be partisan and play the blame game today. It can be very tempting to do so. But I agree with Mr. Zimmer on this, that Enough Talk should be the theme of the day. That's why we're here this morning,

because there has been a whole lot of talk about this issue.

Some members brought up gun violence this morning and law-and-order issues. I want to say that I was deliberately decoupling that issue. I know it's connected, but I decoupled it for a reason. There has been a lot of focus on the law and order side, as there should be, because we know that poverty and a lack of resources play a huge part in the gun violence we're seeing. But I decoupled it because it is so important to recognize that those communities we're talking about are about a lot more than gun violence and troubled youth. What this is all about today is also to prevent these problems from happening with youth down the road. So I deliberately, strategically, wanted to talk today about the resources that are needed, that are spelled out in this report. It tells us exactly what we have to do to help those communities help themselves.

These communities are proud communities, as they should be. My leader and I, as I said earlier, visited some of those communities, and I know other members here have done so as well. I urge everybody to go and see these communities for what they are, because they are about a lot more than what we read in the headlines in newspapers every day. They are made up of people like you and me. They are made up of brave mothers and fathers, single mothers, kids who are going through school and getting jobs, some working two or three jobs to support their families or go to university. There are incredible people living in these amazing communities, and I wanted to highlight and congratulate those communities today for all the good things about them. That's what we're here for today, to celebrate these wonderful communities and say that it's the communities, the leaders in those communities and the struggling parents who are doing the work all on their own to help themselves. We in this place need to draw upon this report and help those communities.

We have with us members from the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, who are meeting with us here today, fittingly enough; the Ralph Thornton Centre; the United Way; and the Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services agency over here. I referred to them earlier and the incredible work they are doing, without any government support whatsoever. There are people like that in our communities all over the city and all over the province, struggling. They work full-time and they spend their evenings and weekends in their communities, without the resources they need to help their communities. I think we also have representatives from the South Asian Legal Clinic, and I'm sure there are more—well, they were here. I guess they had to get back to their meeting.

I am here today, and we are all here today, to applaud their work. Without them, as the United Way says, there would be no way. They are the ones who are making the difference and they're struggling to do it on their own. We need to thank the United Way, the city of Toronto, the Toronto City Summit Alliance and all of those who

worked hard to do the research and bring forward this report.

This debate today is not going to draw headlines. It's not about gang violence and shootings; it's about our communities, it's about us, it's about who we are collectively. The reason why this is here today is because we have a deadline—the province, the feds, the city—to follow through on these recommendations by December, and we're here today to make sure that happens.

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

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT
AMENDMENT ACT (HASTINGS
AND PRINCE EDWARD REGIMENT
MEMORIAL HIGHWAY), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'AMENAGEMENT DES VOIES
PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS EN
COMMUN (ROUTE COMMEMORATIVE
HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD
REGIMENT)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall deal first with ballot item number 3, standing in the name of Mr. Parsons.

Mr. Parsons has moved second reading of Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name a portion of Highway 62 and Highway 33 the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment Memorial Highway.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after dealing with the next ballot item.

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS
STRATEGY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 4, private member's notice of motion number 3, in the name of Ms. Churley.

Ms. Churley has moved that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Liberal government enter into an agreement with the city of Toronto to implement the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and urge the federal government to become an equal partner in this agreement as well.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. I remind the members this is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT
AMENDMENT ACT (HASTINGS
AND PRINCE EDWARD REGIMENT
MEMORIAL HIGHWAY), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'AMENAGEMENT DES VOIES
PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS EN
COMMUN (ROUTE COMMEMORATIVE
HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD
REGIMENT)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Parsons has moved second reading of Bill 5. All those in favour, please rise.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Patten, Richard
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Leal, Jeff	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Levac, Dave	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Marchese, Rosario	Racco, Mario G.
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Rinaldi, Lou
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Ruprecht, Tony
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Sandals, Liz
Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted	Scott, Laurie
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm	Smitherman, George
Hardeman, Ernie	Milloy, John	Tory, John
Horwath, Andrea	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Hoy, Pat	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Klees, Frank	Oraziotti, David	Yakabuski, John
Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Zimmer, David
Kwinter, Monte	Parsons, Ernie	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Parsons has asked that the bill be ordered to the standing committee on regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

Now we'll open the doors for 30 seconds.

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS
STRATEGY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Churley has moved private member's notice of motion 3. All those in favour will please stand.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Patten, Richard
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Leal, Jeff	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Levac, Dave	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Marchese, Rosario	Racco, Mario G.
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Rinaldi, Lou
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Ruprecht, Tony
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Sandals, Liz
Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted	Scott, Laurie
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm	Smitherman, George
Hardeman, Ernie	Milloy, John	Tory, John
Horwath, Andrea	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Hoy, Pat	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Klees, Frank	Oraziotti, David	Yakabuski, John

Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Parsons, Ernie

Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

The House recessed from 1211 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Last weekend I was very pleased to attend the Celebration of the Arts, sponsored by the York Region Newspaper Group. The evening honours recipients of the organization's art bursaries, which are given out to York region's most promising young artists. The celebration is in its fifth year, and it is a gala evening, featuring performances by some of the 2005 bursary winners and other years' fine artists. As well, the audience was entertained by the outstanding Huron Heights After-Hours jazz band.

In five years, they have awarded 68 bursaries, and thanks to the ever-growing list of sponsors, in 2005 they awarded the most bursaries ever: 20. This year's bursary winners are: Amanda Bell, Hillary Coote, Christopher Dallo, Stephan Ermel, Elisa Gargarella, Alessia Iorio, Caley Kaiman, Haley Kirk, Georgia Leung, Kyle Merrithew, Amber Minchella, Gerrie O'Brien, Brandon Rad, Radhika Ray, Rajini Retnasothie, Deanna Roffey, Jackie Saltzman, Hyunjoo Eugene Shon, Samantha Taylor and Mathew Teofilo.

I know I join with all my York region colleagues in honouring these great artists. Thanks as well to the York Region Newspaper Group and all the other sponsors and volunteers.

BLUES AND JAZZ FESTIVAL

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): It's a great pleasure to rise today, especially in the presence of our mayor, Hazel McCallion, and the city manager, Janice Baker. They will be introduced more formally later, I'm sure. It's my pleasure to rise to talk about the 2005 Southside Shuffle.

Once again, this blues and jazz festival was held in Port Credit, in Mississauga South, on the weekend following Labour Day. This year was more successful than ever. In three days, attendance exceeded 100,000 people, and it was so important that even John Tory attended.

On the Wednesday prior, we held the blues gala evening called New Orleans 2005. Over 600 people attended and we raised over \$40,000 for local charities and not-for-profit organizations, including Youth Net Peel, Lake-

shore Corridor Community Team, Interim Place, the Compass food bank, Foodpath and New Orleans relief.

Mr. Chuck Jackson, the founder of Southside Shuffle, his wonderful team, as well as Mississauga South Charity deserve our thanks and congratulations for another successful festival and their great contribution that was made to the community of Mississauga South.

GAMMA FOUNDRIES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On December 9, 2004, I brought to the attention of the Legislature, and specifically to the Minister of the Environment, a long-standing issue involving Gamma Foundries in Richmond Hill.

I rise today to report to this House that regrettably little has changed for the residents who continue to be subjected to the offensive odours and particulate fallout from the Gamma foundry operations.

In fact, despite a provincial officer order issued on December 21, 2004, which ordered Gamma to prepare an action plan that will address odour emissions from the plant, the company's response to that order is a blatant attempt to delay implementation of any meaningful mitigation measures which were identified in the engineering report in response to the Ministry of the Environment order.

I am therefore calling today on the Ministry of the Environment to issue a new provincial officer order which will explicitly require the immediate implementation of the specific engineering controls and control technology that was identified in the EarthTech report, and to prescribe specific timelines for compliance.

Nothing short of an immediate new order will be acceptable. The community that is being subjected to these odours and these pollutants should no longer have to put up with the treatment they're receiving from this company.

UNION VILLA

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): Today I rise to share with members of this chamber some very good news for seniors living in my riding of Markham. Yesterday I had the good fortune of participating in the official grand opening ceremony of a new Union Villa, a long-term-care facility. Union Villa is a model of a brick-by-brick project in the making. After almost 10 years of planning, two years of construction and a number of hurdles along the way, the new complex has opened at last.

Through my affiliation and many visits to the former facility over the years, I have witnessed the vision and plan for the development of this modern and much-needed facility. Built on a solid 35-year foundation of serving the evolving needs of seniors, Union Villa provides exemplary care in a spacious, contemporary, barrier-free and now energy-efficient facility.

As Ontario's fastest-growing demographic, more and more seniors will be moving into long-term-care facilities like Union Villa. I am confident that Union Villa will provide Markham seniors with a quality of life that is second to none.

Please join me in recognizing the leadership, hard work and determination that have gone into the making of Union Villa, and most especially, my former colleague and friend Graham Constantine, president and CEO. To my friends and residents of Union Villa, I applaud you. You deserve the best.

EVENTS IN GODERICH

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): Today grade 10 students from Goderich District Collegiate Institute are touring the Legislature, and I would like to welcome them. I know that they will have a very informative day.

A few weeks ago, the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Steve Peters, had the opportunity to visit "Canada's Prettiest Town", being the town of Goderich in the beautiful riding of Huron-Bruce. Here, he had the chance to go underground to tour the world's largest salt mine, which is located in Goderich. As well, he was able to tour the assembly line at Volvo Motor Graders. Minister Peters discussed different issues from within these two industries, as well as listening to the workers and their unions.

Issues frequently mentioned were workplace health and safety, training and opportunities for current and future employees. The minister spoke about many new initiatives that this government has introduced in order to address these issues. Sifto and Volvo Motor Graders are the two largest employers in Goderich. Providing adequate training and ensuring health and safety are top priorities. These industries will need many new employees to do the job with all the right skills required.

It's certainly my pleasure to welcome the students from Goderich.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): A new sound is sweeping Ontario. It's hard to hear, but in the background of every McGuinty announcement regarding job creation, the faint sounds of mariachi music can be heard and the volume is getting louder. I can only assume that the mariachi music we're hearing is from parties being thrown in Mexico every time a company in Ontario packs up and heads down to warmer climates, both business and meteorological. Last week, Imperial Tobacco in Guelph announced it would be closing and heading to Mexico, leaving 550 people out of work.

It's becoming clear that we cannot trust the McGuinty Liberals to do their part to create a favourable business climate. This has been demonstrated by their energy plan, which is sloppy at best. It's having a devastating impact on the economy. Plant closures and job losses are begin-

ning to mount; certainly more than enough to fill the entire back of a napkin.

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We've learned we cannot trust the McGuinty Liberals for much, but one would certainly hope to expect some compassion and empathy from the Liberal MPP in Guelph—not so. The member was quoted in the Guelph Mercury as saying that the closure of Imperial will cause disruption in the lives of those who lost their jobs but that it is an indicator that the policies in the Liberal government are working.

The member owes those who will lose their jobs, as well as their families, a lot more than that—perhaps an explanation of how the Liberal government has failed them. I doubt that mariachi music will be of much comfort.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): The Municipal Property Assessment Corp., MPAC, has recently sent out the 2005 property assessments. Ward 30 in Toronto–Danforth and ward 31 in Beaches–East York, both in the east end of Toronto, have been particularly hard-hit. The member for Beaches–East York and I have heard from hundreds of residents, some with increases as high as 40%.

New Democrats and the Liberals, when in opposition, opposed the so-called current value assessment brought in by the previous Harris government, because we and the Liberals knew at that time that it would hurt residents in our older neighbourhoods and our part of the city. Our worst fears have been realized. Seniors on fixed incomes and struggling young families living in modest homes are being penalized because of rising property values, and they are being taxed on future equity that they cannot afford to pay.

Mr. Prue and I will be holding meetings in our community, and I can guarantee you that this is outrageous. People are going to be forced out of their homes, and we want to see action now, not six months from now or whenever the Ombudsman reports back. There are certain suggestions we want to make that can be done: “Successful appeals and rollback of assessments are not factored into as the new base rate forcing homeowners to appeal yearly. Homeowners should not have to go through this year after year. Make the appealed assessment the base assessment.”

There are more, which I will talk about at a later date. But mark my words, we are going to fight you every inch of the way.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise today to congratulate Northumberland Hills Hospital and Quinte Health Care Corp. in my riding of Northumberland for their tremendous speed in delivering surgeries to the residents of Ontario.

The new wait time tracking system employed by the Ministry of Health has revealed that Northumberland Hills Hospital is first in delivering cataract surgeries within the Central East LHIN. In fact, patients going for cataract surgery at Northumberland Hills Hospital will have the fourth-shortest wait time in the province.

The median wait time for cataract surgery across Ontario is 85 days. However, the median wait time for cataract surgery at Northumberland Hills is 34 days. This is clearly an impressive figure.

I would also like to commend Quinte Health Care Corp. for being the first for cataract surgeries, hip replacements and knee replacements in the South East LHIN. For hip replacements, Quinte Health Care Corp. is third in the province.

Northumberland Hills Hospital and Quinte Health Care Corp. represent what the government's wait times strategy is all about. No doubt, the success of these hospitals could not have been achieved without the tremendous dedication and hard work of doctors, nurses, administrators and other health professionals. I commend everyone at Northumberland Hills and Quinte Health Care Corp. for rapidly providing quality health care to the residents of Northumberland.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Contrary to what some opposition members claim, the automotive industry in Ontario is not in decline, but rather the auto sector is growing. Some 138,000 Ontarians are currently working in the automotive manufacturing sector. In my riding of London–Fanshawe, over 6,000 people are employed in manufacturing, many of them in the auto sector.

One of the places some of my constituents work is the CAMI plant near Ingersoll. The plant currently assembles the Chevrolet Equinox and the Pontiac Torrent. CAMI is projected to have a record production year this year, producing about 190,000 vehicles. CAMI has recently hired more employees, and now employs 2,784 people.

This government recognizes the importance of the automotive industry. We have set up the \$500-million Ontario automotive investment strategy to help nurture growth in auto manufacturing, evidenced by the \$2.5-billion Beacon project investment by GM. This strategy is helping the industry produce more and helping the industry hire more. I am happy that the McGuinty government is continuing to make these investments.

Congratulations to CAMI on their recent success. I'm proud that this government is helping to create more jobs in my region.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES COLLÈGES

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act with respect to part-time staff / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges à l'égard du personnel à temps partiel.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Yes, I do, Speaker. The bill amends the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act to include part-time staff in staff bargaining units. Under the present act, part-time workers are not included in bargaining units and have no right to bargain collectively with employers.

I have to tell you that I agree with OPSEU President Leah Casselman when she says, "It's shocking that such a basic right is not recognized in our colleges."

I hope the members across will support this bill.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR L'ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

Mr. Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to promote access to justice by amending or repealing various Acts and by enacting the Legislation Act, 2005 / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à promouvoir l'accès à la justice en modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et en édictant la Loi de 2005 sur la législation.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the minister have a brief statement?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I'll defer to ministers' statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I want to begin by recognizing a number of honoured guests with us here in the gallery, and I'm going to go in alphabetical order in terms of the organizations themselves: the president of the Advocates' Society, Linda Rothstein; the president of the Association of Law Officers of the Crown; the County and District Law Presidents' Asso-

ciation; the Criminal Lawyers' Association; the president of the Paralegal Society of Ontario; the president of POINTTS; the president of the Professional Paralegal Association of Ontario; the Small Investor Protection Association; the Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators; the United Senior Citizens of Ontario; the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; the Ontario Provincial Police Association; the Law Society of Upper Canada; the city of Mississauga, Mayor Hazel McCallion; the Healthcare Insurance Reciprocal of Canada; the chair of Legal Aid Ontario; the Police Association of Ontario; the Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments; Seneca, Humber, Durham, Fleming and Sheridan community colleges; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; Canada's Association for the Fifty Plus; the Canadian Medical Protective Association; representatives from the city of Toronto; Fidelity National Financial; First Canadian Title; the medical professional liability committee; the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police; the Ontario Bar Association; the Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association; the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association; and the Toronto Board of Trade. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all of them for being here.

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This afternoon, I introduced for first reading the Access to Justice Act, 2005. The legislation, if passed, will modernize and improve the people's access to the justice system, and it will provide greater openness, transparency and accountability. The bill would regulate paralegals, reform and streamline the justice of the peace system, amend the Limitations Act and create the Legislation Act.

An increasing number of people in Ontario offer and charge consumers for paralegal services. However, at present, paralegals are not regulated in Ontario. For many years, experts have recommended that paralegals be regulated. The regulation of paralegals would increase access to justice by giving consumers a choice in the qualified legal services they use, while protecting those who receive legal advice from non-lawyers.

The Law Society of Upper Canada, which has the experience, infrastructure and expertise to regulate lawyers, has made a bold move and agreed to transform itself into a regulator of professionals providing legal services. Treasurers past and present, like Mr. Hunter and Mr. Marrocco who are here, join together with benchers of the law society to act in the public interest and take on this very important responsibility that will help all Ontarians.

The bill would give the law society the responsibility of regulating paralegals. Paralegals would have a permanent role in the regulation of their own profession through the law society. A paralegal standing committee composed of a non-lawyer majority would play a key role in directing the affairs of paralegals.

I want to thank and congratulate the many pioneers and leaders, many of whom are in the House today, who made this issue that has been around for a very long time

a reality, and it is all in the public interest for Ontario. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for that.

Of course, another part of access to justice is our court system itself. The time is now to modernize the justice of the peace system in Ontario. The improvements in the Access to Justice Act, if passed, will ensure a more open and transparent appointment process for justices of the peace, with legislated standards for qualifications and a complaints and discipline process.

These improvements would introduce increased flexibility for the court in scheduling justices of the peace. For example, per diem justices of the peace could be dedicated by the judiciary exclusively to specific matters, including Provincial Offences Act proceedings, sometimes referred to as traffic court.

We have heard from municipalities, we've heard from leaders, mayors like Mayor McCallion, police and the judiciary, and now we are proposing to amend the Provincial Offences Act to permit witnesses to be heard by electronic means; for example, by video conferencing. Police officers would not necessarily need to attend in person in court for provincial offences proceedings, including traffic ticket charges. The goal is to reduce the time and cost for police in attending a trial and to ease the pressure on Provincial Offences Act courts. The amendments would permit alternatives for resolving municipal bylaw disputes without having to go to provincial offences court, ensuring the effective administration of justice.

If these amendments are passed, it would create the framework necessary for us to consult with municipalities, police and the judiciary on the implementation of video testimony in traffic court, for example.

