



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 13 October 2005

Jeudi 13 octobre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 13 October 2005

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 13 octobre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**TORNADOES IN
WATERLOO–WELLINGTON**

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Waterloo–Wellington.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to congratulate you on your election.

Now that the House has finally resumed, I wish to inform members of the natural disaster that occurred in Waterloo–Wellington on August 19. On that day, severe weather in southern Ontario created two devastating tornadoes that touched down in my riding. As written in the *Guelph Mercury*, “Both funnels whipped up winds of 180 to 240 kilometres per hour, cutting trees in half, downing power lines, tossing cars into ditches and damaging homes and barns.”

After the tornadoes struck, I returned home as soon as possible to pitch in and help. Working with municipal and emergency response officials, I urged the Minister of Community Safety and the Minister of Municipal Affairs to tour our devastated communities in the townships of Centre Wellington and Mapleton. I'm pleased that they did. I also met with senior Ministry of Municipal Affairs staff to push for financial support from the province under the Ontario disaster relief assistance program, and I personally spoke with the Premier on September 9 to seek his intervention and appropriate response.

Yesterday, the government's throne speech referred to the response of Ontarians “when tragedy strikes around the world.” The August 19 tornadoes happened right here at home. Three weeks ago, the townships of Centre Wellington and Mapleton and the GRCA submitted their detailed requests for financial assistance to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. We are still awaiting a reply.

I call upon the government to complete its review of our economic losses and provide a firm financial commitment to the tornado victims in Waterloo–Wellington.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Brampton Centre.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Fire Prevention Week in Ontario. This year's theme is Use Candles with Care.

Fire Prevention Week is a time to take stock of the overwhelming losses incurred by fires and the solutions that could prevent such losses. In 2001, a total of 55,323 fires, 338 deaths, 2,310 injuries and almost \$1.5 million in property losses were reported. Both the loss of life and the loss of property are preventable.

Last session, I introduced a private member's bill to make fire sprinklers mandatory in new detached, semi-detached and row houses. This past summer I traveled the province, speaking to municipal officials and firefighters, asking them how I can improve the bill. Later today I will introduce an improved piece of legislation that aims to make fire sprinklers mandatory in the construction of all new residential properties.

Experience indicates that a properly installed and maintained sprinkler system will save lives and reduce property losses. In fact, fire sprinklers, in co-operation with smoke alarms, increase survival rates by 82% over just using a smoke alarm.

Every day across Ontario, firefighters put themselves at risk, put themselves in harm's way, to protect us. Our government recognizes that Ontario's dedicated firefighters are the backbone of safety and security within our community. Please join me in actively promoting fire prevention strategies in your communities this week.

WORLD SIGHT DAY

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Speaker, congratulations to you on your election.

Today is World Sight Day, an annual, worldwide event to highlight Vision 2020: the Right to Sight, to eliminate preventable blindness by the year 2020. Christian Blind Mission International, headquartered in my riding, is the leading agency in the world working for the prevention and cure of blindness. They provide medical and rehabilitation services to more than 11 million disabled and at-risk people each year, through more than 1,000 projects in over 100 countries. They also provide, free of charge, talking books for the visually impaired throughout Canada.

In Canada, one in nine people will develop irreversible vision loss by age 65, and by age 75 the number is one in four. The costs associated with vision loss are estimated at \$2 billion per year. That number soars to \$28 billion

worldwide. It doesn't have to be this way. Eighty per cent of blindness is avoidable through treatment and prevention.

Canada voted in support of the Vision 2020: the Right to Sight resolution at the 2003 World Health Assembly in Geneva. It calls on all levels of government to join the fight against preventable blindness.

Christian Blind Mission International calls upon government officials in this Legislature and across Canada to take a leadership role in the eradication of preventable blindness.

I ask members to join me in supporting the goal of World Sight Day. A good starting point for this government would be to keep Mr. McGuinty's personal election promise to provide expanded coverage for Visudyne treatment for all forms of age-related macular degeneration disease. I trust that you and members of this Legislature will join me in support of that resolution.

FALCONBRIDGE STRIKE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I stand here in solidarity with the brothers and sisters of CAW Local 599, Falconbridge, Timmins. Members would know that that particular bargaining unit had a strike vote on an offer put forward by the employer, which they've turned down.

I want to inform members in the House that it's a simple issue. Imagine: This particular union, which I believe is now in its third collective agreement since being certified, is trying to get the employer to put into the collective agreement the benefits they already got. These are not benefits they are asking for that they haven't got; they're asking the employer to take the benefits that they've always gotten and put them into the collective agreement. The company has taken the position that they won't do that, and unfortunately the workers of that union have been put in the position of having to vote to go out on strike.

I'm here today to ask the Premier, the Minister of Labour or anybody else on that side or on this side of the House, who is prepared to intervene, to assist. This is a strike that, in my view, can be averted. This is a situation that can be undone. We see Inco and Falconbridge merging. Let's hope that the savvy management of Inco prevails over the issue of Falconbridge and finally somebody recognizes that when you've already got something, it ain't a big leap to put it into a collective agreement. I would ask the Falconbridge management to do that.