Amendments to the Courts of Justice Act would, if passed, enhance the transparency and accountability to the public for the administration of the courts. The bill includes amendments to the Limitations Act that will, if passed, give consumers and business greater choice and not force them into unnecessary litigation. The bill would allow litigants to extend limitation periods to promote the settlement of disputes out of court. The amendments would ensure that Ontario retains its place as an international legal and commercial leader in business law.

Finally, this bill creates a new single source for rules about our laws, called the Legislation Act. If passed, it would increase access to justice and modernize the law-making system by bringing the way laws are published and interpreted into the electronic age.

The proposed Access to Justice Act is the result of extensive consultation between government, the bar, the business community, and consumer and protection groups and, if passed, would benefit all Ontarians.

I say to members of this House, and in particular to the justice critics and House leaders of the official opposition and the third party, who are one and the same, that I look forward to working together collaboratively on this bill and I look forward to working with all members of this House as we improve access to justice in Ontario.

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I would like to provide the members with a report on the progress of the Office of the Registrar General. As you know, this office registers and maintains vital records for all births, deaths and marriages in Ontario.

Over the past 24 months, the ORG has faced a number of challenges, as members of this House can attest. Many MPPs received calls from frustrated constituents seeking help in getting their birth certificates and other services.

Today I would like to tell the House and the public what has been done and what other actions are being undertaken to help fix the problem. The first obstacle has been an unacceptable backlog for birth registration and birth certificate applications. At its worst, the turnaround time to get birth certificates was 20 weeks and more. Since this spring, the ORG has had more than a 90% success rate in meeting its eight-week service standard for processing properly completed birth, death and marriage certificate applications.

In June of this year, my predecessor, Minister Watson, introduced an on-line birth certificate application for children eight years of age and younger. I'm pleased to say this service has had a 99% success rate in delivering under-eight birth certificates within 15 business days, as opposed to that eight or 20 weeks I talked about earlier.

This on-line service is already handling more than 50% of all child applications, or about 25% of all birth certification applications.

As we announced in the throne speech a few weeks ago, we will be introducing a money-back service guarantee for on-line applications for all birth certificates—both children and adult. This guarantee will provide birth certificates from desktop to doorstep within 15 days or your money back. Next to come will be marriage and death certificates online.

Another issue that's been faced by the ORG was caused by the high volume of improperly completed applications. The ORG has dedicated additional resources to this problem. In addition—and this is important—the increasing number of on-line applications is reducing the number of improper submissions because, as you can appreciate, applicants are prompted to enter the proper information before submitting their applications.

Another challenge faced by the ORG was its telephone service. The majority of people who called each day received a busy signal. That was not acceptable, and we have taken action to fix it. Although this problem has not been completely resolved, I'm able to say the number of callers unable to get through has been dramatically reduced. We increased the capacity of the existing call centre and we added additional operators to help callers. The recorded message has been simplified and improved, providing callers with greater access to general information without operator assistance.

About 75% of the callers are looking for the status of their certificate application. In the months ahead,

consumers will be able to check the status of their applications on-line or over the phone without having to talk to an operator. Great strides have been made in this area but too many people are still getting busy signals. We will continue to take action to improve service.

1400

Staffing has also been an issue confronting the ORG. Over the years, the ORG's level of staffing has fluctuated greatly. I'm pleased to that your government has added more than 100 new permanent positions at the ORG in production, planning, training and other areas.

In 2003, a new computer system was brought on-line. This new technology was a prerequisite for other modernization activities. Now that it's functioning properly, it enables on-line applications, improves application tracking and ensures that certificates and registrations are processed properly.

Improvements have been made in the services provided by the ORG. Not everyone's experience will be perfect, but we are striving to increase customer satisfaction. Our ORG staff have been working hard to improve the service to the public, and I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank them. The ORG provides a necessary and valuable service to the public, and we are striving to ensure this service is provided as efficiently as possible.

We will continue to keep the House informed of our progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): This Liberal government frequently talks about co-operation in this House. Several weeks ago, with the former House leader, we asked about upcoming legislation. This was not on the radar screen, not mentioned at all. It appears to be the Attorney General in his usual role as handmaiden for The Toronto Star. The Star says "Jump," and the Attorney General says, "How high? And please bring the cameras."

Modernization of the justice system for this Liberal government is code for finding ways to slash justice ministry budgets through secret deals that will ultimately jeopardize public safety. In response to a question I asked earlier this week, the Premier denied that cuts to the justice ministry in excess of \$300 million were being considered. We know for a fact that the Premier's response was inaccurate. Perhaps his ministers aren't telling him what they're up to. We know they're certainly not above handing him inaccurate briefing notes. We don't hear the Attorney General or the Premier being upfront about their secret plans to close jails, about bullying police into pre-charge diversion, about diverting remands in the custody of organizations known for prisoner advocacy.

With respect to this legislation, there's no question we need more JPs. The Attorney General has had two years to do something about it. Without his friends at the Star

setting his agenda, this would likely still be on the back burner.

I do want to compliment the Attorney General for the commitment to allow retired individuals to serve on a per diem basis. I believe it was a serious mistake to make all JPs salaried, and they should not be restricted to traffic court. Ask a police officer if they can get a JP out of bed at 1 a.m. on a Saturday to do a bail hearing. Most of them won't do it. They're now on salary, they don't have to; they're above that sort of thing. We used to have per diem JPs go into the jails to do bail hearings, but now these lofty-salaried folks are above that sort of thing. The result is significant prisoner transportation costs from jail to court and back, and the enhancement of opportunities for prisoners to smuggle drugs and weapons into our jails.

We have serious concerns about due process; we have to look at the fine print. Audio/video testimony with the opportunity for cross-examination may be acceptable; affidavits, no. The ministers of justice should be looking at things like red tape. We know there's a red tape report sitting in the Minister of Community Safety's desk and nothing is being done about it. What about the paperwork involved in search warrants? Police court time: Traffic certainly is an area, but what about judges constantly giving out adjournments? What role is the crown playing here? What role is the judiciary playing in delaying these, calling police officers to sit in the court for adjournment after adjournment? The crown should be better coordinating with police services. That is not happening to the degree it should.

Finally, I want to mention the inclusion of paralegal legislation in this omnibus bill. It's truly regrettable. The minister made a commitment to our leader that he would share that legislation before tabling it in this House; that's his true commitment to democratic renewal. It's unfortunate it is not stand-alone legislation. It's going to cause significant delays in an initiative that all parties agree upon.

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I certainly appreciate the update provided by the minister, but I'd ask the minister: What date are you going to provide for the implementation? This is your second update within a couple of weeks. Provide the House with a date for implementation so we know what to expect.

Minister, I just want to say to you that people aren't applying for pizzas here. They are applying for a birth certificate with your on-line guarantee, which is the most important document that you can have to get your passport. The new issue that you're going to be facing, because the previous minister couldn't handle the efficiency problem, with ORG is a problem with respect to fraudulently completed applications. Identity theft is one of the major problems facing society today. You have raised that as your own government's priority. What we have in this situation now is an all-on-line approach

for adults and children, and you are going to face situations where there will be fraudulently completed applications. People want their own birth certificate; they do not want other people having access to it. How are you going to verify one's identity on-line?

As you know, identity theft is a great problem. What assurances are you going to give to this House before you implement this on-line procedure that you're going to be able to make sure that we have post-9/11 security protection measures, which we put in place as a government, and that you are not going to put that at risk?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): First let me say to the Minister of Government Services that this carny line, this Canadian Home Shopping Channel pitch of getting your birth certificate in 15 days or your money back, is totally contrary to—folks don't want their money back; they want their birth certificates, for Pete's sake.

Interjection: And they're going to get them.

Mr. Kormos: They're not going to get birth certificates if all you're offering them is their money back if they don't get it in 15 days, if they apply on-line and if they are eight or younger, because your money-back guarantee only applies to applicants eight or under. So if you are a seven-year-old with a credit card and a computer and access to the Internet, you've got some sort of guarantee. But if you are a 35-year-old who desperately needs a birth certificate to apply for a passport to attend to a family matter in another country, you are still waiting month after month after month. You know better, Minister, because that's what our constituency offices are plagued with on a daily basis. It's not only youngsters but, more significantly, adults who have to wait months, even beyond months into years, before they get a birth certificate from your ministry. You have failed miserably. Your comments today provide no comfort for people across the province waiting for their birth certificates so they can attend to important business and important personal matters, important family matters.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want to say to the Attorney General that I recall over the course of the months preceding the summer break speaking with him on almost a daily basis, asking, "Where is the paralegal legislation?" because we had to get moving on it. Well, we get it; we get it bundled up in an omnibus bill. What were you thinking? What is the matter with you, Attorney General? You know full well that inclusion of the paralegal legislation in an omnibus bill can only serve to in fact prolong the passage of that bill through second reading, committee and third reading. You know that every party in this chamber is concerned and committed to the regulation of paralegals in the province of Ontario. But you also know full well that there are issues that you are purporting to address in this bill that are going to require a far different approach and far lengthier consideration and debate than the paralegal legislation in and of itself. There's nothing in this bill to address the Askov

nipping at the heels of every judge, every crown attorney, every criminal file in this province. Backlogs, as reported in 2003, which put our justice system at risk of having serious criminal charges withdrawn on a daily basis, are still not addressed.

There's nothing in this bill to address the plague of plea bargaining that is taking place in our courts because crown attorneys are understaffed and under-resourced, and there aren't enough judges, aren't enough courtrooms, aren't enough crown attorneys and aren't enough cops assisting those crown attorneys in the prosecution of cases, and that means the crown attorneys are accepting lesser pleas simply to clear the docket.

I'm sorry, Attorney General, but you don't need this legislation to appoint JPs on a non-partisan basis. If you were truly committed to appointing JPs on a non-partisan basis, you might have thought twice about appointing Herb Kreling, a Liberal city councillor from Ottawa and a former assistant to a Liberal MP from Windsor, whom you appointed as a justice of the peace on September 7.

If you were serious about the JP shortage, you don't need this legislation to appoint JPs to sit in provincial offences courts down in Hamilton, where you learned yesterday, as a result of Andrea Horwath raising this matter in this chamber, that trials of landlords under the Landlord and Tenant Act—bad landlords, landlords who abuse and victimize tenants—are taking place not in 2006 but in the beginning of the year 2007, because of the incredible shortage of justices of the peace in the city of Hamilton. I tell you, you know full well, as a result of reports having been given to you from any number of sources, that that shortage of JPs is pandemic. It's a crisis across this province.

You don't need this bill to appoint competent, non-partisan JPs; you just need the political will to do it. Rather than doing what you've got to do with respect to appointing adequate numbers of JPs, adequate numbers of provincial judges, adequate numbers of crown attorneys, you're hiding behind an omnibus bill that you know is going to take a considerable period of time to pass through this House, because you did it by way of an omnibus bill rather than by way of stand-alone paralegal regulation legislation, and you know it.

You've done nothing in this bill, Mr. Attorney General, to address the incredible backlogs in family courts, where abused women and their children continue to be victimized because you won't resource family courts to ensure those women have the litigation and the judicial oversight to protect them and their children. Shame on you, Attorney General.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have a deferred vote on the amendment by Mr. Tory to the mo-

tion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

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

The division bells rang from 1411 to 1416.

The Speaker: Would members please take their seats.

Mr. Tory moved that the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne be amended by striking out all the words after, "We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session," and replacing them with the following:

"However, the current speech from the throne ignores the real problems faced by real working families throughout Ontario; and

"Whereas, in place of real action for Ontario's families this throne speech offers nothing more than warmed-over old announcements and 'novelty items'; and

"Whereas the throne speech ignores the real hardship imposed by the new Liberal health tax during an already difficult time; and

"Whereas the throne speech ignores the real hardships that Ontarians face in paying more for electricity, home heating, and vital medical care; and

"Whereas the throne speech continues to neglect the mounting problems of nursing supply, wait-lists, or timely access to care; and

"Whereas, based on this Liberal government's broken promises in their first throne speech ... Ontarians have valid reason to doubt the contents of the current one.

"Therefore, I regret to inform His Honour that the current Liberal government has failed to keep its election commitments, failed to listen to the real needs of Ontario families and have instead persisted in unreasonable taxation, undisciplined spending and continued neglect of the real needs of Ontarians. We therefore condemn this government for ignoring the real problems facing real Ontario families and demand immediate action before it's too late."

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

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Churley, Marilyn	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Jackson, Cameron	Munro, Julia	Tory, John
Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John

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

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil

Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve	
Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 21; the nays are 61.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mr. Crozier.

Mr. Crozier moved, seconded by Ms. Matthews, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

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

All those in favour of Mr. Crozier's motion will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Same vote, reversed? Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 61; the nays are 21.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I want to bring members' attention to the west members' gallery and welcome Bob Frankford, former MPP for Scarborough East in the 35th Parliament. Welcome, Bob.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to welcome to the west gallery Mr. Bill Davidson and his two sons, Matthew and Geoffrey, who are sitting in the front row; they're both students at Crescent School.

The Speaker: That, of course, is not a point of order, but welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. At any point since you found out about the tragic drinking water situation on the Kashechewan reserve, have you called the Prime Minister to discuss the matter?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I can assure you that my office has been engaged in a great deal of communication with the federal government, and we will pursue that.

I can also say that I've sent a letter again to the Prime Minister today offering our support, reconfirming that pursuant to the Canadian Constitution, the federal government has responsibility for matters pertaining to life on reserves. Also, if you visit the INAC Web site today, it will make it perfectly clear—and I'm prepared to quote that later, should the need arise—that the federal government continues to assume responsibility for all matters related to water quality on reserves.

So yes, I have been in communication, through my office, with the Prime Minister's office.

Mr. Tory: These kinds of code words about communication between your office and his office and so forth—I think the public of Ontario would have had reason to hope, and we in this House as well, that whatever the differences are that may exist, you might have initiated personally a call to the Prime Minister of Canada in the interests of maximizing what can be done to help the residents of these reserves.

Would you commit—beyond the contact back and forth between your offices, letters being written and so forth—to calling the Prime Minister this afternoon to begin the process of getting your two governments to start working together to help the residents of these native reserves with the drinking water challenges they face and end the jurisdictional haggling? Will you commit to making that phone call this afternoon?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition is asking a question that I would categorize as one that deals with tactics. I think the people of Ontario, and more specifically the community of Kashechewan, are worried about outcomes. We have acted. We have acted responsibly. There were extraordinary circumstances there which made it perfectly clear that there was a medical emergency, so we have stepped in and we have acted. We're in the process of evacuating people there, removing them to a place where we can care for their safety, health and well-being and make sure children are back in school.

As the Leader of the Opposition, I'm sure, understands, it's more than just a matter of actually having personal communication with the Prime Minister, it's a matter of acting, and that is exactly what we have done.

Mr. Tory: I think the Premier would agree that there's so much more that could possibly be done if you and the

Prime Minister could begin working together to form an action plan as between your two governments to deal with this even more effectively. That's all I was asking, that you phone him and see if there was one more thing that could be done as a result of the two of you—the Premier of Ontario and the Prime Minister of Canada—talking together. I think the people on those reserves and the people of Ontario have the right to expect that you can do that.

The Ontario Clean Water Agency issued a report two years ago. Your Minister of Natural Resources claimed that that report was not shared with your government and that you were not even aware of it until this past Monday, despite the fact that the Deputy Minister of the Environment sits on the board of the agency. Will you assure us today, and more importantly the people living on reserves across Ontario and the people of Ontario, that any future water reports that concern these reserves are, first, shared with and, second, acted upon immediately by your government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to quote from the Web site for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada where it says, "Indian and Northern Affairs Canada works in co-operation with First Nations and other federal partners to ensure safe, clean drinking water and improved waste water services to the residents of First Nations communities." It goes on to say, "Programs and services for the provision of potable water and waste water services for on-reserve First Nations communities are provided through band councils, Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada."

We have, by virtue of an agreement entered into with the federal government in 1992, I believe, assumed responsibility for declaring emergencies as and when we recognize those as being in existence. That's exactly what we have done. To put it very succinctly, our job is to declare emergencies. The job of the federal government is to take steps to ensure emergencies don't happen. They did not take that action. We have taken our action. We have assumed our responsibility. We have evacuated the members from that community and we will continue to care for them in terms of their health and educational needs.

1430

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Tory: With respect, your job is also to do everything you can to work with the government of Canada and any other government or any other body required to try and get as much done as possible for these people.

My question is to the Premier. On March 31, 2004, my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Toby Barrett, raised a similar situation in this House respecting test results that found almost 30% of the wells on the Six Nations reserve in his riding contained dangerous levels of E. coli. What specific steps has your government taken since March 31, 2004, to ensure that our stringent drinking water standards are being met on the Six

Nations reserve and every other reserve in Ontario? What have you done?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm sure the leader of the official opposition will recall Walkerton. I'm sure he'll be familiar, at least to some extent, with some of the recommendations that flowed from that report, recommendations that were offered by Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor.

He said, among other things, in recommendation 89: "I encourage First Nations and the federal government to formally adopt drinking water standards...." Recommendation 90: "I encourage First Nations and the federal government to consider moving to a quality management standard over time...." Recommendation 91: "The provincial government should require ... OCWA to offer its services to First Nations ... on a normal commercial basis." That has been done.

I can also say that Minister Dombrowsky, in her capacity as the Minister of the Environment, on April 22, 2004, in fact made an offer of assistance to the federal government to assist with water quality issues on the Six Nations reserve.

Mr. Tory: I'll take that at face value. Then the question becomes after that, what actually happened about it?

But on the very same day, March 31, 2004, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant also posed questions about the lack of federal-provincial coordination on drinking water and why both levels of government weren't talking to each other, and that may have led to the very offer of help that you say the minister made. I believe this kind of thing—that governments that are elected by the very same people, that are financed by the very same taxpayers and then don't talk to each other, that write each other letters and have their offices communicate with each other but you will not pick up the phone and call the Prime Minister of Canada and say, "How can we work together to get faster action for these people?"—drives the taxpayers of Ontario crazy.

Since March 31, 2004, I ask the Premier, what specific efforts have you or your ministers made to offer every single ounce of co-operation that could be the case in dealing with these problems that exist with respect to water supply on First Nations reserves? What has been done?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, my friend opposite may not want to understand this, but I think the facts are important and here they are once again: The Canadian Constitution specifically provides that the federal government has sole responsibility for all matters pertaining to life on reserve. If you go to the INAC Web site today, it specifically says they have responsibility for water quality, including water potability. Beyond that, we have entered into an agreement—the NDP, when they were in government, entered into an agreement—that says we must take responsibility when there is an emergency to be found. We found one and we have acted.

Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor specifically recognized the difference in terms of jurisdictional responsibilities. It's not a nice word, but the fact of the matter is that rules make this country and this province work. He specifically

recognized the distinction. He specifically encouraged "... First Nations and the federal government to formally adopt drinking water standards...." He encouraged "... First Nations and the federal government to consider moving to a quality management standard over time...." He then goes on to a number of other recommendations and specifically says that when called upon to do so—

The Speaker: Thank you. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: The other thing that drives people in the country crazy is when they hear people citing the Constitution, as important as it is to set out the rules, as a reason—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. I can wait. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: What drives them crazy is when they hear the Constitution being cited as a reason why the first minister of Ontario cannot pick up the phone and call the Prime Minister of Canada and discuss the elements that might form the part of an action plan, even if it is their responsibility, as you've repeated today, the things that might be done, the things we think should be done and so on.

Why will you not pick up the phone and commit to doing it this afternoon and talk to the Prime Minister of Canada about the things that we in Ontario think should be done to help these people?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition may have little regard for our country's founding document and the fundamental principles that inform our relationship, but I see things differently. I hold that in the highest regard.

I am pleased at a statement made by the Prime Minister just a few hours ago, when in a scrum he was asked a question in regards to this particular matter, the matter of Kashechewan. He said, "Our government, the federal government, must obviously accept its responsibility, and will do so.... Now, the solution is one that requires obviously working with local aboriginal government, working with the provincial government, but fundamentally, this is our responsibility, and we accept it...."

I think there is some good news here now. We have a federal government that is clearly indicating that this is their responsibility. Again, I say for purposes of clear understanding and to be succinct, our job is to declare when we've found an emergency on a reserve; the federal government's job is to prevent that emergency from happening.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday your minister for aboriginal affairs went on television, looked into the camera and said with reference to the Kashechewan First Nation water crisis, "We only became aware of this on Monday." Meanwhile, Premier, we know that the Ontario Clean Water Agency, which is an arm of your government, wrote a report two years ago detailing the problems with respect to the water crisis. The deputy minister of your Ministry of the Environment

sits on the board of the Clean Water Agency. The Clean Water Agency was sent into Walkerton after the crisis happened there. This is an arm of your government, very close to you. Is it still your government's position that you didn't know anything about this until Monday?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Our government's position is grounded in an agreement which was entered into by the then NDP government with the federal government. That 1992 agreement specifically states that our responsibility is to declare an emergency when we find one. We found one. We declared an emergency, and we decided to evacuate the community. That is our responsibility. We have assumed that responsibility. Again, I would encourage the member opposite to visit the Web site for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada today, where it is clearly indicated that the federal government assumes responsibility for all matters related to life on reserve, including water potability.

Mr. Hampton: Yes, there is constitutional responsibility, but there is also something called the ethical responsibility of government. Your second warning about the Kashechewan water crisis happened when your health minister visited Kashechewan First Nation 18 months ago. Your third warning came when your community safety minister visited Kashechewan First Nation last spring. The people of Kashechewan, citizens of Ontario, told your ministers about the serious problems with their water supply. Is it still the position of your government that you didn't know anything about this until Monday of this week?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think the facts are important on this. I'm proud of the fact that my Minister of Health went up to the community and visited. The subject of the meeting up there was the need in the community for an additional land ambulance, which was provided.

I should also say that the Minister of Community Safety also had the opportunity to visit the community. Mr. Gilles Bisson, in response to that, made a statement in this House, and I want to quote from that: "I give full credit to the minister and the government for trying to respond, from what we can do on the provincial side, to deal with the issues, and I would have to say that the province has been very responsive up to now.... Shame on the federal government. They should wake up and do their jobs." I couldn't agree more.

1440

Mr. Hampton: I notice that you omit the rest of Mr. Bisson's statement, where he says that "the community is on a boil-water advisory. The water plant doesn't work." He is critical of the federal government. Then he says we must decide at "one point we as a province need to step in and start serving these people, who live in the province of Ontario, and provide them with the kind of infrastructure that we do in every other community in this province."

Premier, here is the issue: an OCWA report, from the Ontario Clean Water Agency, two years ago; your Minister of Health, who should be concerned about

health issues, visits the community; your Minister of Community Safety visits the community; and the people in the community point out that there are serious water problems. Now, if it's still your position that your government didn't know until last Monday, I'm asking you to table the briefing notes that would have been prepared for your two ministers before they went to Kashechewan First Nation. Table those briefing notes here today, before the end of question period. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, so that it's made perfectly clear to the leader of the third party, I'll quote from the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Web site: "Programs and services for the provision of potable water and waste water services for on-reserve First Nation communities are provided through band councils, Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada." It goes on to say, "Health Canada works in partnership with First Nations communities to ensure water quality sampling, monitoring and surveillance programs are in place on First Nations lands. Water sampling and analysis are done in accordance with the guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality. Health Canada assists First Nations in identifying and resolving water quality issues." Our responsibility—the leader of the NDP may not like to hear this—by virtue of the agreement that your government entered into with the federal government is to declare emergencies as and when they arise. We found that emergency, we declared one and we've acted.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: This is about your ethical responsibility as Premier; this is about the moral responsibility of your government. I asked you for the briefing notes that would have been prepared for your ministers before they went to the community. That would show whether your government knew or didn't know. I'm asking you again if you'll table that.

But I want to read you a letter I received today:

"Dear Howard Hampton...

"We would like to state for the record that" we "had told Minister Kwinter and Minister Smitherman, on two separate occasions of the water crisis here in Kashechewan. We discussed the appalling condition our residents are living in. We told them our water is undrinkable and our people are getting sick. We asked them ... for help..."

That is signed by Deputy Chief Rebecca Friday of the Kashechewan First Nation and Jonathan Soloman, Deputy Grand Chief of the Mushkegowuk Council.

Premier, why didn't your government listen?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm prepared to say it as many times as is necessary, and apparently I've got to say it again: Responsibility for all matters pertaining to life on reserves in Ontario and throughout the rest of the country lies exclusively with the federal government. The INAC Web site makes it perfectly clear that that most surely includes water quality and water potability issues.

We have a specific responsibility insofar as it relates to an agreement entered into in 1992 by the former NDP

government with the federal government which makes it clear that in a case of emergency, we are to declare that such an emergency exists and take the appropriate action. We have also, in keeping with Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor's recommendations, made it clear to the community and to the federal government that we are more than ready to assist with water quality issues which are, first and foremost, the responsibility of those two parties—the community and the federal government.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you don't have to lecture people about the Constitution of Canada. I understand that. I often write to the federal government on behalf of First Nations in my riding. I often phone federal officials at the regional office of INAC here in Toronto. I recognize the constitutional authority issue, but this is about your moral responsibility as Premier and the moral responsibility of your government.

This is a very poor First Nation. This is a First Nation that has been crying out for help. They cried out for help to your cabinet ministers. It's about what your government did in response. It's about your minister responsible for native affairs, who goes on television and says, "We didn't know anything about this until last Monday."

I ask you again, Premier: Is that the position of the McGuinty government, that despite two cabinet ministers going there, despite a provincial agency's report about bad water, your government didn't ask any questions, didn't take any responsibility, didn't know until Monday?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The position of our government is very clear. When there is an emergency found on an Ontario First Nations reserve, our responsibility is to act. There was an emergency. We declared an emergency. We have taken action. Going forward, we've made it clear once again to the federal government, as we do to our First Nations communities, that we are prepared to play our continuing supportive role.

Again, the leader of the NDP may feel that we can somehow rush into any reserve on any pretext and assert any authority and exercise any rights. He is mistaken in that regard. We have a very specific authority. It has to do with emergencies. We found an emergency, we declared an emergency, and we've acted appropriately.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, the only thing that changed on Monday is that the chief and the grand chief of the Mushkegowuk tribal council came here to Queen's Park and held a press conference. People are sick in that community today; they were sick half a year ago when your Minister of Community Safety visited; they were sick a year ago when your Minister of Health visited. The only thing that changed was that they finally came to this place and held a press conference.

Are you saying, Premier, that First Nations residents in this province can drink dirty water for two years, they can be sick for two years, they can cry out for two years, but unless they come here to Queen's Park and hold a press conference, it's not an emergency and the McGuinty government doesn't care? Is that your position?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: If it were truly and sincerely such an important issue to the leader of the NDP, then I would ask why it was not until this week that he raised this issue in this House? I think Ontarians need to know that.

Again, our responsibility is to declare emergencies where they genuinely exist. We learned just a few days ago, on the basis of information offered by a medical expert, that there was in fact a health-related emergency there. That's why we declared one. That's why we've moved to evacuate people from that community. That's why we're doing now what we can to improve the quality of their health and to ensure that children are in school.

I think our responsibility now is to ensure that we do everything we can to help those people recover from this particular emergency. And then, of course, it is incumbent upon the First Nation itself and the federal government to work together to restore a higher quality of life to that community.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Premier. I just think it's important that we should all be clear. Is it the Premier's position that when he has reports such as the one written by the water agency, when your ministers—ministers, plural—are briefed in detail repeatedly about a serious health issue, that your responsibility—you're taking the position that, as Premier of Ontario and as the government of Ontario, your responsibility goes no further than to sit back and wait, watch the Web site to make sure you've reminded yourself of who's responsible for this, and only when an emergency arises do you do anything—pick up the phone, call anybody, write a letter, issue a press release. Is that your position as Premier and head of the government of Ontario?

1450

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: If any party member would want to be intimately familiar with Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor's recommendations arising from the tragedy in Walkerton, it would surely be a member of the Conservative Party in Ontario. I would recommend those recommendations to my friend opposite. Through those recommendations, Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor makes it perfectly clear that he offers—in some cases, he encourages—First Nations and the federal government to formally adopt drinking water standards or to consider moving to a quality management standard over time.

With respect to our role—because my friend is wondering what might be our role—he specifically says we should require OCWA to offer its services. That has been done. He said we should actively offer, on a cost-recovery basis, training facilities. That has been set up, and 481 certificates have been issued so far. We are doing what we are required to do pursuant to Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor and pursuant to the agreement entered into by the NDP.

Mr. Tory: Just so we're clear then, talking now about the remaining 50 reserves on which there are boil-water orders in place—we'll take what the Premier just said—beyond offering the services of OCWA and beyond the

other matter you mentioned a moment ago, that is it. Beyond that, when you get reports, when you get briefed, if OCWA, in response to being involved, came up with some information, it's your position and the position of your government that your responsibility is to sit back, wait, keep your eye on that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Web site, remind yourself that it's not your responsibility and just do nothing until an emergency arises, and only then do you have any responsibility whatsoever to these people as the Premier of Ontario. Is that your position for the other 50 reserves where a boil-water order is involved?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In addition to the Walkerton legacy which my friend has inherited, in addition to the extensive and dramatic cuts made to environmental protections, including water protection in our province, which is also my friend's legacy, he also inherited the abolition of a tripartite process which enabled us to work in a very positive and constructive way with our First Nations. I am pleased to say that we are working hard to put that deplorable history when it comes to First Nations, which we inherited from that government, behind us. We're working hard to establish a new, positive and constructive relationship. We look forward to doing more with our First Nations.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety. In April of this year, you went to Kashechewan First Nation. You saw with your own eyes the problems with the community's water system. The people of Kashechewan First Nation asked for your help. What did you do?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'm delighted to be able to respond to the leader of the third party. Just to put the record straight, I was sitting in the House on a Tuesday when your member came up to me and said, "There is a flood up in Kashechewan. Are you aware of it?" I said, "Yes, I am. Emergency Measures Ontario is evacuating 190 people to Moosonee." He said, "Would you come with me tomorrow and see it?" I said, "If I can arrange it, I will." I then went up with him. He said, "Where are our briefing notes?" There were no briefing notes. I went out of my way to go up with him. I was up there to see the flood. There were no conversations with me at all about helping them with their drinking water. They told me they were on a boil-water advisory.

I should tell the Leader of the Opposition that that boil-water advisory has been in effect for more than five years—five years. What did they do about it? Nothing.

I'm suggesting to you that there were no representations to me at all, other than to say that their water treatment—

The Speaker: Thank you. There will be a supplementary, I'm sure.

Mr. Hampton: There was some media coverage of your visit there, and I want to quote from an article in the Voice, which covers basically that part of northeastern

Ontario: "We have a community that is in a perpetual boiled water emergency from a water treatment plant that failed just months after it was built." This is part of the media coverage of your visit.

I want to read the letter again from the First Nation: "We would like to state for the record that both myself and Deputy Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon had told Minister Kwinter and Minister Smitherman, on two separate occasions of the water crisis here in Kashechewan. We discussed the appalling condition our residents are living in. We told them our water is undrinkable and our people are getting sick...."

Minister, is it your position that the people of Kashechewan First Nation are not telling the truth?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I will tell you my position, and I'll quote the member from Timmins—James Bay when he spoke in the House the day after we came back. He said, "The position that the federal government takes is that they are not going to supply the community with any potable water by airlifting bottled water into the community. So my federal member, Charlie Angus, and I intervened with the federal government, and they said, 'OK, we'll provide potable water in bottles to children and people who are elderly who might be at risk.' Well, what happens to the other 80% of the community?..."

"Shame on the federal government. They should wake up and do their jobs. If not, step aside and let us do it."

I can say to you that they may have discussed it with the federal member, but they did not discuss it with me, because I was there to take a look at the flood conditions and the ice floes. I stand by that, and I can tell you that is what has happened.

BORDER SECURITY

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia—Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. While issues regarding border security are federal in nature, constituents in my riding have expressed to me personally their concern regarding the passport policy that is being proposed by the United States and the economic impact this is going to have on our community. For more than a lifetime, the businesses in Sarnia—Lambton, many Canadians and Americans who work on either side of the border, and the flow of shoppers and visitors, have had a history of free-flowing travel across that border. Minister, could you please explain this proposed passport policy and the potential impact it could have for Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Thank you for a very good question, a very timely question. There's no doubt about it that the proposal from the United States to require a passport for American citizens visiting Canada and then returning to the United States or for citizens of Canada visiting the United States—it affects Mexico and Bermuda as well—could have a potentially devastating effect on not only tourism, but other economic activity between the two nations. I think there's an understanding, in all border

areas in particular, of this impact. That's why several months ago the Premier of the province and I, and I think Minister Cordiano, visited Washington to meet with the head of the Department of Homeland Security—the Premier did that—and other officials in Washington to draw to their attention the potential adverse impact of such a policy and to suggest there would be reasonable alternatives that could be pursued.

We have now been joined by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the business community, the border mayors and others who are equally concerned, along with the federal and provincial governments, about this matter.

Ms. Di Cocco: Minister, while I understand that our first priority, of course, is ensuring that Ontario's border crossings are secure, this proposed policy will have serious impacts on tourism and other businesses in my community. I have spoken at length with a number of the leaders there, who indicate they are really concerned about this matter. How is our government protecting and promoting the interests of my constituents and all Ontarians?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I have encouraged, through communication with the federal minister, Mr. Emerson, and with others a country-wide approach to this so that all of us who are impacted by it in the border areas are going to take action to persuade the US government to change its mind in this matter.

I met last Friday in Buffalo with several New York state senate representatives and other officials and business people about this matter to draw it to their attention. There's a meeting in Niagara Falls again tomorrow in this regard.

There are several actions ongoing. We're responding formally to the invitation from the Americans to comment. Ultimately, the solution, in my view, is not the creation of a new security document but rather to take an existing document that people would normally have, such as a driver's licence, and add security measures to it. People on both sides of the border agree with that initiative on our part.

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WATER QUALITY

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. The minister said in the Toronto Star that water problems were one of a variety of concerns raised when he visited the reserve in the north and that he called the federal minister of public health to speak specifically to the concerns that had been raised, and the reference appears to be about the water.

Today in the House, the minister said, and the Premier repeated, that you were there to discuss an ambulance, and that was that. Will you table your briefing notes from the trip you made to that reserve in this House today? Will you tell us precisely what you said to Minister Bennett? Perhaps most importantly of all, will you tell us if you ever did anything to follow up on that phone call

as Minister of Health for the province of Ontario? Did you ever do anything, or were you just looking at the Web site and deciding it wasn't your problem?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I guess you're looking forward to reading the Ipperwash report.

I want to say to the honourable member and to the members of the House that I initiated a three-day visit to northern Ontario in August 2004, with particular focus in the James Bay area on moving forward the integration of health services, which has been the number one health priority advanced from that community. Part and parcel of that meant that on Friday I did a tour of Kashechewan by air ambulance, where I visited the medical clinic. At that time, the staff in the medical clinic spoke to me about the issue of teen pregnancy. The next day, we returned to Kashechewan after overnighing in Moose Factory, where we met with a wide variety of First Nations officials who had flown in for a discussion on the issue of the integration of health services. During that visit, Chief Friday made it clear to me that the priority he wished me to work on was with respect to an ambulance. In a supplementary, I'll give the member some rate of progress on that issue.

Mr. Tory: It would be very kind of the minister to give us an update on the ambulance, but that's not what we're asking about.

To repeat what the deputy grand chief had to say in reference to the meeting with you, "We discussed the appalling condition our residents are living in. We told them our water is undrinkable and our people are getting sick. We asked them so many times for help over and over again."

You said in the Toronto Star that you called Minister Bennett in Ottawa about this. That was a good thing to do. My question was, did you ever do anything after that? What did you say to her, and did you ever do anything after that? Did you pick up the phone? Did you write a note? Did you do anything to follow up on that in your position as Minister of Health for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: As I mentioned earlier, the priority that was impressed upon me by Chief Friday was the necessity of providing land ambulance services in the Kashechewan community, which did not have them at the time. Subsequent to that, my ministry assisted the community and a land ambulance—in fact, an advanced land ambulance—was made available to the community. Regrettably, it has subsequently been disabled and, accordingly, a new vehicle is in Moosonee awaiting the ice road to be delivered to the Kashechewan community.

What I characterized to the Toronto Star was that over the course of my three days, I heard a wide variety of concerns related to First Nations communities. At the end of my trip, I felt that it was appropriate to report those to the minister of public health for Canada. That's the step that I've taken. In the time since, I have had several meetings—and I have a list—with deputy chiefs of all First Nations communities. This issue has never been

brought up again. On the street corner of Bay and Grosvenor recently, I saw people from the Cree community related to James Bay and they did not raise the state of affairs with respect to water in the Kashechewan community with me directly at that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Minister of Health: When you visited Kashechewan First Nation, community leaders gave you a tour of the community, and they told you about their serious water problems. Yesterday, you told the media that you left Kashechewan First Nation sensing “no great urgency about its water.”