1340

I know that we have at least one member on the Liberal side, who used to be a New Democrat, who's prepared to say, "Yes, I stand with the workers. I want to make sure that at the end they get a fair collective agreement."

I also look forward to being on the picket lines on Saturday with Charlie Angus, my federal member, and others to serve hot dogs, hamburgers and sausages, in solidarity with the brothers and sisters of CAW Local 599.

VETERANS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): Mr. Speaker, I too offer my congratulations to you on your election.

This year was designated the Year of the Veteran, and this past summer in particular was marked by numerous events commemorating Ontario's veterans and their contributions. I had the honour of hosting veterans from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh at a barbecue this past Labour Day.

Among the veterans from past conflicts was one young man on leave from service in Afghanistan. Seeing him reminded me that, as important as it is to remember those who fought to promote freedom in the past, we must also offer our support to those doing so today. Without some tangible reminder, those of us living in comfort, free from the fear of war, could easily forget that our way of life is due to the sacrifices made by our veterans, both past and present.

The McGuinty government understands the importance of this legacy. This is why we have commissioned, for the first time in 65 years, a new monument to be placed on the front lawn here at Queen's Park.

I had the honour of attending the groundbreaking ceremony for this monument on August 17. When this monument is completed, student groups, tourist groups, even members of this Legislature, will be able to walk on the grounds of Queen's Park, see the veterans' memorial and associate the sacrifices of our veterans with the preservation of the democratic tradition represented by this House. This will certainly be our tribute to those who fought for our freedom.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Congratulations, Mr. Speaker.

I'm really sorry to say that once again Dalton McGuinty is gambling with community safety. He's planning, as we speak, to pass over the keys of our valued provincial parole system to the National Parole Board as early as April 1, 2006.

Ontario's provincial parole system, the oldest in Canada, established in 1910, is there for a reason, and I'll explain it to the Liberals. It is to keep dangerous provincial offenders off our streets and to keep our communities safe.

Ontario has the largest provincial parole system in Canada. The Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board reviews all parole and early release applications from the more than 8,000 offenders in provincial jails and correctional centres. That's 41% of all provincially sentenced offenders in Canada, and more than the National Parole Board handles in seven other provinces and three territories combined.

Ontario's parole system is much tougher than the National Parole Board's. The OPERB approves only 22% of parole applications. The federal board approves

60% of parole applications for provincial offenders—almost three times the provincial rate. Provincial inmates are more dangerous than ever. With the increase in community sentencing since 1996, only the most serious provincial offenders are incarcerated. A tough parole system is more important than ever. Ontario's parole system is fully integrated with our provincial correctional facilities and the provincial probation system.

All of these are reasons why Monte Kwinter should stand up and fight at the cabinet table to maintain our current provincial parole system. As minister, he must stand up for safe communities. The citizens of Ontario deserve and expect safe communities, and we expect that the government will turn around and forget about this ridiculous decision.

TEAM OTTAWA-ORLÉANS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm very pleased to announce that Team Ottawa-Orléans, a community group in my riding, has been awarded a \$200,000 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant that will help it make our community of Orléans an even better place to work and live.

Team Ottawa-Orléans was created to promote and develop community projects through a partnership that includes all levels of government, businesses, community groups and individual members of the community. The grant will be given over three years to support its work in short- and long-term strategic community development. What's great is that this money doesn't just benefit Team Ottawa-Orléans; it benefits everyone by allowing the group to implement new initiatives that will help strengthen our community.

As my riding grows, the needs of my constituents are growing with it. They want to know that the economic and social development of their community will reflect their ideas of what a great community looks like. Team Ottawa-Orléans will work to meet those needs in a way that is balanced, inclusive and coordinated. Whether it is big business or a single individual, anyone can participate. Even though the group was founded only one year ago, it has already established working groups to address issues such as health care, education, transportation and many others.

This grant marks a turning point for Team Ottawa-Orléans. It will turn planning into action, ideas into reality, and expand the group's presence in our community. I look forward to working with Team Ottawa-Orléans and watching the positive impact that this Trillium Foundation grant will have on my riding. Thank you.

STEDMAN COMMUNITY HOSPICE

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Speaker, I add my congratulations on your election and assure you that it is my intention not to get thrown out. I will do my best.

I am honoured to share with the House today an important development that has taken place in the riding of Brant. Last week, I was with the Minister of Health when we announced that our government will invest \$751,600 annualized to ensure that more people in the riding of Brant can access end-of-life services. Speaker, the Stedman Community Hospice in Brantford is one of the first of nine facilities to receive provincial funding. The president and CEO of the St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation, Olga Consorti, said this about our government's investment:

"It's so wonderful to have a secure base of funding, and the people in the hospice were delighted for us. There were lots of tears of joy and hugs. Our hospice is a home-like facility that offers comfort and care for patients and their families during their last days.

"To the army of volunteers and staff that provide the loving care, we collectively thank them. Our citizens have diverse needs when it comes to end-of-life care, thus it is important for our government be able to provide them with different alternatives."