Minister, this is after Walkerton. This is after many people died and thousands of people became very sick from tainted water. You are the Minister of Health, responsible for protecting the health of Ontario residents. Can you seriously tell us that after Walkerton, and after the people of Kashechewan First Nation pointing out their water problems, you left with no sense of urgency about their water difficulties?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes, quite clearly. The tour that I took of the community on Saturday—I was in the back of a pickup truck. Photographic evidence, which I’m prepared to provide, indicates that I rode in the back of that truck with two New Democratic politicians, Gilles Bisson and Charlie Angus. We toured the community visually, we went up on top of the berm to gather its circumstances related to the river, and then we went and had a meeting with First Nations who had flown in related to the integration of health services in James Bay, which was being advanced as the number one health priority. I left that community with a very clear impression from Chief Leo Friday that the number one priority that they wished me to work on related to the provision of land ambulance services, and as I have already indicated in an earlier answer, we have delivered on that important priority. Over the course of my trip to northern Ontario, I saw a variety of circumstances at First Nations communities, and I thought it was appropriate to call the Minister of State for Public Health in the government of Canada, and I did that.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, a First Nation may ask you about land ambulance. The reality is that many of these First Nations have so many issues and so many needs that I wouldn’t be surprised at that. But they also made you aware of the serious problems with their water supply, just as they made your colleague the Minister of Community Safety aware of the serious problems with their water supply. As a minister of the crown, as the minister responsible for protecting people’s health, didn’t an alarm bell go off? Didn’t you stop to think, “You know what? After Walkerton, this is something that, as Minister of Health, I should check into”? Or is this just a case of the McGuinty government saying to people, “Don’t tell us, and we won’t ask”? Is that the standard by which you govern yourself?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The standard by which I govern myself is the view that duly representative officials, speaking with the voice of their community, are prioritizing their views in a fashion that I believe they have determined. Perhaps it was their more developed understanding that the issue that the member is going on about was a matter of responsibility of the federal government. What they clearly impressed upon me was the necessity of moving forward with land ambulance services. But what I find surprising is that the honourable member from Timmins–James Bay is perhaps one of the most aggressive—when it relates to the Hearing Society in Timmins or the community health centre in Kapuskasing, he asks me on a near-daily or at least weekly basis. He has not come back across the floor and advanced concerns related to the water quality in that community to me directly. I’ve met many times since then with the deputy grand chief and leadership from those First Nations communities. They have not advanced this issue as a priority; they advanced the ambulance issue. I work very hard on it, and I deliver.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): My question today is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, we’re seeing some very positive indicators in our economy today. In my riding of Oakville, for example, the last year has seen unprecedented investment from the auto sector. It’s great to see that our economic plan is working. Under the NDP, Ontario lost 10% of its good industrial jobs, unemployment averaged 10% and over half a million people were out of work. The Tory design for the economy appears to be: Cut taxes, sit back and do nothing. Under the Tory government, the productivity gap between Ontario and the States doubled, Minister. How is our plan benefiting the Ontario economy?

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I thank the member for a very good question. I’m going to recite some numbers because they are important and tell a tale. Last month, 17,300 jobs were created in Ontario, and the unemployment rate stood at 6.4%, the lowest in four years. We were able to cut our deficit almost in half, going from \$3 billion to \$1.6 billion—all in an effort to create a more positive climate. More important than just numbers, in my opinion, is the fact that we’ve taken a new approach to working with the private sector, creating a real climate for positive business conditions.

In addition to that, through the Minister of Research and Innovation, the Premier, we are fostering a new climate and a new culture for innovation to flourish in this province like never before through our research funding, to the tune of about \$1.8 billion over the next four years, looking to commercialize that research right here in the province of Ontario to create even more jobs and even greater prosperity for the future.

1510

Mr. Flynn: Thank you, Minister, for that response. These steps, as part of our plan, should provide a lot of confidence to potential investors in Ontario. Could you cite some of the more recent examples, maybe share those with us, of businesses that have had the confidence enough in recent times to invest in our economy?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I'd like to repeat this over and over again. The biggest example is the Toyota plant in Woodstock—almost \$1 billion. I might point out that the spinoffs from that investment are now looking at possibly 5,000 to 6,000 new jobs being created as a result of the Toyota plant located in Woodstock.

In addition to that, I'm happy to recite the fact that DMI, an American heavy-steel manufacturer, plans to build wind turbines in Stevensville. In life sciences, GlaxoSmithKline will invest \$23 million in its Mississauga plant, adding more jobs to its workforce. KOEI, a \$300-million Japanese software entertainment company, has opened a video game development studio in Toronto, which will serve as its North American headquarters, creating some 200 jobs over the next number of years. Ranbaxy, an Indian pharmaceutical company, just opened up operations in Ontario. So when you look at it, there are a lot of exciting things happening here in Ontario. Many companies are looking to invest in Ontario, and in fact, we're expanding our international presence—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade as well. Minister, last night, the president of Corn Products International told a public meeting in my riding that the company may shut down one or all three of its Ontario plants if Canada institutes a tariff on imported US corn.

I wrote you in September, asking you to ensure that the federal agency reviewing this consider all implications that might flow from the imposition of tariffs, including plant closures and job losses. I have yet to receive a response from you. Can you indicate to the people of Ontario, the communities that will be impacted by this, just what you are doing?

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): We are in talks with the federal government. I have forwarded my views with respect to trade matters to Jim Peterson, my federal counterpart. The whole issue around trade and softwood lumber with the United States concerns Ontario because, obviously, there are considerations around what might happen if a trade war escalates, and this is of great concern to Ontarians, given the fact that we export a great deal to the United States. It continues to be a matter that we monitor. So our view is that we have to take a comprehensive view but keep Ontario in mind when these trade disputes are unfolding before us.

We were in Washington earlier this year to talk to people in Washington about ongoing trade disputes with the United States. Softwood lumber continues to come up as a sore point, but we wanted to impress upon the Americans that there are many other considerations around the border. Keeping that border open, keeping goods flowing south, is a very important thing, and we want to continue to do that.

Mr. Runciman: If you wade through that bafflegab, I think the real answer is he's done absolutely nothing. We're talking about 240 people in the community of Cardinal. That represents about 20% of the jobs in that one municipality. We know there are three plants in jeopardy here. The findings of the agency are going to be made public November 15. The decision on tariffs will be announced December 15. The clock is ticking. Will you do your job? Take some responsibility here. Ontario has a role to play. You have a role to play as the minister. Make your views known. Make sure that this agency, before it makes a decision, knows all of the implications. Please do that.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I find it passing strange. This is a member who says, on the one hand, when we help the auto sector, that it's corporate welfare. On the other hand, he wants us to intervene every time there's a decision being made, and this is an independent body making a decision.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: That's right. It's an agency at arm's length which will make this decision. But when it doesn't suit his purposes, he wants us to intervene. That's just like him, wanting to have it both ways.

We're doing what we have to do. This is a matter before that agency. It will make its decision, as it should.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): My question is to the Premier. In community colleges across this province, the quality of education is under strain because cash-strapped schools are hiring half-time instructors. As many as half of Ontario college classes are taught by part-time instructors who don't have the time or the resources to focus on the needs of their students. They are hired because they work cheap, and they work cheap because they are legally barred from forming a union. Premier, why are part-time college instructors denied the right to organize?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Training, College and Universities.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): The member is correct that colleges and universities have been under strain over the years from an absence of government assistance to improve the quality of education. That's why the McGuinty government is investing an extra \$6.2 billion in the quality of education. That's why this year alone colleges

will see their operating grants increase by more than 13%—almost 14%—which contrasts significantly with the action of the NDP, which during their last couple of years actually cut grants to colleges and reduced the per-student funding. We are investing in the quality of education at our colleges by investing in the people and the resources that students need to improve the quality of education. That's the appropriate route to take.

Mr. Marchese: So much arrogance and so much blah, blah, blah. It's unbelievable.

Ontario's part-time college workers are exploited, with lower wages and little or no benefits. Comparable part-time workers at the province's universities and secondary schools have the right to free collective bargaining. Ontario is the only province in Canada to deny this basic right to part-time college workers. College students don't want part-time instructors, they want and, in my view, deserve a quality education. Minister, will you ensure, by supporting my bill, that part-time college workers can exercise their right to organize?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It's fascinating. The member and the NDP must have been cleaning out the garage because this is virtually the same bill they introduced in 1992, and what did they do with it? Absolutely nothing. The NDP had five years to bring about the same effect, and they did nothing. At the same time—they didn't end there—they decreased the amount of money for the quality of education at colleges, they took money away from the people who work at our colleges and they brought in the social contract.

We're taking a different approach by investing in students, investing in colleges and investing in the people who teach. That's the right approach. The member should stop cleaning out the garage and get on with the quality of education in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I'm sure someone wants to ask a question. Order.

HEALTHIER SCHOOLS STRATEGY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion. Recently, our government announced that students will receive 20 minutes of daily physical activity on top of the mandated 90 minutes per week they currently receive. In 2004, the chief medical officer of health, Dr. Sheela Basrur, reported that an obesity academic threatened the health of all Ontarians, and she highlighted concerns specifically for children and adolescents.

Many of my constituents are pleased that we have begun to move on this issue. However, some, including the Ontario Medical Association, have called on us to increase our mandate to one hour. I understand that an hour of activity would take away from time spent on other important aspects of the curriculum. However, the health of our children is in danger. Minister, how do you respond to the claim that 20 minutes is not enough?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I thank the honourable member for the question. I was pleased to be a part of the announcement with the Minister of Education in Minister Cordiano's riding a few weeks ago. As the honourable member correctly pointed out, there is an epidemic of obesity, particularly amongst young people. There's been a 300% increase in obesity rates in young people in the last 25 years.

The 20 minutes of physical activity, to be very clear, is, number one, just a start. Secondly, it's in addition to the two to three periods a week that young children in elementary school participate in in their regular phys. ed. classes. We're putting \$10.7 million into training and providing resources for teachers to ensure that the 20 minutes of physical activity in the classroom is effective to get the heart moving and to get people physically fit. It's a holistic approach, in addition to removing junk food from vending machines and providing new guidelines for nutritional standards in school cafeterias.

1520

Mr. Brownell: Keeping kids active is an important aspect of our overall healthy school plan. Important first steps to a healthy living strategy include banning junk food in schools, removing user fees for after-school facilities and introducing a mandatory 20 minutes of daily physical activity.

I was pleased to see that our government's announcement included community leaders and role models, including some distinguished members from the Toronto Maple Leafs, one being Chad Kilger from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh.

Applause.

Mr. Brownell: For sure.

Community involvement is essential to combat the growing crisis in childhood obesity. I am concerned that parents and community are not involved enough in the strategy to keep kids active. What can we, as both a government and as community members, do to promote physical activity for children?

Hon. Mr. Watson: This is a good example of the partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health Promotion. We also have, for instance, the communities in action fund, which is a very successful program that provides opportunities for programs like International Walk to School Week, which I and a number of other members participated in, to encourage parents to act as role models for young people. We've also got, as we talked about yesterday on the community use of schools, a very successful program where individuals can rent facilities, with parents as coaches and as mentors, at a much lower rate than what has been the case in the past.

The NDP came to that press conference in the school where Mr. Kennedy and I were, and they were saying, "It's not enough time." Well, you know what? With the NDP, it's never enough, yet when they were in power, they did absolutely nothing to improve the quality of physical education in schools for young people throughout Ontario. It's never enough with the NDP.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the Minister of Health. Two weeks ago, in response to the 17 deaths at Seven Oaks Home for the Aged here in Toronto, you indicated that, in your appointment of Dr. David Walker, you would be moving forward on this basis in a very short number of days. I spoke with Dr. Walker yesterday, and he advises me that he will not be able to begin his work until the latter part of next week.

Minister, since you made that announcement, four more people have died at this location. My question to you is very simply, are you or your ministry implementing any new safety and protection measures for the staff and residents of Seven Oaks and the 10 other homes that are owned by the city of Toronto at this time?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I find the question somewhat curious, so as to suggest that there is something germane to Toronto.

With respect to the appointment of Dr. Walker, he is, with the benefit of a secretariat and support from the ministry, working toward his work plan. There is development of that ongoing, and we will be responding appropriately to the advice and direction being provided. No advice has been provided, with respect, further to the necessity, beyond those things which are in the matter of course of long-term care, with much greater compliance and inspection than under the previous government. We're very satisfied that the quality and safety of our 600 long-term-care homes in the province is in a very high state.

PETITIONS

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says:

"Whereas the minimum wage in the province had not been increased in more than 15 years from \$6.85. This has caused great hardship on lower-income people, because prices for basic necessities like food and shelter are increasing because of inflation but wages to these people still remain the same.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that legislation passed by the McGuinty government to increase the minimum wage to \$8 is supported by all parties in the Legislature."

I agree with this petition, and I affix my signature. I pass this to page Graeme.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to introduce a petition from the riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent upon the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present the following petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls. It's signed by many, many people, including Pamela O'Donoghue, Liz Watson and Heather Somerville. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet) and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered.

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

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment cost for this disease is astronomical for most constituents and adds a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I'm pleased to submit this petition on behalf of my riding.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition signed by a great number of constituents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent upon the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my signature, as I agree with it, and I will give it to Alexandra to bring it up to the table.

1530

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas existing legislation enforcing mandatory retirement is discriminatory; and

"Whereas it is the basic human right of Ontario citizens over the age of 65 to earn a living and contribute to society; and

"Whereas the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have also abolished mandatory retirement in various forms; and

"Whereas ending mandatory retirement is a viable means of boosting the Ontario labour force and accommodating the growing need for skilled workers;

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

"The Ontario government should act by abolishing mandatory retirement in the province of Ontario. This is best achieved by passing Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement."

I put my signature to this.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):

"Recommendations for the Frost Centre

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government announced the closure of the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre in July 2004 with no public consultation; and

"Whereas public outrage over the closure of the Frost Centre caused the government to appoint a working committee of local residents to examine options for the future of the property; and

"Whereas the working committee has completed their consultations and has prepared recommendations for the provincial government that include a procedure to follow during the request for proposals process; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre has been an important educational resource for the community, and continued

use of the facility for educational purposes has widespread support;

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

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should retain public ownership of the Frost Centre lands and follow the recommendations of the working committee regarding the request for proposals process."

This was brought to me by Environment Haliburton, Heather Ross's group, and I hope Minister Caplan is listening.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today in support of Bill 211.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas existing legislation enforcing mandatory retirement is discriminatory; and

"Whereas it is the basic human right of Ontario citizens over the age of 65 to earn a living and contribute to society; and

"Whereas the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have also abolished mandatory retirement in various forms; and

"Whereas ending mandatory retirement is a viable means of boosting the Ontario labour force and accommodating the growing need for skilled workers;

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

"The Ontario government should act by abolishing mandatory retirement in the province of Ontario. This is best achieved by passing Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement."

I'll affix my signature to this petition.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario....

"We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned that the care and release restrictions imposed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources which are in violation of the international standards will eliminate the provision of responsible wildlife services in our community.

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with wildlife rehabilitators to ensure progressive, humane and responsible regulations that reflect the international care and release standard that states:

"Orphaned wildlife should be raised with others of their own species, to learn proper conspecific behaviours, and the group should then be released together in appropriate natural areas, with the transitional care for those species that require it, generally within the city or county of origin."

I affix my name.

FILM RELEASE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It is my distinct pleasure to introduce a petition from my riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a Hollywood movie entitled *Deadly* and based on the horrific crimes committed by Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka is scheduled to be released in Canada this year; and

"Whereas out of respect for the victims, their friends, family and communities, we strongly object to the depiction of this tragedy for the purpose of entertainment; and

"Whereas these depraved and horrific crimes have already saddened and disturbed those who followed the high-profile trial coverage in the media; and

"Whereas further portrayal of these events may tend to glorify those who are guilty and desensitize the public to the horror of the crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, declare that we will boycott this movie in Ontario theatres or video stores; moreover, we also urge the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to investigate all measures that may be taken by the provincial government to prevent the showing of this" depraved "movie in theatres and/or its distribution anywhere in Ontario."

This is a sensitive petition, and I'll be signing it to support my constituents.

FALLSVIEW CASINO

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Falls Management Group made numerous commitments to the city of Niagara Falls when it was awarded the Fallsview Casino contract in 1998"—by the previous government

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

"Niagara Falls residents are still waiting for the on-site amenities and the off-site attractors. We believe that the government of Ontario should ensure that all promises made at the time of the awarding of the contract" in 1998 "be fulfilled."

I'm pleased to submit this petition.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): "Highway 35 four-laning

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

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

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

This was brought to me by many members of the Kawartha Lakes Chamber of Commerce.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): "To the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West ... making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

"Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue-Old Weston Road bridge;

"Whereas this bridge (underpass) will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

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

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): This is my third petition. There are a number of petitions presented to me at my riding office in Durham.

"Pharmacists Care

"Petition to the Government of Ontario in support of Ontario Pharmacists

"Whereas we, the undersigned,

"Share the concern of Ontario pharmacists that the government is considering changes to the drug program that could restrict access to some medications or force patients to pay more for their prescriptions, placing

seniors, low-income families and many other Ontarians at risk;

“Recognize that these changes could affect the ability of pharmacists to continue to provide quality programs and services, decreasing Ontarians’ access to essential health care services; and

“Believe that pharmacists, as advocates for quality patient care, should have a greater role to play in advising the government when it considers changes that will affect the health of Ontarians,

“We hereby petition the government of Ontario:

“To work with Ontario pharmacists to prevent cut-backs to the drug program; and,

“To establish a process that brings pharmacists to the table to provide solutions that will protect patients and strengthen health care for all Ontarians.”

This makes eminent sense, and I’ll be signing it on behalf of my constituents in Durham.

1540

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to present this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls, signed many people, including Linda Pizzi and Louise Leyland. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s health insurance plan does not cover the cost of PSA (prostate specific antigen) test as an early method of detection for prostate cancer in men;

“Whereas mammogram tests for women are fully covered by the Ontario insurance plan for early detection of breast cancer and PSA test for men is only covered once the physician suspects prostate cancer,

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

“We support Bill 201. We believe PSA testing should be covered as an insured service by the Ontario health insurance program. Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canadian men. At least one in every eight Canadian men is expected to develop the disease in their lifetime. Some five million Canadian men are currently at risk in their prostate-cancer-risk years, which are between the ages of 45 and 70. For many seniors and low-income earners, the cost of the test would buy up to a week’s worth of groceries for many individuals.”

We ask the government to support covering the cost of these tests.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I rise pursuant to standing order 55 to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On the afternoon of Monday, October 31, the government will be calling Bill 197, and the evening is to be confirmed.

On Tuesday, in the afternoon Bill 210, and to be confirmed in the evening.

On Wednesday, November 2, in the afternoon an opposition day, and the evening will be confirmed.

Thursday, November 3, the afternoon to be confirmed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENDING MANDATORY RETIREMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS POUR ÉLIMINER LA RETRAITE OBLIGATOIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 24, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement/ Projet de loi 211, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne et d’autres lois pour éliminer la retraite obligatoire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Time for questions and comments.