Four hundred and sixty thousand dollars will be added to the Stedman Community Hospice base budget, while \$291,000 will be allocated through our local CCAC for end-of-life home care. This is part of a \$150 million investment that we are making province-wide over the next three years.

I'm proud to be part of a government that recognizes that hospice and end-of-life care in our own homes are important parts of our health care system. Congratulations to the minister.

WORLD SIGHT DAY

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): You've already heard from the member for Oak Ridges that today is World Sight Day, and again this year I'm rising to ask the Legislature to join me in recognizing World Sight Day.

World Sight Day is an international endeavour to help raise awareness on the issue of blindness. Around the world, every five seconds a person becomes blind, and every minute a child becomes blind. Eighty per cent of this blindness can be prevented and/or cured. World Sight Day is part of Vision 2020, a joint initiative of the World Health Organization and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness. Vision 2020 aims to eliminate avoidable preventable blindness by the year 2020.

This year's World Sight Day is marked by a launch of a report that will look back on the first five years of the Vision 2020 program and look forward to the next 15. In the Legislature today is Chris McLean, from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the CNIB, whose head office is located in Don Valley West and helps bring awareness to World Sight Day every year in Ontario and Canada. They are a national charitable organization, and one of Canada's leading vision health and rehabilitation organizations. In Ontario alone, they

serve some 50,000 clients of all ages. I would like to invite all members of the House to join me in commending the CNIB for its participation in this initiative.

VISITOR

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): We have a distinguished guest in the east lobby, Mr. Balbir Dhillon, who represents the Bloordale Village Business Improvement Area.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. That, of course, is not a point of order, but welcome, Mr. Dhillon.

REPORTS OF PARLIAMENTARY OFFICERS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 36(g), the Premier has authorized the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, the member for Perth–Middlesex, to answer oral questions for the minister during the fall sitting.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. There are too many conversations going on in here.

I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following reports of parliamentary officers were tabled:

On June 22, 2005, the 2004 annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner; the 2004-05 annual report of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, and the 2004-05 annual report of the lobbyists registration office; on July 4, 2005, the 2004-05 annual report of the Ombudsman; on September 1, 2005, the report of the Ombudsman entitled *From Hope to Despair: Whether the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Refusal to Fund the Drug Cystagon for Treatment of Batten's Disease is Unreasonable and Unfair*; on September 27, 2005, the report of the Ombudsman entitled *The Right to be Impatient: Whether the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has Failed to Properly Administer Newborn Screening in Ontario*.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent for the Minister of Health to make a statement regarding the Ombudsman's report on newborn screening.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the Clerk

received the report on intended appointments, dated September 7, 2005, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on social policy and move its adoption.

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

Bill 183, An Act respecting the disclosure of information and records to adopted persons and birth parents / *Projet de loi 183, Loi traitant de la divulgation de renseignements et de dossiers aux personnes adoptées et à leurs pères ou mères de sang.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

The ayes have it. Carried.

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

M. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke–Nord): Monsieur le Président, je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice et je propose son adoption.

I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

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

Bill 159, An Act to revise the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999 / *Projet de loi 159, Loi révisant la Loi sur les enquêteurs privés et les gardiens et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi de 1999 sur le Tribunal d'appel en matière de permis.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Qadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Bountroggianni, Marie	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony

Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Oraziotti, David	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Peterson, Tim	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Tascona, Joseph N.
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Tory, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 29.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

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

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to amend and repeal various other statutes in respect of transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et modifiant et abrogeant diverses autres lois à l'égard de questions relatives au transport.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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

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

Bill 214, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, to repeal the Representation Act, 1996 and to enact the Representation Act, 2005 / Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des

élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, abrogeant la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale et édictant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise to ask unanimous consent of the House for us to wear these purple ribbons. October is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and I was hoping that we would be able to wear these ribbons in the Legislature as a sign of our support for this very important initiative in the month of October.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): As Chair of the public accounts committee, and pursuant to the order of the House of Monday, June 13, I beg leave to present a report on the maintenance of the provincial highway system from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Sterling: For those not aware of the work of the public accounts committee, made up of all parties of this Legislature, the committee reviews each year the auditor's report, which traditionally comes down in the late part of November of each year. So these reports I'm presenting today, four in all, will take into account four different subject matters on which the auditor reported in November 2004.

The committee calls before it the deputy minister of each ministry and other officials from the ministry to ask the ministry and ministry officials what they are going to do to meet the auditor's observations with regard to inefficiencies, lack of inspections, those kinds of things, which are occurring within each ministry. As a result of those hearings, the ministry then makes recommendations in the reports that I'm bringing forward today. In many cases, we ask for replies from the ministry with regard to the recommendations we make. We traditionally give the ministry 120 days to reply. I hope in the future that I will be reporting to the Legislative Assembly on the ministry's reply to our recommendations.

I'd like to thank all members of the committee for their input. All of these reports have received unanimous approval by all members of the committee, representing all three parties.

With that, I adjourn the debate on this particular motion.

The Speaker: Mr. Sterling moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Sterling: Pursuant to the order of the House of June 13, I beg leave to present a report on the Ontario rights and responsibilities program from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr. Sterling: I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Mr. Sterling: Pursuant to the order of the House of June 13, I beg leave to present a report on the air quality program from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr. Sterling: I move adjournment of this debate.

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

Mr. Sterling: Pursuant to the order of the House of June 13, I beg leave to present a report on independent health facilities from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Sterling: With regard to this last report, I would like to ask this Legislative Assembly, and particularly the Minister of Health, to read this report and consider its recommendations very seriously. All of the committee members felt that there was some foot-dragging, not by ministry officials but by outside agencies, with respect to the inspection of independent health facilities. It is our hope that the recommendations in this report will give strength to the ministry in asking outside agencies to work with them with regard to setting up committees and the formation of groups that will in fact go into these independent health facilities and test them, particularly without notice to them.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate on this matter.

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

1410

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HOME FIRE SPRINKLER ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LES EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES DOMICILIAIRES

Mrs. Jeffrey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 respecting home fire sprinklers / Projet de loi 2, Loi

modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait aux extincteurs automatiques domiciliaires.

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

Does the member have a short statement?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): Improving upon my previous private member's bill, Bill 141, which incorporated sprinkler systems into only new detached, semi-detached and row houses, the Home Fire Sprinkler Act, 2005, will ensure that all new residential properties, including apartment buildings, are constructed to include fire sprinklers. This bill endeavours to prevent the devastating loss of life and property.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT AMENDMENT ACT (ASSISTANCE TO MUNICIPALITIES), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES PUBLIQUES

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to the assistance that the Minister provides to municipalities / Projet de loi 3, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun à l'égard de l'aide apportée aux municipalités par le ministre.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I rise today to reintroduce my private member's bill from the past session: the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Amendment Act (Assistance to Municipalities), 2005. This bill, if passed by this Legislature, will ensure that if the Minister of Transportation enters into an agreement with a municipality to provide a rebate of tax under the Gasoline Tax Act to any municipality for the purpose of constructing, maintaining or operating a rapid transit or public transportation system, the minister could not refuse to enter into an agreement to provide a rebate of tax under that act on the same per capita basis to any municipality for the purpose of constructing, maintaining or operating public highways in that municipality.

The roads, bridges and highways in rural Ontario are our public transportation system, and it is only fair that if our tax dollars are being used to subsidize urban transportation systems, the needs of rural Ontario should also be supported. I hope that all members of this Legislature from all political parties will support this important bill, which I firmly believe will ensure fairness while recognizing the significant economic and cultural contribution made by those who live in rural Ontario.

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (PSA TESTS FOR
PROSTATE CANCER), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ
(TEST PSA POUR LE DÉPISTAGE
DU CANCER DE LA PROSTATE)

Mr. Mauro moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 4, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): The purpose of the amendment would be so that the PSA test, or prostate-specific antigen test, which is a blood-screening test for men in danger of prostate cancer, would be an insurable service under the Health Insurance Act.

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 206

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that the order for second reading of Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act, be discharged and that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Mauro and Mr. Rinaldi exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mr. Mauro assumes ballot item 5 and Mr. Rinaldi assumes ballot item 25; Mr. Wilkinson and Ms. Jeffrey exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mr. Wilkinson assumes ballot item 39 and Ms. Jeffrey assumes ballot item 6; Mr. Parsons and Mr. Gravelle exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mr. Parsons assumes ballot item 3 and Mr. Gravelle assumes ballot item 11; and that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot items 1 through 4.

The Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

HEALTH CARE

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr. Speaker, before you're given the opportunity for me to regret what I'm about to say, I do with other members want to welcome you to your new role.

It is with great pride that I rise in my place today to speak about some recent developments in health care, developments that I believe bode extremely well for the future of a system upon which we all depend. It's been almost four months since we last gathered here, but make no mistake, it sure hasn't been a vacation. My co-workers in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and our many stakeholders and colleagues across the province have been very hard at work, and the system itself has been very hard at work. Government health care providers, officials and volunteers have all come together in the name of building a better health care system, and a better health care system is being built.

We have, without question, many challenges remaining, and those are well known, but we have many accomplishments worthy of celebration. Let me take a moment to share with you just some of the historic achievements and successes:

We've expanded newborn screening programs.

We are building on a world-class flu shot program, and flu season, as we know, is just around the corner.

Ontario now has the toughest, most comprehensive anti-tobacco strategy in North America.

The province's share of public health funding now sits at 55%, being upped from the 50% it was when we took office and on track for the 75% it will be at in 2007-08.

I'm delighted to acknowledge my colleague the Minister of Health Promotion, who will ensure that "healthier Ontarians" remains a very central priority for this government in the months to come.

But that's not all. I'm also very proud to report that this government has made investments in community-level care that are unprecedented in Ontario's history. Let me quickly highlight some of these.

Forty-five thousand additional Ontarians are receiving care in the comfort of their own homes this year.