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): It’s a pleasure to listen to the member for Ottawa–Orléans with respect to Bill 211. It has been said here that we respect a person’s right to decide in many cases. That’s what this is about. Some would say it’s discrimination based on age that the government is trying to deal with. It’s to that extent. But I think it’s like a lot of the initiatives of this government that really trouble me. It’s the agenda of no consultation. I’ve heard from university professors and other persons who want to continue their careers that this is the right thing to do. It’s in that interest that John Tory and our party have discussed this at length. John Tory has encouraged us to consult with our constituents and seniors. It’s in that consultative vein that we have elected to support this initiative giving people the choice.

The NDP is against most things, but in this case, they have a different agenda. Their agenda here clearly is that they want to protect the younger workers. Again, listening to their concerns, I think that people should have choices and the right to make those choices. That’s what this essentially is about.

The member for Ottawa–Orléans made some points. He has served in government at the municipal level and brings some common sense to it, but it’s the consultation with the people of Ontario that is missing.

If you put this together with the other legislative initiatives such as the one dealing with pensions, it troubles me. I’m always suspicious of commitments and promises by the McGuinty government. It’s better to go with a government you can trust, like Mr. Tory, and that’s what I look forward to in my remarks—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments? Are there any more questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for running around a little bit here.

I wanted to briefly comment on the remarks made by the member for Ottawa–Orléans. He is quite correct: It's basically doing the right thing here in Ontario. The legislation regarding mandatory retirement, if passed, would end mandatory retirement in a fair and balanced way that would not undermine existing rights and benefits. Ontario workers deserve the right to choose when they want to retire. Think of how many people have been able to be successful in life after age 60 or 65. A lot of people, even those into their 70s and 80s, are wanting to work and do things.

I'll never forget my own experience of going in to see a family doctor. He had reached 65 and he said to me, "I'm not going to retire. I don't want to retire. I want to keep on working because I enjoy my job."

This legislation is giving people that opportunity to continue to work if they want to. We shouldn't say, "You've reached this number, 65, and you have to pack it in." I think that's wrong, and the government is moving in the right direction here.

What's important is that there is an aspect of discrimination by causing people to retire when they are 65. I myself don't want to see any of this type of discrimination existing. If a person wants to retire, whether it be at age 55, 60, 65 or even 70, so be it. We shouldn't be legislating a date or a number any more. That was done by Bismarck back in the 1800s. He picked that age over 100 years ago. I think it's time to change that rule and that law.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any further questions or comments? Seeing none, the Chair recognizes the member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I thought I had five minutes to get through some of the points I wanted to make, but I have just two minutes.

"Your skills, ability, drive and determination do not stop once you turn 65." This was in the minister's speech when he started it.

« Dans la mesure du possible, nous devrions tous avoir le droit de choisir le parcours de notre vie. Le droit de choisir ne devrait pas être restreint à une minorité de gens comme les travailleurs indépendants et les hommes et femmes politiques. »

We should all have that right to work beyond 65, but the right is only one thing. What we really don't look at are the benefits we get from having people work beyond 65. We have a problem in this country—like other countries, some in Europe—where in 20 years we're going to go from 12% of our population being seniors to 20% in 2025—almost double. The number of dependent people for every 100 workers will rise from 45 to 54. That's going to put pressure on our governments in many ways.

So we have to work toward getting more people in the workforce.

It is estimated that this legislation will keep 4,000 more seniors in the workforce beyond 65. We should be getting rid of any disincentives for people continuing to work. We should be making sure there is retraining, so we can keep seniors in the workforce and so be able to carry some of these heavy costs we're going to get as seniors age, as health costs go up. We're going to need more workers.

This is good legislation. It was well supported across the province and I will be glad to see Bill 211 enacted as legislation in this House.

1550

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It's a pleasure to be able to rise and speak, in this case in support of Bill 211, which will allow people to retire when they see fit, with dignity, and be able to work past the age of 65.

The act is called An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement. Just for those who haven't been part of the debate thus far on the bill, it is only three pages long. It reflects the change—just to take out the section of all the legislation where it requires people to quit working at 65 in the Human Rights Code, which of course says that it is not discriminatory to have early retirement or to have retirement at 65, and this will change that, that in fact employers cannot force retirement at 65.

The Coroners Act requires a change, the Election Act requires a similar-type change, and the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Ombudsman Act, the Public Service Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. Then there's just the title of the bill.

I rise today to speak in support of the bill. Until I heard the comments of the last member from the government side in his two-minute wrap-up of his presentation—I'm a little concerned that the one priority he was putting on the need for this bill was how government was going to be able to get more people into the workforce and help the economy in our province. As I was looking at the bill, that wasn't why I was supporting the bill; I was supporting this bill because I want to be fair and provide opportunities to seniors or to the people who have reached the age of 65 but who are not ready to retire.

I believe that everyone in this province should have an opportunity to make their own decisions on when they want to go to work and when they want to retire. I read here in an article—I can't tell you which paper it's out of—where it says, "Surveys show as many as three quarters of those approaching retirement—young seniors—plan to continue working in some capacity well into their 70s, as much because they feel they are still vital as because they need the money. Therefore, say some career counsellors, traditional retirement is increasingly becoming a career transition point instead of the end of work."

That is so important, but I don't think we should have laws in this country that mandate that you must make a

career change because of the timing. It's a great opportunity for people to change careers, but at the same time, I don't think that when you reach the point of 65 you must change careers because the law no longer allows you to work where you're working.

In the introduction of the bill, I'm also a little confused with the government's approach on things. A number of months ago, there was a bill in the Legislature that dealt with flexible work hours, that provided the opportunity for people in the workforce—not just people who were reaching retirement age, but people in the workforce generally—in consulting with the employer, to come to an agreement on flexible work hours so that if they needed to be home at certain times or doing other things, they could actually work up to 60 hours in any given week and then work fewer hours in the next week to provide flexibility in their living conditions and lifestyle.

This government decided that that was inappropriate, that people in the workforce should not have the choice to work when it was more advantageous to their living conditions. That bill was the law, and the government of the day decided that they were going to eliminate that law because giving people choices as to where and when they should work was bad.

Now we have a bill—and I agree with it—that does exactly the opposite. I would suggest that they don't seem to have a plan about what it is that people should be able to make their choices on, when the government should tell them they have to work, what hours they have to work and how many continuous hours they have to work, and now, that they can keep working when they reach a certain point in life. There's a similarity there, not to the extent of the people, but in the type of event that the government is creating. In fact, in one they're providing the ability to make a choice, and in the other one they're taking away the ability of those workers to make the same choice. I would say that proves that they have absolutely no plan.

On this bill, it was the Progressive Conservative government that first introduced Bill 68, which was the Mandatory Retirement Elimination Act, 2003. It was introduced two years ago, on May 29, 2003, to end mandatory retirement. If this bill had passed, it would have been the law today—not today, actually; it was to be implemented January 1 of this year—and we would already be in a situation where we would have eliminated this retirement.

We have to remember we're two years down the road, so we have two years where people who were 63 when the bill was first introduced are now being forced to retire, and the whole two years of the workforce is still under the old regime, as opposed to the new one. The Liberal government decided to delay this bill by two years, and many of the people, of course, were not able to work past their retirement time, and they had to either quit working or change jobs.

I think it's important to recognize, as I said earlier from that newspaper clipping, that a lot of these people

who are being forced to retire are doing so at quite a detriment to their lifestyle and to the way they live, because they are not necessarily in a position to have sufficient pensions and sufficient revenues to be able to live the life they wanted to live. So they are now living at a lower standard because of the delay of two years.

As I mentioned, in 2003, the Progressive Conservative government, under the Minister of Citizenship, Carl DeFaria, introduced the legislation ending this retirement. Again, I believe all Ontarians should enjoy equal opportunity and the freedom to participate fully in the lives of their communities. Our party believes that equality of opportunity must also extend to the workforce.

Just letting seniors work longer isn't the only answer. We want to make sure that government is committed to increased funding for seniors and seniors programming and the things that our seniors need. We are still, as a party, committed to ensuring that services continue to meet the needs of our growing and aging population now and in the years to come, which again is why I support this legislation, even though it should have been in place by now if the McGuinty Liberals had made this legislation a priority.

Seniors are challenging society's assumption about aging and are breaking new ground. We believe that seniors should have the right to continue to contribute to the economy as they choose. Going back to the statement previously made, I think it's important: as they choose, not as government chooses.

Since 1995, Conservatives have always supported policies and services that promote dignity, independence and quality of life for our seniors. We worked to ensure that they were able to contribute fully to their communities, and this proposed legislation will help meet that commitment to ensure that seniors live in dignity and respect.

As I mentioned, we shouldn't overlook the fact that in the past, many seniors, upon retirement, were forced into living conditions different from what they were before, and I think we need to make sure that the policies government puts in place will make sure that it is not a great detriment to the ability of seniors to support themselves.

This legislation is simply doing the right thing: It puts the choice to work into the hands of individuals, not governments or employers. For the vast majority of workers, these proposals will have absolutely no effect on their retiring. Most people, when they get to 65, will still want to retire. For some, however, this will remove an unfair barrier to the freedom of choice. Individuals may simply want to remain active in their chosen career.

For many seniors, employment is fundamental to their sense of dignity and self-worth. Others may face economic hardships if they are forced to retire, and live on fixed income. Forcing people into retirement when they reach 65 robs our economy of skilled workers, as was mentioned by the previous speaker, and it denies seniors the opportunity to continue contributing to our economy. Again, I think it's important to recognize that this is their choice. It should be their choice, not the government's choice.

I believe that Ontario seniors have earned the right to decide whether they want to continue to work into their golden years, but I want to point out that many people I talked to in Oxford say that when they were forced to retire, that was definitely not the start of the golden years. In fact, it was the other way around. The golden years were leading up to their retirement, not after they were forced into retirement. As I said earlier, more needs to be done for seniors than just telling them that they can keep on working.

1600

Yesterday I had the opportunity to speak to 150 seniors in my riding of Oxford, and health care was the biggest issue raised in our discussion. No one talked about mandatory retirement, and whether they should or shouldn't. I have to admit, it was during the working hours of the day, so I presume most of the people in that room were already retired. But health care is a concern to everyone, young and old.

Governments have been faced for a long time with the challenges of excessive wait times, the lack of physicians and beds and an aging population. Of course, the longer people live, the larger the group of seniors that we need to deal with. In government, we see increased funding each year and we continue to implement programs to assist the people of Ontario. We put mechanisms in place to try to reduce wait times and doctor shortages, but the need for health care services is far outpacing the money that's going in.

The McGuinty Liberals face the same problems and have decided to deal with it by raising taxes: the health care premium we were all told about in the last budget. Because of this, families are now paying as much as \$1,800 a year more in taxes, yet those I talk to say they still haven't seen any of the improvements they are paying for. I think that's also a big issue with our seniors. They're more concerned about the health care that isn't available than they are about retirement.

It's easy to understand that changes must be made to ensure that people receive proper medical care throughout their retirement years. Many seniors in Oxford have experienced at first hand longer waiting times and being without a family doctor. In fact, I was talking to one individual yesterday who wanted a doctor's appointment, and the earliest she could get an appointment was two and a half months from today. I think that's a much greater problem to the seniors in Oxford county than when they can or cannot go to work.

Many seniors in Oxford have experienced at first hand longer wait times, being without a family doctor, and the fact that they leave the hospital much quicker than they used to: shorter hospital stays. There will be increased pressures on the caregiver role and home care services. Not only are the effects of the doctor shortage being felt at the general practitioner level, but many are waiting, after they've met their general practitioner, for the specialists who have to perform the operations.

The other thing that the people I talked to yesterday were very concerned about was the issue of account-

ability and—I don't know whether it's the right word in this place—the issue of being believable. Of course, if you're not believable—that's why I questioned whether it was appropriate to say it in the House; if you're not believable, it's an inappropriate word to imply. It's the issue of integrity in people, that in fact people can believe what their people tell them.

I was a little concerned the other day. I met a good friend of mine who happens to sell used cars, and as I was talking to him for a few moments, he congratulated me and thanked me. I asked, "What did I do that you would be so thankful for?" He said, "The results of the latest survey have just come out, and it seems that the used car salesman has moved past the politician as a trustworthy occupation." He thanked me, of course, because that would put the politician—I hate to suggest it, Mr. Speaker. You would be one of those too, though I'm sure you are not a politician sitting in that chair. But he was so happy to say that politicians are now less respected than used car salesmen.

What's important is not so much where we are on the list but that the public is becoming very cynical, I think we would all agree, about what politicians tell them as to what they will and will not do for them. It becomes very important for all of us to raise that bar a little higher, that we don't make promises that we can't keep and that we can deliver the things we have promised to do.

Along with health care, that was one of the big issues we discussed yesterday, and it related to the things these same people heard two years ago when there was an election. They heard things about not raising taxes and providing more medical services, and of course that isn't what happened. Their taxes went up and they delisted chiropractic, eye care and the physiotherapy services that seniors in particular need.

They removed the vehicle tax credit that affects seniors' mobility. None of us in this House gave that much thought, but that was a great imposition on a lot of our seniors. We can talk about how we can let seniors work longer, but what about the things seniors need when they can no longer work? That was another one.

Another very big issue was the price of electricity. Oxford, you will know, has a large component of rural people. Hydro is supplied by Hydro One in the rural areas, and the cost of hydro has gone up dramatically. All the seniors remembered that both parties that were in the race—I shouldn't say "both." In my riding, there were seven names on the ballot. It wasn't what all the parties were saying, but the two main parties, the two that had the highest numbers, were pointing out that if they were elected, it wouldn't make any difference. Both parties agreed that the price of hydro would be locked until 2006. We were assured that our hydro bills would not go up. You will be aware that they have gone up dramatically in that time. That's not really living up to one's commitments. That's not really saying something and then doing it. I think that breeds cynicism in our population.

They repealed the education property tax credit, which was especially regressive for seniors on fixed incomes. Property tax is one of the big issues for seniors. If their income is not growing at the same speed that inflation is causing the cost of living to go up, it becomes very important that we keep the cost of accommodations down to where they can afford it. Our government had previously introduced the seniors' tax credit, which it was repealed by this government. It was going to provide an average of \$475 each year for more than 945,000 senior households—gone. That wasn't what was supposed to happen, but there it was again: more difficulties for our seniors living on a fixed income.

One other thing brought up was the issue that when the government was having problems with doctors, it came out that, as part of the agreement, doctors were asked to cut down on the medication they were prescribing to seniors to reduce the cost of the drug plan for the government. Of course, the doctors said if they did that, it would be hazardous to their health because they would be using different drugs than they were presently prescribing which were maybe not as effective. In fact, they were not over-prescribing, so that was not a way it could be reduced. People were very concerned that that was a negative for them, and again, it didn't look like the government cared about the seniors, who this bill refers to.

I think Ontarians deserve better. They deserve a government that will show leadership and hard work and someone who will be straightforward with them.

As I said, I support Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement, but I have to question this government's commitment to seniors and their well-being. Actions speak louder than words, and so far their actions have not been very positive.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I don't want to waste two minutes of my time to disagree with the member for Oxford, except to say that in approximately seven or eight minutes, I'll be speaking against the Tories and the Liberals on this issue, so please stay tuned. Come back around 4:20.

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I'm glad to speak to Bill 211 because this is something very important. The member from Oxford talked about the sense of dignity and self-worth for our seniors, and I certainly agree.

I think this is particularly unacceptable in this day and age with respect to how seniors can contribute to our society and economy. In my riding of Markham, for example, we have a lot of high-tech companies. It certainly is true that how much a person can contribute does not necessarily depend on the physical strength and status of a person. Oftentimes, it really is the mental and intellectual capacity and strength that is even more important. So it obviously is discriminatory if we require a person to retire at the age of 65.

1610

I also want to comment on what this means to a lot of immigrants. Oftentimes they come into this country in their late 30s or early 40s and, believe me, they would still get the highest points on the immigration grid. But when they come into the country, they usually have to spend a few years in acculturation, and some of them have to spend a few years to get their foreign credentials recognized. Of course, our government is helping them in a big way to expedite the accreditation of foreign credentials.

For these immigrants to have the time to build up the experience in this province, for them to have the time to build up the pension that they need when they grow old, they need the flexibility to retire at the time that they feel is appropriate intellectually, in terms of their health and in terms of their financial status.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I have just a few brief comments. I think it's critical that we recognize that choice is what we're talking about here. It's very, very important that people have that choice.

When we think of the senior population in Ontario now, we think of people who have been working, quite often, for a long number of years. Some of them may want to retire younger; some of them may want to keep going; some of them may find that they get a great amount of joy from their jobs and a lot of intrinsic value. Why should we here at Queen's Park tell that individual, "No, you're no good any more. You're going to have to retire now. Go off. Retire. Hit the rocking chair. Hit the front porch. You've got nothing more to contribute"? That's not the way to go.

Choice is what it's about. Seniors will have the ability to make the choice that's right for them. If they're ready to retire, they'll be able to retire. If they want to continue on, whether it be with their career, full-time, part-time, and they have a contribution to make, they should be allowed to do that.

One of the things we talk about sometimes in organizations is corporate knowledge, corporate memory. It's something that sometimes only the senior members of an organization can bring. I know that sometimes when organizations do have a cleaning of house or when a number of people reach a certain age and are forced to leave, they lose a lot of that corporate memory. The younger people coming up don't have the mentors that they need to bring them along, and the organization suffers as a result.

Our seniors have a great contribution to make. They've made a great contribution already. Why should we here at Queen's Park be dictating to them to tell them, "Your contribution ends because you turn 65"? It's not fair, it's discriminatory, and I'm glad we're ending that.

Mr. Berardinetti: There is a lot to be said here. I'm looking at Bill 211 here, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement. Basically, all the act does is it amends the Human Rights Code and certain other acts to end mandatory retirement. As was said earlier today, and as I

even said earlier today, it's a form of discrimination to say that you reach the age of 65 and you have to retire.

I was talking earlier about the situation that I recall when I was studying 19th century history in Europe. Bismarck had become the leader of the new country of Germany and he had said, "When you reach 65, you have to retire and we'll give you a pension." It's a rule that came into place because someone out in Germany, back in the 1870s, decided to do that.

Mr. Marchese: Bismarck, was it?

Mr. Berardinetti: His name was Bismarck, yes, the member from Trinity–Spadina reminds me. He basically decided on this rule. Here we are 135 or 130 years later deciding finally that we don't need this rule. It's a different era. What we had 120 or 130 years ago was a different life expectancy, a lifestyle, a different way of living our lives. People who are 70 years old and 60 years old are now considered much younger in age. Someone who was 70 back in 1870 was considered old. Someone who's 70 nowadays is not considered old. People are starting careers in their 50s, 60s and into their 70s and continuing on well beyond that.