End-of-life care: An additional 6,000 Ontarians will be able to live out their lives in the comfort and the dignity of home or at least in a residential hospice, thanks to a \$115-million expansion that includes the funding of 30 residential hospices in Ontario through 2007-08.

Community mental health services have enjoyed a 21% funding increase.

Long-term care: a 10% funding increase for 700 new beds and the hiring of additional staff.

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We've also made great progress improving the access Ontarians have to nurses and to doctors. As you all know,

we reached an agreement last winter with this province's doctors, one that makes Ontario an extremely attractive place to practise medicine. Under that agreement, various fee increases kicked in earlier this month. This money will go to support doctors working in group practices, more after-hours patient care and more care for seniors.

And these measures are beginning to pay off. Last year, the province of Ontario issued more medical licences than we have in almost 20 years. In 2004, we now know that more doctors moved into Ontario from abroad than left here. That is the first time that has happened, ever, and it's very good news.

Let me give you a little more, by the numbers:

—medical school enrolment: a 15% increase over the next four years;

—family residency positions: a 70% increase, resulting in 340 additional family doctors by 2007-08. Under our leadership, people want to be family doctors again.

We're training more international medical graduates than ever before.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean—Carleton): You're the best, George.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm being heckled, Mr. Speaker, by the member from Nepean.

Family health teams are taking shape—69 of them in 47 communities.

We have delivered stable, multi-year funding for hospitals.

We've created more than 3,000 full-time nursing jobs, and the percentage of full-time nursing jobs today stands at 59%, up from 51%, according to the Ontario College of Nurses.

Finally, in the area of wait times, we are making tremendous progress. We have funded almost 240,000 additional procedures in five critical areas:

—hips and knees, 28% more procedures delivered;

—cataracts, 16% more;

—cancer surgeries, an 11% increase;

—cardiac procedures, a 17% increase; and

—MRIs, 42% more procedures delivered since we launched our wait times strategy.

While those are a lot of numbers, what they add up to is better health care for Ontarians. And we are doing more.

I can tell you that this coming Monday we will be launching our wait times Web site, a Web site that will empower Ontarians by providing them with accurate and timely information about wait times, broken out by specific procedure, by hospital, by local health integration network.

I want to urge my colleagues to think about that. Think of the power we will be putting in the hands of patients, the likes of which they have simply never had before. With the tap of a few keys, they will be able to find out how long the wait is for a particular procedure at their local hospital, and with the tap of a few more, they will be able to look for another hospital where the wait perhaps isn't as long. With the help of their doctor, they will be able to get care in that environment.

Because this data is broken out by local health integration networks, hospitals within each local health integration network will be better able to work together to share the wait times burden. I call that the system helping the system, and it is precisely the kind of critical community dialogue that local health integration networks are designed to foster.

This Web site will serve Ontarians very well. It is a model of transparency. It will give Ontarians the information that they need to take control of their own health care and their own health care system, and it will drive accountability into the system.

On the subject of accountability, I'm proud to remind my colleagues that we have launched the Ontario Health Quality Council. Its mandate is to monitor the province's health care system and to report to the public on access to publicly funded health services, access to doctors and nurses, and the overall health of Ontarians.

What that means is that the council is going to tell the health care story to Ontarians in a way that it has never been told to them before. The health care discussion that we once carried on in the boardrooms and in speeches here in the Legislature, with indirect input from the rest of Ontarians every four years, was an exclusive discussion, complete with language rife with acronyms that almost seemed designed to discourage public participation. No longer: The Ontario Health Quality Council is going to make the health care discussion accessible to anyone in the province who cares to pay attention.

The council is an independent body. It couldn't do the job we need it to if it weren't. It's going to shine a light on the health care system we are building and running on behalf of Ontarians and give them a sense of how well we are doing together. It's their health care system. It's paid for with their tax dollars. They own the system and they have a right, accordingly, to know how well their money is being spent.

So, yes, this is indeed an impressive list, but our work is not yet done, and our legislative agenda will reflect that. In the coming months, my colleagues will have a chance to reflect on and debate legislation that is of critical importance in the area of long-term care, in the area of traditional Chinese medicine, and related to health care transformation. I look forward to a spirited debate and a productive sharing of ideas as we move forward with the task of making Ontario's health care system the best that it can be and making sure that Ontarians are the healthiest Canadians.

TOYOTA PLANT IN WOODSTOCK

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): It is indeed a pleasure to rise in this House today to share a great story with the people of Ontario.

When this government first took office, I met with members of Ontario's auto sector. They told me tales of gloom and doom. They said this province's anchor industry was going nowhere. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to

stand in this House today and tell you that that is history. It's yesterday's news.

What is happening today in this great province is truly remarkable. It's remarkable because the people of Ontario are realizing their true potential. Our citizens have once again started to believe that they can achieve great—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the minister. Members know that only one member at a time has the floor, and we'll respect the other members' time. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: Citizens have started to believe once again that they can achieve great things in this province, that nothing they reach for is impossible.

This spring, Toyota announced it was building the first new greenfield auto plant in Ontario in 20 years. Toyota prides itself on quality and innovation. It strives for excellence in the innovative cars it builds. To do that, it will only trust the very best and most highly skilled workforce with Toyota's name and reputation. Toyota believes in the workers of Ontario. Look at Cambridge. The plant in that community is the only plant outside of Japan that builds the Lexus. Why? Because Toyota knows Ontario workers have met the challenge of building their flagship luxury car.

When I first became Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the dream of luring another Toyota plant to Ontario was far off. Some thought it was unattainable. But I knew that armed with the knowledge that our auto workers are the best in the world, we could reach this goal. That's what getting this plant means for the people of Ontario: It means we can compete with the best and win.

Sure, there was competition. There was lots of competition, because everyone knows the automobile industry is hugely competitive and every jurisdiction around the world wants the next auto plant. But we didn't let that scare us away. Instead, we worked hard for what we wanted. We started getting the kinds of investments in our auto industry that had other countries sitting up and taking notice. We had GM, Ford and International Truck making huge investments in our industry. Our \$500-million auto strategy was working. Toyota took notice too. We were showing them what our Ontario workers could do in Cambridge, and what a partnership with a proactive provincial government could do.

It was a great day when the Premier and I attended the groundbreaking in Woodstock this past Tuesday. The whole world was watching Ontario, and we were proud to be there.

This government wants Ontarians to know that there is nothing we can't achieve if we work together. We are not going to settle for second best. We are not going to settle for mediocrity. Like Toyota, quality and innovation are crucial to this government.

I am pleased to tell you that already we are seeing spinoff benefits from Toyota's investment. Indeed, this is happening right across our auto industry. Automodular Corp., maker of parts for cars and trucks, is opening in

Oakville, creating 400 new jobs. On Tuesday, Warren Industries, another auto supplier, announced it will open a new plant in London, and Arkal Industries of Israel will also open shop in London. These are real benefits.

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We have already seen \$4.5 billion of new auto investment in just 18 months, and that's just the beginning. Toyota will employ 1,300 people when it opens its new plant in Woodstock. Each one of those employees will be well paid because of the skilled work they do. Even more than that, they will be telling the rest of Ontario that our province is the best place in the world to build an automobile. Those workers will tell their children that they too can achieve their dreams, and that's because of the kind of culture we are building here in this great province.

I look forward to standing in this House again very soon with more news of the great opportunities we are seizing, because we are confident that Ontario is the best place in the world to do business.

The Speaker: Responses?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's good news from Toyota—1,300 new jobs in Woodstock—but what about the flip side? What about the other side of the coin? What about the rest of the story? What about the Ford story, where they're laying off 1,100 people? What about the Chrysler story, where 500 to 1,000 people are being laid off? What about the GM story, where it's 1,000 to 1,500 people, many of them in St. Catharines, which our new House leader will be happy about? The new jobs equal 1,300; the lost jobs equal 2,600 to 3,600. This is not an equation for prosperity. This is not how these people reach their goals.

Add this to the closing of Nestlé's coffee plant in Chesterville, where 300 people have gone; add it to Alcoa layoffs in Collingwood of 420 people; add it to the ConAgra Chef Boyardee plant closing in Niagara Falls, with 240 jobs laid off.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm having some difficulty hearing. One member at a time, with respect for the one who has the floor.

Mr. Chudleigh: I'll try to speak louder.

Kaufman Furniture is closing in Collingwood—147 jobs; Backyard Products closed—230 jobs; Nacan, an old company, closing—87 jobs gone; and Blue Mountain Pottery is closing its doors. I don't know how many years that's been in business. It was a hallmark of Ontario manufacturing. These Ontarians are not realizing their potential.

In fact, September manufacturing job numbers in Ontario were down 42,000 jobs from just one year ago, to say nothing of the north, where your electricity policy is destroying the pulp and paper industry. There is not one plant that is not looking at layoffs or closures, because they can't compete with other jurisdictions on electricity prices alone. Abitibi Consolidated have cut their paper production in half and cut more than 300 jobs. The Minister of Natural Resources—he's got the answers

to the problems here—says, “Some pulp and paper mills will close.” What a wonderful thing for the minister to say. Twelve mills are at risk of closing. There have been 6,000 jobs lost in the north under your watch.

Minister, you and your government are presiding over the destruction of Ontario’s manufacturing industry, and heaven help us, because Mr. Brownout is now in charge of finance and the economy.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): This speech today is the same one that was delivered last week at the St. Lawrence Market, which got no pick-up whatsoever by the media. I can tell you, this is cold comfort to the people in Ontario who recognize that this government continues to mismanage health care. Talk to the person who’s on the waiting list and who has seen no change in two years. Talk to the person who is looking for a family doctor and can’t find one. Talk to the about 800 nurses who have been fired despite the promise to hire 8,000 more. The minister claims there are 3,000 new nurses. Tell that to the people who are part of that 3,000, who have three-month- and six-month-term positions. Those are not full-time permanent positions.

Furthermore, tell the people who are paying the new health tax of \$2.4 billion, some of them paying up to \$900 per year. At the same time these people are paying more in health taxes, despite the promise of the government not to do so, they’re getting less. They don’t have free eye care. They don’t have the chiropractic care and they don’t have physiotherapy. So, despite the fact that this government says these are recent developments, people are paying more and they’re getting less.