I support this legislation. It's important that we send a signal out there as a government that we are not going to tell people to close their shops, leave their jobs or go home when they're 65. This is good legislation, and I support it.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Mr. Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Trinity–Spadina, Scarborough Centre, Scarborough Southwest and Markham for their kind comments. I would just say that I totally agree with them, that the issue is really about choice and people having a right to choose.

The member from Scarborough Southwest mentioned—I really didn't know the history of where we came from and where we got this mandatory retirement at 65. I find it hard to believe that in today's society you could have had that debate and had that type of policy developed, because obviously it's discriminatory; that just because you get to a certain age—and I'm getting a lot closer to that than I really appreciate—you're not capable of doing something, you are substandard to what you were before.

I totally agree with them in saying that this is an issue of choice. I support 100% the government's initiative to eliminate mandatory retirement and in fact give all our citizens the choice as to what they want to do, whether they want to work.

Incidentally, we don't have mandatory work legislation. We don't tell people they have to work at a certain time. I don't think we should have legislation that says they cannot work because of their age.

I support this 100%. I thank members for their kind comments. This may be the only time in the past—I know it's been in the past two years, but this could be the only time in the next two years that I totally agree with the government's legislation.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes, in further debate, the member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Marchese: I want to welcome Ontario citizens to this parliamentary channel. It's 4:20 on the clock and we are on live. We're speaking on Bill 211, an act to end mandatory retirement.

I have to tell you that New Democrats oppose this bill. We are unanimous in our opposition to this bill, unanimously in our opposition to all of the Tories and all of the Liberals who, today and in the near future, will probably be supporting this bill. I hear the member from Oxford who's so delighted about the bill. The only problem with it, I suppose, is that you Liberals just haven't acted fast enough, but if they were in power, they would have done it sooner. Is that more or less the issue? Yeah.

I have to tell you, member from Oxford, people can work—and Gerry Phillips knows this—past age 65. They can. Nobody prevents you from working past age 65. No one. If you want to work, like some members in this place, past 65, you can. You are not prevented from doing so.

I'm not quite sure why we have this bill. People like my father worked past age 65. There are lots of people who work past age 65. Why we have this bill is of interest to me and of interest to many people in this place and presumably outside of this place.

What ever happened to freedom 55, Speaker? You remember those commercials. They were good. They had these wonderful scenes as this man or this woman talked about how beautiful it's going to be. Once you get to age 55, you get in the saddle and just "Ride 'em, cowboy," in the nice beautiful fields and just enjoy life. Freedom 55—and it wasn't long ago—whatever happened to that? Corporate people wanted us to aspire to retirement at age 55, so you could enjoy life. The idea was that when you have worked for so long, you should be able to, and can and could retire at age 65 to be able to enjoy the fruits of life and what life has to give. The fruits of life are often beyond the workplace.

Now I can see that for the Tories and Liberals the fruits of life are in work—work till you drop because it's the most beautiful thing you could be doing. I understand that Liberals and Tories enjoy seeing people work till they drop. God knows, we are living longer and we want them to be able to work as long as they can, because Tories and Liberals like the idea that people work till they drop. Freedom 55 no longer; it's passé. We no longer want people to enjoy themselves at age 55, because no, that was bad. It was a wrong cultural ethos to be part of. Whatever possessed those corporate individuals to advertise on television with those beautiful pictures of how sweet life is at age 55, plus one day after that? How wrong they were. Bring them back to the idea of the gloriousness of working past age 65 because we live longer.

1620

I have got to tell you that in my experience, the people I've known in the past couldn't wait for retirement—if only they could, but could not. The majority of people I

know work to age 65 because they have to, not because they want to. Why do they have to? Because what they earn is insufficient. It's about not having enough pecunia; that's what it's about. I wager with you, Speaker, that if the majority of workers were given decent wages or had a private pension and/or had a pension given to them by the federal government that was somewhat satisfactory, they would be retiring at 65 or earlier. I wager that with you, Speaker, or any other Liberal member here in this House. It's about not earning enough. If people work past 65, the majority of them work because they have to, not because work is glorious past age 65, because the majority of people know that you never know how much longer you're going to live.

You can abstractly say, as Liberals say, "Ah, people live longer"—in the abstract, yes; in the particular, some people don't last past age 65, and that is why the majority of human beings I know who work hard want to be able to retire at 65 if they can, or earlier if they could. The majority of them would love to be able to be with the grandchildren; would love to be able to visit the daughters or sons and play with the grandchildren. The majority of people would love to be able to volunteer in some non-profit agency if they could, and if they could retire, they would. It's all about not having the pecunia.

Instead of the Liberal government here today saying, "We are going to lobby the federal government to increase pensions in a way that people could retire at 65 and earlier," rather than that, they come here with this notion of choice. "We want to give people choice. What's wrong with choice? If people want to work, they can. If people don't want to work, they don't." It seems like a very nice formula. How could you be opposed to this simple, clean formula of people having choice? There's a greater political agenda at work here that I will speak to in a little while, but I want to make reference to a number of people in Ontario and Canada who work for so little they might have to work past age 65.

Hotel and motel workers: workers in Toronto earn \$27,000; the median wage is \$26,000. Child care services: workers in Toronto earn \$25,000; the median wage is \$25,350. Full service restaurants: workers in Toronto, \$53,700; the median wage is \$19,000. Nursing and residential care facilities: Toronto, \$27,000; median wage, \$30,000. Building services: workers in Toronto earn \$32,900; median wage, \$23,000. Semiconductor and electronic component manufacturing: workers in Toronto, \$12,000; median wage, \$29,250. Clothing manufacturing: workers in Toronto \$23,800; median wage, \$20,000. Business support services: workers in Toronto, \$20,700; median wage, \$25,350. Special food services: workers in Toronto \$12,500; median wage, \$24,375. Personal and laundry services: workers in Toronto \$40,500; the median wage, \$21,000. General merchandise stores: workers in Toronto \$47,000; median wage, \$19,500. One-third are part-time.

This is a long list of people who work in a whole lot of sectors in Ontario whose median wage is clearly, to me, inadequate to survive on in Toronto or beyond the bor-

ders of Toronto. These workers I've mentioned and many others I haven't will have to work past age 65 to be able to pay the bills, because they're not earning enough. That's what this is all about. It ought to be a discussion of, are people working? Are people earning a decent wage? Do they have a decent pension to be able to retire at age 65? The argument I've put forth is that the majority do not. We should be talking about that.

Instead, we have a few arguments from some Liberals saying, "Women come into the work field much later and therefore they need to work past age 65 to be able to accumulate enough money and/or to have an adequate pension." The pensions are inadequate, and women who work raising children work hard. Rather than women in this place and men in this place, Liberals and Tories, arguing that perhaps women who work in the home looking after children should have access to a pension of sorts, they present an argument here saying, "They take care of the children, and they start work later, so we need to have them have the choice to work past age 65."

That's not the argument you should be making. You should be supporting the fact that women work hard in the home, and are not paid for that work and there's no connection to any pension as a result of that hard work. That's the argument Liberals should be putting forth, not saying, "They work hard as mothers and then we want them to work harder, longer than ever, past age 65, till they drop." That's the argument you want to put forth and defend? It's certainly not the argument I want to support or could support. It's the wrong thing to do.

I'm telling you that what you are doing with this bill is gradually shifting the culture around a little bit to the point where, having done this, you will have federal governments start reflecting on having pensions move to age 70 as opposed to age 60, because we live longer and because you provincial Liberals have made it possible for people to work past age 65. Given that there's a law now that says you can work past age 65, and given that many will work past age 65 because they have to, federal governments will advance the argument that now, finally, we are ready to push the pensionable age to age 70, as Mulroney tried to do when he was in power, before 1993.

1630

I'm telling you, it won't be just Mulroney types who will bring forth the debate on pensionable age at age 70; it'll be Liberals, I guarantee. These Liberals might not be around, because they will either have retired or been retired by the electorate, but those who remain will know that both Liberals and Tories federally are eventually going to put forth a question of choice: "Don't you think perhaps we should move the pensionable age to 70?" "And why not? We live longer. What's wrong with that choice?" you will say. It'll be interesting to see how many Liberal backbenchers will be there in the front lines saying, "No, it was never meant for that. No, we never intended to have this kind of debate. No, it was never intended to change the culture such that we are contemplating the idea of moving the pensionable age to

70.” They will say that foolishly, naively. But this is where that is leading to.

The majority of working people want to retire at an age when they have the strength, the will, the intellect, the peace of mind to be able to do other things such as not having to be afraid of the bills that have to be paid and not having to worry that you would love to be with your grandchildren but you can’t afford it. The Liberal government is so happy that they made some minimal change provincially to increase the minimum wage, so happy with that they are that, in spite of the minimal change they have made to the minimum wage, the majority of people here in this country are earning an inadequate salary to survive decently.

I am telling you and those of you who are watching, the middle class is slowly diminishing and disappearing. We have, for the first time ever, a manufacturing base that is getting smaller and smaller. It was the manufacturing base and unionized sector that allowed people to have a middle-class income. We are losing that. We are exporting all of our manufacturing jobs to other parts of the world where they only have to pay a dollar or two a day. We can never compete with a dollar or two a day. But our manufacturing jobs are disappearing. The well-paying jobs are disappearing.

Oh, yes, all those poor immigrants coming to this country, all those immigrants coming here with incredible skills, academic skills better than most of the immigrants we used to have in the 1950s or 1960s in terms of academic degrees, they come here and are unable to find work in their field. Yet the federal Liberal government has a policy of bringing bright people with good degrees to this country; oh, are they ever so proud to bring in these immigrants. Then they bring them in and they say, “OK boys, you’re out on your own. Good luck finding a decent job.”

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): What about the women?

Mr. Marchese: Men and women immigrants, good luck with finding a decent job. Not once have I heard a Liberal in this place, minister or otherwise, attack the federal Liberal government that says, “We’re bringing immigrants and, when they come, we have nothing to give them.” “Oh, yes, you’re a doctor. Oh, yes, we need doctors, but good luck finding a job.” Oh, the Liberals are quite happy to say, “We are putting more foreign-trained doctors into the medical profession than did the Tories,” but you can’t argue that you’re putting thousands there, no siree. When you say, “Oh, percentage-wise we’ve increased it by 100 %, no problemo.” You go from 50 to 100, and you say, “Oh, my God, it’s 100%.” Or you go from 100 to 200, and you say, “Oh, my God, it’s 100%.” It’s not a lot; don’t kid yourself, and don’t pat yourself on the back. We are bringing into this country cheap labour. Academics and well-trained professionals become cheap labour. They’re the ones who are working double time and triple time trying to make ends meet to pay the rent and/or to pay for a house. They will be working past age 65, not because they want the choice,

but because they have to. You don’t have too many Liberals saying, “We feel bad for them.”

The minimum wage is simply insufficient. We worry about what business has to say, but we’re not worried about those families that are earning minimum wage at \$7.15 an hour.

Mr. Berardinetti: It’s going up to \$8.

Mr. Marchese: The Liberals behind me: “It’s going to go to \$8.” So proud they are. In two more years, it’ll go up to \$8.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: The NDP, to the Liberal member up there, Lorenzetti, who says, “What would you do?” our policy—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): What did you do?

Mr. Marchese: What did we do? We increased the minimum wage, my friend, when we were in government, something the Tories refused to do for eight years when they got in. Now you come here proud of the few cents extra that you give them in an economy that’s gotten more and more expensive.

We said minimum wage should be at \$8 an hour when it was at \$6.85, Lorenzetti, and they say, “Oh, it’s going to go up to \$8 in two more years,” and they say it with pride. Aren’t we so proud that so many are hungry, so many are working poor, so many cannot afford the luxuries that MPPs, relatively speaking, have, the luxuries that wealthy people have.

Wealthy people have the choice to retire when they want. Wealthy people don’t have a problemo retiring at 50 or 55 or 60 or 65 or even going on. They don’t have any problemos with that. It’s the working poor we are trying to protect here with this bill. It is they who deserve a decent wage and it is they who deserve a decent pension. That’s what Liberals should be fighting for, at least those who pretend and claim to have a heart. That’s what they should be fighting for, not the choice to work till they drop. That’s not the bill they want.

I thank you, Speaker, and those Liberals listening to me, for the 20 minutes that I had.

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

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I just want to respond to my colleague from Trinity–Spadina. I always enjoy listening to him because he has such a dramatic way and such passion. It doesn’t necessarily mean that he’s right, but he delivers it well.

One of the things that he said in his inimitable style was, who’s stopping anybody from working past 65; anybody can work past 65. He mentions in the abstract this, and in the real world this. In the abstract, he’s absolutely right, but in the real world there are people who have jobs working for organizations that make it mandatory for them to retire at 65. Now, they can go out and get a job, maybe, after 65, but it would certainly be a lot easier for them to stay in the job they have where they obviously are making a worthwhile contribution and

they're of use to that company or that organization or whatever. To suggest that because someone has set this arbitrary number of 65, they must leave, is something that I don't think is fair and I don't think is equitable.

People can retire at any time. I have an employee who was a police officer. He retired at 52. There are other people who can retire even earlier than that because of the nature of their particular employment, where if the factor works out and they got into the job at 18, after 20 years they hit a factor that allows them to retire.

The whole issue is this: No one says that you must work past 65, no one says that you have to work a shorter period of time, but if you want to work and you're in a job where you are productive, where it is an essential part of your life because you've contributed so much of your time to that particular endeavour, you should have the right to continue to work as long as you are productive. And that is what this bill is about. It's about making sure that that freedom of choice is there.

1640

Mr. O'Toole: It has been said that the member from Trinity-Spadina is a very entertaining speaker. He certainly has a lot of validity in his arguments with respect to where they're coming from. I give him credit. All members would have a certain amount of sympathy with their arguments. I think if you just wrap it down into the two issues they're fighting for, they are the minimum wage issue—and there are probably arguments for and against almost all the policies derived from the NDP platform—and the issue of having a universal, mandatory pension for every worker and every small business person. If you look at the economy today, that's certainly an important concern in the broader debate on pensions themselves.

As has been said, many of the contracts that are entered into between employers and employee groups, be they unionized or non-unionized—most employers in the small business world would probably like to retain their employees, because it means less training, less expense, more reliability, dependability etc.

I think the ultimate choice here by the Human Rights Commissioner in his ruling was that there should be the right. It should not be discrimination based on age. But it would be very difficult for an employer to say arbitrarily that someone who is 65—and I know the Minister of Community Safety has just spoken. If it was mandatory that we retire, he wouldn't be here. I'd be close to that point in time myself.

I believe that people have the right, and I would stand in support of this bill. I'll be speaking shortly and my argument will be primarily that many people at certain points in their lives, depending on the kind of work they did, maybe didn't have a choice. There's meaning gained from work for many people, and that should not be diminished. But I think there are arguments to be made, and the member from Trinity-Spadina makes them very well.

Mr. Flynn: It certainly is a pleasure to join the debate. It's quite a simple debate when you boil it right down to

the essence of what we're being asked. The proposed Ending Mandatory Retirement Statue Law Amendment Act, 2005, would effectively, if passed, end mandatory retirement by amending the appropriate legislation to ensure that employees could not be forced to retire merely because they had reached a certain age.

We in the Liberal Party say that they should not be forced to retire. My understanding from the comments I've heard to date is that those in the Conservative Party agree that they should not be forced to retire. What I'm hearing from the New Democratic Party—the third party—is that they should be forced to retire. The human rights that would be extended to those people beyond the age of 65 who choose to work, the human rights they do not possess today that would be extended to them as a result of the passage of this legislation, should be extended, in the opinion of the Liberal Party and in the opinion of the Conservative Party.

The New Democratic Party's opposition to this is strange to me. This has been a party, I understand, that throughout its history—from people like Tommy Douglas, J.S. Woodsworth, Broadbent, Lewis; you can rhyme them all off—was all about extending human rights. For some reason, on this proposed piece of legislation, the New Democratic Party has decided, in essence, that some of the more elderly people in our society—who are still in great shape, who are still mentally alert, who love the work they do, who want to continue to do that work—should be treated differently. People in Quebec who are over 65 and have this right should retain that right, but in Ontario, according to the New Democrats, they should not get the same human rights as other people in the rest of Canada. That is simply wrong.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): As I sit here and listen to this debate tonight, it's really interesting. It almost makes no sense why we should debate it. The reasons that the member of the third party is giving really don't make any sense.

We talk about democracy and basic rights, which I think we all want to enjoy. We're privileged to live in a country where we can have those rights, yet when it comes to somebody wanting to be fulfilled in something they like doing, we're debating whether to make them stop or whether they can be forced to stop doing that.

Personally, I can relay that I often think and talk with some friends who are at home. If we leave things the way they are, what really happens on the day you're 64 years and 364 days old or when you hit the magic number of 65? What really happens? I hope that, for me, nothing drastically changes, that I can keep on doing what I enjoy doing, whether it's in this place or somewhere else in the workplace. Nobody should hold something over my head and say I have to do that because today I turned 65. It really doesn't make any sense.

Once again, I repeat to the layperson watching this on TV or here in the Legislature, it almost makes you wonder why we are spending time debating something that makes so much sense. If you want to talk about basic rights, well, if you want to work, if the potential is there

and the employer is willing to keep you there, why not? So I would urge that there shouldn't be any debate. We should just pass this bill and move on.

The Acting Speaker: Time for a response.

Mr. Marchese: I think there are three points, in response to my opponents.

Mr. Duguid: Colleagues.

Mr. Marchese: Opponents.

First of all, I want to say to the Minister of Community Safety that I like and respect him, but I want to make three points in relation to what people have said.

First, 65% of the people do not have a union in this country. That means the majority have no contract. That means the majority of them have no pension. Thirty-five percent have a union and a contract that says, at age 65, sayonara. In my view, it's a good thing. In my view, the majority of people who have a contract would love to retire earlier than age 65. That is a fact.

Second, you Liberals fail to grasp—because you're trying to hide under the simple formula of choice—that this cultural change is moving us and the federal government to say that what we need are pensions you can have not at age 65 but at age 70. This bill will allow the framework and the foundation for that to happen.

Third, the majority of people would love you Liberals to hear them say, "Give me a decent wage, and if I don't have a union, help me to have a pension." That's what they want. They don't want to say, "I want choice so that I can work past age 65, until I drop." They want you to give them a decent pension if they don't have one, and they want decent wages. For that, we should be improving the minimum wage. That's not what you're doing. I'm sorry.

The Acting Speaker: Time for further debate.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's interesting, when you've been in the House for the number of years that I have, one of the aspects of debating a bill is looking at how every party or every side chooses a position. I heard some of my colleagues—I don't want to say "my opponents," but my colleagues—in the House suggest that the sky is somehow going to fall in because of this bill. What I want to do—oh, and by the way, I want to note that I'm sharing my time with, I believe, the member from Mississauga South.

I want to begin with what the essence of this bill is really about, in spite of the constant—and, as I said, it's a shame, because you get these very polarized perspectives instead of maybe a more objective view of both the positives and the negatives as we move forward in legislation. The essence of this bill is that it amends the definition of "age." The previous definition had the effect of permitting discrimination in employment because of age, including mandatory retirement where the age is 65.

1650

I want to share with the House that I've had a number of individuals come and see me over the last six years. In particular, there was a civil servant and a truck driver. I recall these two in particular because their cases were interesting. One worked in the court system. He was not

a justice; he just worked in the court system. They had some employment issues. They couldn't find enough people to do the specific job that he was doing. But because he was reaching 65, he had no choice but to retire at 65 because that, apparently, was the contractual agreement that was there. He was going to turn 65, there was nobody to fill the job he had to do, but there were also issues about not finding people to replace him. He said, "Can I not even get an extension? I love the job I do." He was more than capable, had no health issues and he wanted to stay on. No, he couldn't. So he didn't have a choice.

Then there was a truck driver. He was in great physical health, and he certainly didn't look 65 to me. There again, for whatever reason, it was imposed upon him that he could not do this job that he loved. He said, "This is discrimination. I want to have a choice."

These are real stories, the real people who came to me, before this legislation was even introduced, about the issue of not being able to work after they reached a certain age.

There are benefits to society in general if people want to choose to work beyond this retirement age that someone chose at some point in time in the past—and we've kept it there—because people with that kind of experience in the workplace have often developed great expertise in what they do. Instead of just having to go out the door at 65, they can provide the benefit of their experience to younger people who are coming in, so that there is a history of experience that can be passed on.

I know, and the Minister of Health Promotion certainly knows, that people are living longer and they are also healthier. Therefore, it's also about adapting to this increase of healthy years that we have ahead of us, even though we are beyond 65. I think that's of benefit to all of us.

There is another aspect that is creeping up on us: a shortage in our workforce. That is happening, so we're going to need that talent and that expertise from the aging population.

I had this wonderful experience, and I've talked about it with a number of my colleagues. I spent four days down in Wisconsin and had this wonderful training with some of my US colleagues in the Legislatures. One of the sessions, on communication, was held by Mel Hurtig. I met him in the hall before we had this session. He was an elderly gentleman. He looked to be at least in his late 70s to me. That's the age that I had pegged him at. These were gruelling sessions. His session started at 9 o'clock, finished at noon, and it was incredibly intense. He ran the whole session by himself with 34 legislators. He had so much vitality and so much to contribute to train us when it came to this topic of communication, but the astonishing part about the work he did, to me, was that I didn't—let's put it this way: After a while, I didn't even think about the fact that he seemed to be a little bit older than a normal presenter. I don't know what that means, but he was. He shared with us his age. He was 93 years old. I couldn't believe it because of the energy he provided in

this presentation of this whole session, the wealth of information that he provided to us from years and years of doing this job. He still travels the world today. Just that same morning he had flown in from some other part of the world. Again, he's 93 years old, and he works full-time doing this. He isn't doing it for the money; he does it because he loves it. He just loves what he does.

I think our legislation is very, very progressive because it says that all citizens, no matter what age, have the choice that they can work after they're 65.

I have to say that many people choose not to work after 65, and that's OK too. Nobody is saying you have to work after you're 65. We hear the phrase "freedom 65." People have different interpretations of what that means. But many people prepare for retirement. They prepare for a time of maybe more leisure, less work, but that's a choice. I think that's what this legislation is intended to do.

It concerns me sometimes when I hear arguments from the third party, just a few minutes ago, that are very, very much, in my opinion—I don't want to say "theatrical," but certainly are biased.

Mr. Marchese: Say it if you mean it.

Ms. Di Cocco: All right, I will. I do mean it. It is theatrical. And I say that because it doesn't deal with—certainly in everything we do there are positives, there are negatives, depending on individual circumstances. But the intent of the legislation is about allowing people, as I said, to work after 65 if they so choose. That's all it does. It's about not discriminating because someone has turned 65. Again, there are so many benefits. There are benefits to the individual who chooses to work after they're 65. There are benefits to society and the workplace because they provide a wealth and benefit of experience and talent that they can continue on.

I'm quite perplexed at the rhetoric of opposition that comes up, because I don't think it's real. I don't think they truly believe that this is bad legislation or poor legislation.

I am very pleased that the former Minister of Labour, Chris Bentley, brought this forward. Now, as you know, we have a new Minister of Labour, the Honourable Steve Peters. I'm very pleased to be part of a team that supports this kind of very progressive legislation that is going to provide choice for all the citizens of Ontario who want to work.

I also want to remind the member from the third party that when he talks about pensions—and I'm not quite sure what he's trying to get at—as if this legislation is somehow undermining people's pensions, that I didn't quite get what he was trying to say there.

I want to remind everybody in this House that we are a part of that class of legislators in Ontario who don't get pensions. We do not. This is something that's not very well-known out there, but we don't. I'm not complaining. I'm just suggesting that that is a fact.

1700

One of the things we have to do as we move forward in bringing forward good legislation is that we have to

have good, honest debate about what value this brings to Ontario.

I'm pleased to be able to support this legislation. I certainly know that my constituents who have come to see me over the last six years as their MPP have asked that they please be given the choice to work after 65. They felt it is discriminatory and they were considering bringing it before a tribunal to see whether or not it is discrimination because of age.

I want to thank the minister for bringing it forward. I'm certainly going to support it and I'm hoping that the third party will rethink their rhetoric. I'm not quite sure if they're supporting it or not. From the debate I heard tonight, I don't think they are supporting it, but maybe they're going to change their mind by the time we've finished the discussion.

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill. Like some of the other members in this House, I have grey hair and will be facing that magic age of 65, and I think it's time that we rejig our mentality of talking about older people and their contribution to society. Much of our society is focused on youth. We can rebuild bodies, we can rebuild faces—

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): In this job, the people retire you.

Mr. Peterson: We hope the noisy members will actually put up enough effort to give us a bit of a challenge in that regard.

As we can rejig faces and rejig bodies, and as Hollywood is an omnipresent view of our world, many people have succumbed to the view that you cannot trust anybody over the age of 35.

I have been a part of many societies. I have done business in Japan where, unless you have grey hair, you're not taken seriously, not only for your contribution to family but for your contributions to society. With the grey hair, you are accredited with the wisdom and experience that comes with that. In a society like ours, focused on youth, we don't understand that easily. The same exists in China, where often the patriarch or the matriarch of the family is well into their 80s, and many, many leaders in China were well into their 80s as they led the country.

There are tremendous contributions made by older people in North America. We know of John Kenneth Galbraith, Hazel McCallion, Ronald Reagan and even Mr. Greenspan, who, almost approaching the age of 80, has had a dynamic effect on the economy of North America and the world. In my riding, I can speak of Dr. Boyd Upper, a man who is well over 70 who has made a great contribution to politics and to his local community and continually works very hard. Jack Luby and Dick Chataway are two other names who have meant a lot to their society. In terms of building Canada, one can think of the grey-haired power of Ted Rogers of the Murdoch group and of Jimmy Pattison. All these people—wouldn't it have been a shame if they were asked to retire?

Unlike the member from Trinity–Spadina, I know a lot of people who enjoy working and get a great satisfaction from it. In my lifetime, I have had the pleasure of doing many types of work. In my teens and early 20s, I did a lot of manual labour, and had the great satisfaction of putting in a 10- or 12-hour day and seeing what I could accomplish with just my body. I obviously moved on and got educated, moved on to more cerebral types of work. I enjoyed the satisfaction of setting objectives and working hard at them. The member from Trinity–Spadina doesn't seem to know any of those people who get enjoyment out of the journey. They all want to have the destination, which makes them idle, which prepares them for doing nothing, because it seems there's no satisfaction for them in how they got there, only in that they prepared themselves for old age, to do nothing, to sit idle, to not benefit society.

As we build our society, one of the great tenets of our government is that we provide excellent health care. We are extending the useful life of people's bodies by banning smoking. How many of us have seen people wheezing from emphysema, knowing that they are in great agony? If those lives are extended, why can they not contribute? Why can they not help as they would like to? We have anti-cholesterol medicine for those of us who have abused our bodies and have not lived a proper lifestyle which, again, prevents all kinds of internal diseases and heart attacks. We are allowed to live longer. Why? To do nothing? That would not be my choice.

For many of us, the expectation, "Let's retire when we're 50. Let's retire when we're 60. Let's do nothing," comes out of the 19th century. It comes out of the time when there were no antibiotics, no penicillin, no insulin for diabetes; when there were no hip replacements, knee replacements or microsurgery for backs, which allow people to do everything they want to, including working to a later age.

As we face the future in our society, we face the ability to rejig our views of older people. I think today of friends of mine who do face serious chronic pain and are blessed with having a pump where they can inject themselves on a daily basis so that they can continue to function and do the things they want.

Many of the expectations of what we are doing today, I would like to repeat, are framed by the great Hollywood society, the Hollywood society that focuses only on youth, on youthful bodies, on great sexual expectations—and that can be rebuilt with plastic, not the bodies and not the lives that we face and we enjoy.

I very much support grey power. I very much support the wonderful activities of people who are building our society and making a tremendous difference as they find the journey is more important than the end result, the end result being straight idleness and lack of activity. I welcome in my daily exercise at this job the advice of people who have gone before me, the advice of people with more experience than myself. In most societies that are successful, that is a welcome and appreciated part of society. I suggest that that will be a major improvement

for the society of Canada, for its economic wealth and for its cultural wealth.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments. The Chair once again recognizes the member from Durham.

Mr. O'Toole: I did pay considerable attention to the member for Sarnia–Lambton, and I'll make a comment. The member for Mississauga South spent a fair amount of time talking about relieving pain and how various drugs can do that to make you effective. That's a whole other discussion.

I think what's important here is that she did admit, and I give her credit for that—there's actually in the future, if you're looking at any of the demographic or economic trends, an aging workforce, and as such, at some point in time, you can examine the productivity levels and all these various things. In manufacturing and the sectors where people's bodies can only take so much time on the end of a piece of heavy equipment, there will be a shortage of workers—in certain sectors, absolutely as forecast, no question. I'm saying to you that in certain other roles there is no shortage.

People are living longer, and I'll have more to say on that. From Stats Canada, the life expectancy has gone from 68 to about 75 for men, maybe even higher for women. People have got this idea of "freedom 55" in their mind; they want to retire. I think the point has been made, too, that people at the end of the day really want choice, and it's an individual thing. That's what this is doing.

It's really doing quite the opposite of what Mr. Marchese wants. Mr. Marchese wants everyone to be locked into kind of a unionized framework where they can discriminate and say, "You're 65. Sorry, our contract plan doesn't suit you. You've got to leave now." But the person can go and seek other meaningful work, if that's their choice.

1710

At the end of the day, John Tory's and our position on this is that we are in favour of choice, we are in agreement with the human rights decision on discrimination based on age. What's out of sync here, as it turns out, is the argument that Mr. Marchese and others are making, that, really, the unions themselves are discriminating. I don't want to go down that road, but they are providing other kinds of voices for workers. But it's a pleasure.

Mr. Marchese: In response to the two Liberal members and what they said: 65% of the people in Canada and Ontario do not have a union, have no contract with an employer and therefore have no pension. What do workers want? They want a pension. The majority of them do not have a pension. Why don't you talk about how we discriminate against so many workers who do not have a pension? How come that does not figure into the debate? Why don't you introduce a bill that says, "We will end discrimination against workers who do not have a pension"? Then we could support you. But to stand here and say, "Ah, we want them to work until they

drop past age 65": I'm sorry; that's not the kind of thing workers are talking about.

The Liberals, who take such great pride in saying, "We've increased the minimum wage to \$7.15"—

Applause.

Mr. Marchese:—"so people can live with dignity earning 18,000, 19,000, 20,000 bucks." Liberals call that dignity and they applaud themselves. When you talk about how you've increased the minimum wage so they can earn now, with dignity, \$17,000, \$18,000, \$19,000 a year, how can you applaud yourselves for that? Fix that. That's dignity; that's an end to discrimination against working men and women. Fix the fact that they don't have a pension. That would end discrimination against men and women. Talk about that, and then you can get New Democrats to support you. But this? Please.

Our leader is going to speak in about—oh, no, we have a Tory speaking next—a half-hour. In about a half-hour, our leader will be speaking to enhance our arguments.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): It gives me great pride to speak to Bill 211, the ending mandatory retirement bill. It is the right thing to do: ending ageism, ending discrimination. We have to stop.

Many members of our society feel that, come age 65, people should just stop in their tracks and that's it; they shouldn't be able to pursue many of the jobs that they have done for many years and love to do. Many jobs are vocational, things that people love getting up in the morning to do. I've met people from all sorts of different trades and professions, carpenters who love their trade, who don't want to stop doing it at age 65. We shouldn't stop them from doing it. They should be able to continue with that trade until the day they themselves, by their choice, decide they want to stop. I have met politicians, athletes, people in the medical profession, doctors who have wanted to continue doing what they love to do, helping people with their skills and knowledge, and providing that service.

Many times, people go through many different career changes. As today's society says, you change careers every seven or eight years. As those careers change, you may be picking up a new career at age 57 or 64. You want to continue with that career; it's something that you're inspired by and it's a new challenge. We don't want to stop people from being inspired and continuing to be able to provide all of us with their great skills.

This is a bill that is long overdue, and I'm glad that it's coming forward now.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I want to speak in favour of ending mandatory retirement, because I believe it's a fair and balanced way that would not undermine existing rights and benefits. The NDP, in particular, must understand that this legislation is not forcing individuals not to stop. If they choose to stop working at the age of 65, they can certainly do that. What this legislation will do is allow people to continue working if they choose to.

My constituency has received a number of calls in support of making those changes. Many people feel they

can contribute to the system, even after the age of 65. One of my colleagues made some reference earlier. If you look at a number of politicians—which we are—they tend to be over the age of 65. Nobody seems to have a problem having a Prime Minister who is over 65 or a leader of a party over 65. So why should we block individuals who want to continue working and being productive?

On a personal note, my little girl is only five years old now, and I am over 50. This means that when I am 65, my little girl will be 20 years old and, I suspect, will still be going to school. Does it mean I shouldn't be able to continue working so that she will be able to continue her studies in case there is a need for her to receive financial assistance from me? It just doesn't make sense. If any of us wish to continue to work, that option should be available. We should not be discriminated against because we reach that age, because at the end of the day, experience is very important. It does not take away opportunity for young people, in my opinion, and therefore it should be supported.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a reply.

Ms. Di Cocco: I want to thank the members from Mississauga South and, of course, Durham, Trinity-Spadina, Mississauga East and Thornhill for their input.

I heard the member from Trinity-Spadina trying to say that this bill is somehow about having people work until they drop. That misconstrues totally the intent of this bill. This bill is only about amending a discriminatory definition of "age" in such a way that it actually does not permit that discrimination in employment because of age and does not discriminate after they're 65.

As I said, I listened to the argument, I listened to the debate, and when I hear that kind of language, trying to suggest, "Well, you guys just want to make them work until they drop"—that has nothing to do with this bill. It's a choice. It's a choice people have. Nobody is saying that people are forced to work until they're 65. That totally misconstrues the intent of this bill. This bill is about having the choice, and whoever doesn't want to work until they're 65 and chooses at age 55 or 60 or 62, whatever, to retire and not work: absolutely. But those people who care and who want to, who choose to work after they're 65—whether it's their circumstances, whether it's because they love their job, whatever the reason—now have the choice. That's what this bill is about.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: It's my privilege to speak on behalf of the constituents in the riding of Durham on Bill 211. I think it's always important to go back to the beginning of the story. In the very brief time—I hope I have 60 minutes, but I'm not sure of that; no, it's only 20 minutes.

1720

Here's the starting point: Some of you would probably know that Keith Norton issued a report—he was the human rights commissioner of Ontario—in 2001. In the report, he called for an end to mandatory retirement. I can quote an article that was printed in the media. The commission also called for a change in the Ontario

Human Rights Code, defining the definition of “age” to end mandatory retirement. Once in place, a person’s age could no longer be used to determine when they are to retire from the workforce. That’s the background, and it’s important to understand that that initiative was in 2001, and 2005 is where we are now.

The next point in history was that our government, under Premier Harris at the time, had Bill 68, which was the first instalment. That bill was introduced, and it died because of the election. I think that then, in 2003, there was a general consensus that it was the right kind of decision.

The discussion has been going on, and here we are a couple of years later, in 2005, and we have the bill we’re debating here before us, Bill 211.

What the bill does actually is a couple of important things. I think it’s important because we’re kind of in agreement on this thing, but we’re looking at its implementation and implications. “Sections 2 to 6 of the bill amend or repeal provisions of other acts that require persons to retire at a certain age.” Arguments will be made that the only place where it’s mandatory is within the contracts under certain sections under the employment standards or codes under collective bargaining.

The point there is probably well established. If you look at the public sector, in the case of municipal workers, for instance, or police and fire, those workforces, because of the demands of the occupation, have over time negotiated the provision of a certain factor of age and experience. Some of them are 70, some of them 75, some of them 80. Let’s say that you start when you’re 25, you work for 25 years—that’s a factor of 75. If you’re a firefighter at 25 years of age and you work for 25 years, you’re then 50 and that’s a 75 factor. Can you imagine people retiring at 50? They’re not going to retire—nor should they. They draw their pension and they’re able to do things that perhaps their body is more suited to do or they choose to do. That’s what this question is about.

My personal view is that’s where the contention begins. If the pension itself then becomes the issue, if the pension itself is indexed and if you look at the contribution schemes within most plans, this is where the problem emerges. Many plans in certain sectors have what they call an aging-out factor. What that means is that they take age and time on the job to come up with a factor. As I said, some of them are 70 or 75 or 80—many of them are 90 factors. Let’s do the math with the 90 factor. You can do that math. You find people retiring much before the age of 60.

Those pension plans were all predicated, as we saw under the revisions to the Canada pension plan—they are actuarially incorrect. Most of the fundamental assumptions have been proved to be wrong actuarially, because the aging population we all talk about—early diagnosis, detection and treatment. Life expectancy has changed from an average of 68 to probably 70 or 75. If the contribution was predicated on your deceasing at 68 and you’re going to live an extra 10 years, those plans, as we saw with the Canada pension plan—what they did was

they augmented the CPP contributions. The reason they did that was that those plans are virtually bankrupt. I don’t want to scare anyone, but I think what was said earlier in some of the contrary arguments, the NDP arguments—this is really fundamentally all about pensions.