I’d like to clarify some of the facts. The minister talks about the newborn screening program. We know that the only reason for the expansion was because of the Ombudsman’s report. He talked about the flu shot program.

I’d like to remind the McGuinty government that it was our government that introduced the world-class flu shot program in 2000. In fact, we became the first jurisdiction in North America to make flu vaccine available at no charge to everybody in this province.

He talks about promotion. We didn’t need a new minister of promotion. We simply set about making sure the programs were there: healthy hearts; Healthy Babies, Healthy Children; asthma prevention; diabetes prevention—the list goes on and on.

In fact, it was our government that introduced 20,000 new long-term-care beds. We introduced the home care program, and we created funding for 100,000 people in this province.

We made the announcement of the new northern Ontario medical school. It was part of the strategy to improve access to physicians in the province of Ontario.

We introduced the new family health networks. In fact, there were 3,000 physicians who served three million patients under—

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

TOYOTA PLANT IN WOODSTOCK

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I’m responding to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Notwithstanding his take on things, the fact of the matter is that Ontario has a faltering economy, losing 42,000 jobs since the McGuinty Liberals took charge in this province—thousands of those jobs in the auto sector, as a matter of fact.

The NDP has long advocated, and everyone knows it, for sector-based strategies—definitely in auto but in many other areas as well: in the steel industry, in forestry, in northern Ontario, a place where this government is failing miserably, I have to say.

The McGuinty government has definitely made some investments in auto—absolutely. However, in our opinion they’re long overdue. But it also needs to start looking at some other areas of this economy.

New Democrats believe there needs to be some investment in the steel sector as well. That investment has to go hand in hand with what’s happening in the auto sector.

Another big problem with the statement of this minister today is that it omits a number of initiatives that working families need. It omits a number of initiatives that would make it a comprehensive package for all working families, that would address issues that ordinary people are very concerned about and that workers in this province are worried about: things like high hydro prices that are crippling some of our major employers and manufacturers in this province—that’s what the minister left out. Employee protection legislation that requires companies to negotiate with workers before plants close was left out of the speech. Strengthened pension benefit guarantees—that was left out as well. The reintroduction of the NDP’s employee wage protection act that makes sure employees go to the front of the list when a company goes bankrupt and their wages are protected—that’s what this minister left out. Upgrading of Ontario’s infrastructure to make sure that bottlenecks going across the border are reduced so that goods can continue to travel in an effective way—that’s what that minister left out. Card-based certification so that all workers have a fair opportunity to be represented and protected by a union—that’s what this minister left out.

I wanted to share something that CAW President Buzz Hargrove said about the federal Liberal government just last year: “They, too, sat on the sidelines for years, mouthing platitudes about how government ‘shouldn’t pick winners,’” he said. ““They ignored the successful lessons of our automotive past, and they took the auto industry for granted—and we are” still “paying for it today.””

The minister’s statement does nothing to affect that.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In the time I have, I want to remind the public of some of the broken Liberal

health care promises. On the health care tax, Premier Dalton McGuinty said, on January 5, 2002, “‘Tory leadership candidates Ernie Eves and Chris Stockwell may want to raise taxes, by charging families an additional \$1,000 a year for health care. I do not,’ McGuinty said...”

“‘Families are already paying for health care with their taxes. Pay more for health care, pay twice for health care, but get less health care—that’s the Tory plan. It’s certainly not the Liberal plan....’

“‘If Eves were Premier, you’d pay at least three times: with your taxes, with your premiums, and, if you have the cash, out of your own pocket to get premium service....’

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“‘Instead of looking for ways to make Ontarians pay more, we must look for better ways to invest the precious dollars Ontarians already give us,’”—and then this government whacked Ontarians with a \$2.4-billion health care tax in its first budget.

What did McGuinty say with respect to private financing of hospitals? Here we are in the Ottawa Citizen, May 28, 2003:

“‘What I take issue with is the mechanism. We believe in public ownership and public financing (of health care)’....

“‘Mr. McGuinty believes that public-private sector partnerships in health care would ultimately cost the province more money than traditional arrangements.’”

Then on Wednesday, September 24, 2003: “‘Ontario Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty has said the ROH expansion will go ahead because Ontario needs a new psychiatric hospital, but a Liberal government would cancel the deal with the private consortium because public-private partnerships are a waste of money.’” I agree. Isn’t it a shame that the Conservative policy is now the Liberal policy and people are going to pay through the nose for private sector financing of hospitals?

The Liberal government, before the election, promised it would reinstate 2.25 hours of nursing care for residents in long-term-care facilities. Have we seen that? No, we have not. This government said they would end the arbitrary restrictions on home care that the previous government put in place. Have we seen regulations to change those restrictions? No, we have not.

Let me end with this. The government is going to reorganize health care. A recent SES poll showed that 50% of the Ontario population think that this is going to cost more, that 39% think they are going to get less service. That’s what people think of Liberal plans to reorganize health care.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. We’ll just wait.