I am not saying this from just a reckless commentary here. I’m going to cite an article from the Toronto Star, a very Liberally oriented media conduit of Liberal public policy. That article is dated June 26, 2005. It’s fairly current. It’s entitled, “Thumbs Up for Working Seniors: Tony Keller Says Younger Generation”—listen now; this is very important—“Simply Cannot Afford to Support Retired Baby Boomers.”

If you read that article, there are several important factors here that actuaries and others who do all of these extremely complex calculations could help you through. Here I’m going to quote:

“But the most compelling argument against mandatory retirement is an economic one. We younger people need you older people to stay productive, at least for a few more years. We can’t afford to support all of you. We’re going to need a little help.

“The good news is that Canadians are living longer and retiring earlier. That’s also the bad news. Back in the 1960s, there were six workers for each retiree.”

Now, think about this. This is the typical pyramid theory. The pyramid theory, most futurists will say, has reversed itself. This article goes on to say, “Today”—this is 2005—“there are four workers per retiree.” The point is that for each retiree, there used to be six people paying into the plan. Today, for each retired person, there are four people contributing to the plan—the pyramid. “In 2030, the ratio will be only 2:1.” For every retired person, there will only be two of you young people supporting them. That’s this whole article.

If you apply this mandatory—and that’s been denied by Liberal governments, by Paul Martin. He’s been finance minister; he’s a very clever man. It’s been denied by many, specifically in this debate here, that the Liberals have a secondary agenda. I put to you, I cannot trust anything Dalton says—not in a personal way, but if I look at his public policy—“I’m not going to raise your taxes”—this is another one to be suspicious of, not for the function that the argument is being made here; just be honest with the people of Ontario for a change.

This article goes on: “In the 1960s, life expectancy for a Canadian male was 68 years and the median retirement age was 65.” In other words, they retired for three years. You can figure out the actuary sitting down: retired at 65, three years, they paid in for 30 years, bingo, there’s enough money in the bucket to pay for themselves in their little fund, provided they didn’t invest in Nortel or something.

“Today, the average male can expect to live almost a decade longer, to 77,” and I hope I do and I hope all of the people do, but that’s the point. It used to be you retire at 65 and die at 68. Now it’s changed. Now it’s freedom 55. Imagine a fireman retiring at 55; he’s going to be retired longer than he lived in his working world.

Mr. Hampton: Good for him.

Mr. O'Toole: And that's good. Nothing wrong. I'm only pointing out—the maze that I'm leading you through here—that you can't retire longer than you worked. Somebody else has got to put the money in the pot, and it's young people. I'm looking at the pages now. I'm thinking of my five children who will all have to work so my wife and I can retire. No, no. A lot of people don't have any children, so do you know what they're going to do? They're going to bring new Canadians in to work. That's why you've got to grow the population, grow the economy, so there are more people paying than collecting. It's that simple. It's not complicated.

If I look at this in an isolated case, Bill 211—it's quite a small bill; I will be supporting it. I have, however, my suspicions. For the debate, it's important to look at Bill 206. How strange. Bill 206 is An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act, OMERS. These aren't related. Almost all public sector pensions come under OMERS. The issue is, while they're not changing OMERS, they're changing the governance of OMERS. I think the provincial government, as the employer of record, has a certain amount of pension liability going forward. Is pension liability a big issue? You bet it is. It is the issue of the decade. Most people under 40 don't worry about it too much.

1730

The pension issue is the single most important issue today. And I'm going to tell you, because I have read this and I have examined it, why Air Canada is in huge trouble. It's the pension liability. Why is Stelco having such trouble divesting itself, and in protection? It's the pension liability. The auto sector generally, and I'm not trying to alarm anyone—this would include the Big Three, possibly the big four. Their pension plans are not fully funded. In fact, the pension liability in the auto sector is all captured under one definition called the legacy employers. Older employers like Stelco, Ford and General Motors have an aging workforce and contracts that encourage people to retire younger, while at the same time they're downsizing their workforce through automation, as we've seen in the latest CAW contracts. That goes back to my first point that there are actually going to be fewer people working to pay for the many who have retired early and who are living until they are 80. That's why these pension funds, in real dollars, don't have an actuarial deficit; they have an estimated forecast to project a deficit in the ability to fund these pension plans going forward.

How does that tie in to Bill 206? The main issue around Bill 206, which we are not discussing, is the OMERS pension plan revisions—very subtle. There are two points. There are two particular groups that want to separate themselves from the OMERS group. Who are they? Police and fire. They want out of OMERS because they want to continue, as they probably should, to retire earlier with a 70, 75 or 80 factor, which means they're 50, 52 or 53 years of age when they retire. It's like any bank account, which is what a pension really is. In their

case, it's a defined benefit plan, meaning that when they make it up to sergeant or captain, whatever the rank is, for their last five years they're going to be at the very highest rank, and the pension plan is calculated on their best five years of income. If you look at it actuarially, the first 20 years they were just climbing ladders or doing traffic violations and the work that younger, less senior people would do. They would do more office and administrative functions as they move up the ladder to sergeant or captain or whatever, and would actually be making probably 25% more. But for the first 15 years of employment, they probably didn't make what they'll be entitled to make as a pension. And I'm not against that; these are negotiated collective agreements. But if I look at this bill, that's substantively one of the issues they're dealing with.

Look at a couple of the sections in the bill. It says: "Sections 9 to 15 set out restrictions on the terms and conditions of the OMERS pension plans. Every OMERS pension plan must be a defined benefit plan." What's a defined benefit plan? A defined benefit plan says you're going to get so much, times the number of years of service, times your annualized salary. Let's say you get 3%, times 25 years. That means you get 75% of your highest salary. That's your pension for life. Often they are indexed, meaning, if you were making—these aren't the actual numbers, but for simple math—\$100,000 for your last five years because you were the chief; you're making \$75,000 as a pension. It could possibly be indexed, and possibly you'd get a year's severance—probably one month for every year of service as a severance.

These are the concerns that are raised in the number of articles I'm raising. I'm only bringing them to the attention of the House because I believe that Bill 211 is really sending a signal that retirement may not be an option for the future.

How does it affect your Canada pension? There are provisions under the Income Tax Act where if you have a pension and you have income, the pensionable income will actually be clawed back from your Canada pension. That's just starting. It's called a clawback provision under the Income Tax Act. I'm quite concerned, as I'm reaching that age.

As has been said before, there was an article in the Economist or one of those magazines talking about the aging workforce and the only way that Canada—in fact, Pierre Pettigrew said it in a speech that was made last week in Toronto at a big summit. I'm not quoting directly; I'm just going from a newspaper report, because I did not attend the conference. He said they are going to have to have a lot more immigration to bring in people to do the various tasks that have to be done so that we can still keep growing the base of employment, which implies that you've got to expand your economy. If the economy goes flat, we're all in trouble—all of us. No independence here at all.

How do I draw a conclusion on this? First of all, individuals need and want the right. The other part of this is some certainty going forward in any pension, whether

it's Canada pension or pension entitlements under the Pension Benefits Act. But then you turn immediately to the growing and developing entrepreneurial sector of the economy. These innovators in our economy are self-employed. They're consultants. They often may have one or two people in clerical functions, marketing functions or contract people.

Employment relationships are changing. People aren't going to be like me and others who work for a company for 30 years and then retire. That's finished. We're now in an era where you're going to have multiple careers in your life. Most young people are challenged and enthused by that; that's good. The pension part of it is going to become a pension plan which you create yourself through RSPs. The pension plans of the future will probably be defined contribution plans, not defined benefit plans. Defined benefit plans, as I said, are calculated by the factor of years of service times your salary. A defined contribution plan says that if I'm with an employer for four years, they give me their 10%, I give them my 10%, we put it in a fund and we hope the fund does OK, but nobody has a liability going forward. That's a very difficult pill to swallow, and it's quite intimidating for people whose future isn't guaranteed by a collective agreement or any other long-term commitment from an employer.

This legislation cannot be looked at in isolation. It's an admission, right from the Prime Minister down, that the people who have experienced a good quality of life—in the future, benefits, entitlements and indexation will all be predicated on having a healthy, strong economy, in the auto sector, the resource sector. If you don't have a manufacturing and resource sector, the actual job and wealth creators, our public sector and its important services will be at risk.

I leave you with the thought that Bill 211 is in response to the report issued by Human Rights Commissioner Keith Norton. Our government tried to put it through. John Tory and our caucus will be supporting the legislation. But I just put on the record a few of the concerns I have going forward that we need to have a strong and growing economy to support any calculation that will benefit persons who aren't actually still in the economy. If you've been in contract work all your life, I would strongly recommend that you work toward what I'd call a self-directed retirement plan, because there are very few legacy companies left. I put to you that in 10 years they will all be merged, subordinated or integrated, and any of the senior companies that exist today will be quite different 10 years from now.

We'll be supporting this plan. The young people of the future have every right to ask questions of legislators so they don't end up paying the bill for agreements made by governments that they had little say in.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Hampton: I listened to the comments of my colleague from the Conservative caucus, and I want to give him credit because he is focusing on the issue of pensions. He realizes that this is not what the government

tries to dress this bill up as, about individual choice; he recognizes that there are serious issues here about pensions, and that this government, the McGuinty government, is trying to slide through legislation which will have a very serious impact on pensions, without having a debate or discussion in this place about pensions. He knows that this really is an attempt to finesse, slide by, avoid having a discussion about pensions, because a discussion about pensions would draw a lot of public interest.

People want to know where their pension dollars are invested. People want to know what is happening with what is, in effect, their deferred income. Other people want to know why pension legislation in this province is so weak. Other people want to know why pension regulation in this province is so weak. So I give the member credit. He correctly identifies that this is not just some philosophical notion about individual choice; this legislation is intimately tied to the future of people's income security, people's pensions, how people will make out in retirement in this province. But the government doesn't want to have that debate about pensions, so they try to disguise the whole discussion as about individual choice, about whether you work or retire. Nonsense. This is directly connected to pensions.

1740

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to put on the record a couple of comments that I've received from my riding itself. I ended up in a battle for some supply teachers and some firefighters who were given their notice and told, "You're 65; you're gone." Absolutely not one word of their ability—nothing. As a matter of fact, they showed me their record of their performances. Their performance appraisals were exceptional, including the fire department. The city had indicated that this guy was designated as one of the most impressive firefighters that they've seen, at the age of 64. As soon as he turned 65, he wasn't able to do his job any more because he was 65.

What I find interesting is that the member from Durham gave us some good advice in terms of what we need to look for in terms of future planning, and it dovetails nicely into what the member from Kenora—Rainy River, the leader of the third party, is saying about pension reform. What we're talking about here—and let's make it clear—is that the minute you turn 65, in some cases you are out to pasture. Shameful. In my dealings with some of the people and trying to get an answer for them, they started to come up with five different excuses why they couldn't accommodate this 65-year-old. First it was, "Well, it's a WSIB situation. Oh, wait a minute. No, it's not that; it's a benefits issue. No, it's not that. Oh, wait a minute; it's because the law says at 65 I can put him out to pasture." I challenge everybody who turns 65 to have your employer tell you precisely, "What is the purpose for me being let go?" That's what this legislation is doing: removing that very flimsy excuse that as soon as you turn 65, you're no longer a contributing member

of our society. We have to stop that, and I appreciate the opportunity to say that.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I really enjoy listening to my friend Mr. O'Toole, who was formerly employed by General Motors. As I understand it, he doesn't have the same problem as many of the MPPs do here. He's the benefactor of a pension. So notwithstanding my objections with regard to what has happened in the past—

Mr. Hampton: And continues to be a problem.

Mr. Sterling: —and continues to be a problem—I think that while this legislation appears, on the face of it, to be very simple in terms of giving an individual the choice to continue working once he or she reaches 65, the problem is more complicated than that, and notwithstanding that, you face this issue when an individual becomes 65 and he or she is told they must leave the workplace: There's a problem in terms of explaining and dealing with the employer and the employee, and whether or not the capability they had when they were 55 is the same when they are 65. How do you deal with those very humane issues when you don't have any limitation on the up side?

I'm 63 years of age now, and I know nobody in this place believes that, but notwithstanding that, I don't believe I have the same energy I had when I was 53. Therefore, I can now do only twice as much as a Liberal can do, as opposed to four times before.

Notwithstanding that this is good legislation, there are some things we should think about as we go forward.

Mr. Leal: I listened very carefully to the comments from my good friend the member from Durham. I know he had a very distinguished career with General Motors, both here in Ontario, and I believe also perhaps in the province of Quebec, where he was a senior manager.

He talked about our growing economy. I just want to get on the record that yesterday, RBC released a new projection for Ontario. It said, "Ontario's economy is expected to grow 2.4% in 2005 and 3.1% in 2006." So we can look forward to a growing economy in Ontario.

For me, in a community where I have both a community college and a university, there are a number of females who, because they went through child-bearing years and other activities, didn't come into the workforce—or re-enter the workforce, I should say—until they were perhaps in their 40s. This legislation will give them an opportunity to work beyond age 65, particularly in those two areas, in the community colleges and universities, where they want to have the opportunity to share that expertise they have acquired over a great many years.

For other people, if they want an opportunity, if they feel able and can continue to make a contribution, to stay with their employer beyond age 65, I certainly believe they should be given that opportunity. A number of human rights commissioners across the province have dealt with this issue. It is a question of eliminating discrimination and of people looking at choice. I think it's an opportunity to give those individuals other opportunities to

continue working, and I think, as a society, that's what we should be all about.

I'm in full support of this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: The Member from Durham in response.

Mr. O'Toole: I thank those members who commented. I want to make sure I put on the record that last night, and again tonight, I will be attending Minister Colle's celebration of volunteers. There were over 240 volunteers last night in Oshawa, and tonight at Sikorsky Hall, there will be an excess of that; it's a larger hall. The respect and how it ties to this is that these people who choose to do something different at a certain age in their life—I find that volunteers for the most part are, what some would say, as the member from Brant said, just terminated. They are volunteers who make our communities work.

I want to pay respect: Jim Richards was given the volunteer service award at the end of the ceremony. He's a great guy; in fact, I worked with him at General Motors; he lives in Orono. He has been reborn in the whole issue of the Second Marsh and environmental and trail systems, and I send my congratulations to Jim, as I did last night. Tonight there will be others I would recognize.

The second part of this: I did a small bit of consultation on pensions when I was in the Ministry of Finance, and one of them was meeting with U of T professors. These are the tenured professors who are very concerned—think of the valuable contributions of these academics. I think, personally, of a very good constituent of mine, Professor John Traill, in archaeology at the University of Toronto, who is well published, a wonderful contributor to the academic world and to the scholarly world. These people are going to be forced to retire. It's simply not fair.

I'll be supporting the legislation. I will be watching closely the other legislation that affects entitlements to pensions, and I look forward to other comments on Bill 211.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Hampton: I have only a few minutes remaining, but I do want to make a few comments about what the government has presented here in terms of their legislation and what I think it means.

As I said in my brief comments earlier, this is not an uncomplicated issue, and I want to thank the member for Durham for getting into the issue of pensions. The government would have people believe that this is all just a matter of simple, uncomplicated, individual choice. They'd even have people believe that if you're an older worker, all you have to do is indicate it's your choice to continue working and the matter is over. It's not like that in the world of work. The employer has choice as well, and the employer can come back and say, basically, "We don't want you around." The employer can then move, through legal processes, to say, "We're retiring you."

For the government to say, “This is all about individual choice, and if you choose to continue working, you’ll be able to continue to have your job,” is just not true. In fact, there are many places of employment in this province where employers—one of the reasons they support mandatory retirement is so they don’t have to go through the painful process of saying to some of their employees, “We’re going to retire you. We don’t think you can do the job any more.” That’s painful. But for the McGuinty government to go around the province and say, “This is just a matter of your individual choice,” is just not true. The labour arbitration reports of this province and the labour arbitration reports of other provinces are replete with all kinds of cases that exemplify that this is not just a simple matter of individual choice.

Secondly, the government has tried to avoid, to an extreme degree, any discussion of pensions and pension legislation. Yet it is very clear that this legislation will have a very direct and very dramatic effect upon pension legislation, upon pension calculations and upon the capacity or the ability of people to receive a pension in the future. I can tell you right now, and I think the member for Durham led into this somewhat, that financial institutions that deal with pensions will be looking at this legislation and they will start changing some of their actuarial estimates. They will be looking at issues of what greater contributions will be required or what changes will be necessary in terms of legislation which directly affects retirement age. This will have a direct effect upon collective agreements and it will have a direct effect upon collective bargaining going into the future.

Let me say that I expect it will not be too far in the future, based upon this legislation, that federally we’ll see someone stand up and say, “We have to amend the Canada pension plan in terms of when someone can receive a Canada pension or a retirement pension.”

For the government to say, “This is just a matter of simple, individual choice,” is not being honest with people in this province. It will have a very direct, a very dramatic effect on people’s retirement incomes and on the capacity of people to support themselves in retirement. It will have a very direct effect on collective bargaining in the province. It will have a very direct impact on people’s terms of employment in the province—on all of those things.

What I wish is that the McGuinty government would just be honest about that, because my fear is that people are going to wake up four or five years from now and suddenly discover that the income security they were depending on in retirement, that capacity to retire early—financial institutions and insurance firms are going to be saying to you, “Sorry, that option’s not on the table any more. Retirement age has changed in Ontario. Retirement legislation has changed in Ontario. As a result, the pension plan has changed. As a result, the possibility to retire earlier has changed. As a result, the level of the pension you can expect has changed.” All of those are potential, real repercussions out of this legislation.

That’s what I think we ought to be talking about. I think we ought to be talking about the security of people’s income in retirement, the prospects of people’s income in retirement. That’s what I think the real debate ought to be about, because my sense, having been out there and having talked to lots of people, is that the vast majority of people in this province are not interested in working longer. You may try to dress that up as, “Oh, that’s a matter of individual choice,” to finesse that issue, but the majority of people are not interested in working longer. The majority of people are in fact interested in retiring earlier if they can, so that they can enjoy and do some of the things they may never have had the opportunity to do in their working life. Commensurate with that desire to retire earlier, they want to have a retirement income that will allow them to retire. They want to have some income security. Those are the issues that I suspect really matter to people.

This government isn’t interested in debating that. This government isn’t interested in having that public discussion. This government wants to dress it all up as, “Oh, this is just a matter of individual choice,” and try to avoid all those issues. That is wrong, and that’s going to come back to bite this government in the not-to-distant future.

Seeing it is 6 of the clock, and knowing you want to go home, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. It being 6 o’clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. next Monday, October 31.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Guelph-Wellington	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	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
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Toronto–Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
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	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Parkdale–High Park	Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	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
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Whitby–Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	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
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (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
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	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
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Vacant
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse		
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
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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