It’s now time for oral questions. Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think there has been an arrangement made to make a statement on the earthquake.

EARTHQUAKE IN SOUTH ASIA

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, do you wish to ask for—

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent for each party to have five minutes to speak about the South Asian earthquake.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Last weekend, while most of us were with our loved ones at Thanksgiving, a terrible earthquake struck South Asia, wreaking havoc on Pakistan, India and Afghanistan, shattering buildings and claiming an estimated 40,000 lives, and it’s not over yet. This disaster brought a response from people around the world and right across Ontario who are coming to the aid of their fellow human beings in their time of need. Ontario is home to people from throughout the world, so no matter how far disaster strikes from our own borders, it affects us all, and we respond.

This morning, I signed a book of condolence, along with Lieutenant Governor James Bartleman and the Consuls General of India and Pakistan. I offered each of them my deepest sympathy on behalf of the people of Ontario. I invite all Ontarians to join with me in expressing their sympathy by signing one of the books of condolence. It’s open to the public, beginning today through Sunday, in the Legislative Building here at Queen’s Park. For those not able to come to the Legislative Building, the books will be available on the Lieutenant Governor’s Web site.

I also want to join with people across our province in offering our help. On Sunday night, Premier McGuinty spoke with the Consuls General of India and Pakistan, and offered his deepest condolences and support. While the Consul General of India said they are managing, the Consul General of Pakistan reiterated his President’s request for help.

On Thanksgiving Monday, the Premier announced a five-point response plan. First, the government of Ontario pledged an immediate donation of \$1 million on behalf of the people of Ontario to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for relief in the area. The Premier also asked me to pull together an earthquake response team. The team includes the Commissioner of Emergency Management, Julian Fantino, and Ontario’s chief medical officer of health, Dr. Sheela Basrur. They have both the experience and expertise to assess how Ontario can be most effective in its response.

The province is working closely with the federal government to make available any assets, further equipment, supplies or expertise necessary to help the global relief effort.

Premier McGuinty also asked all Ontario public service employees to give generously to the relief effort. Flags across the province have been lowered to half mast since Monday.

The Premier has also renewed a call for all Ontarians to donate generously to their local relief organizations.

Ontarians are answering the call. The grief and pain felt by over 500,000 Ontarians of South Asian origin is profound, only surpassed by their incredible generosity. A west-end Toronto mosque raised more than \$55,000 in Pakistan earthquake relief in just 20 minutes last Sunday.

Over the last two days, at this most holy time of Ramadan, I have visited the Cooper Mosque in Mississauga. I've also visited the Nugget Mosque in Scarborough to join in prayers and offer support and condolences. We have been in ongoing contact with the consuls of Pakistan and India, letting them know Ontario is here to help in their time of need. The need is great, as is the generosity of all Ontarians.

I would like to offer my personal thanks to all those across Ontario who are helping, giving and volunteering. This is the kind of generosity that strengthens our people and our province. This is not just a catastrophe affecting those of South Asian origin; it affects us all. Their pain is our pain. They are our friends, our neighbours, our workmates.

If you could see the outpouring of generosity in all these communities across this great province, where they are giving the last \$10 in their pocket to help those who have been so dramatically impacted by this awful earthquake, you would be so proud of the newcomers who have come to this great province.

I really encourage all Ontarians—in small business, big business, individual Ontarians—to please be generous, because they really need our help. As Ontarians, we are generous and we are going to be there with our fellow human beings who have been so unjustly impacted by this earthquake.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): It hardly seems possible it could happen again this year, but over the past week Ontarians have once again watched with horror the devastation that has been inflicted on millions of people in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Kashmir in the wake of last weekend's earthquakes and the aftershocks that have followed, up to and including last night.

The scope of this disaster, like the other ones we've seen, almost defies description. The lost of life, upwards of 30,000 so far, is as incomprehensible as what we saw in the case of the tsunami. Hundreds of thousands more are today without food, without homes and without shelter.

The scope of this disaster shocks us all. Of the half-million Ontarians of Indian and Pakistani descent, this tragedy hits particularly close to home. For these families, this is a difficult time. Today, many Ontario families are still, as we speak, struggling to locate missing loved ones in that region, while more still stagger under the uncertainty and sorrow of a disaster unfolding on the other side of the globe. Fortunately, what we have seen is how important friends and neighbours are here where we live, in our province, when disaster strikes a world away.

I know I speak for all in the Progressive Conservative caucus, and indeed throughout this House, when I extend our thoughts and prayers to the families impacted by this disaster. To our friends and neighbours in Ontario's

South Asian communities, and in particular to those families who have lost a loved one, you have our deepest condolences during this sad time. As Pakistan in particular struggles to recover and to rebuild, it must happen with our full support.

Right now, it is incumbent on all of us to make our top priority doing what we can to help in the rescue and relief efforts of Pakistani, Indian and international authorities. I would like to commend the Premier and the government of Ontario and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, as well as our counterparts in the federal government, for their quick initial response to this tragedy. Certainly, if there is any way in which I or any members of the Progressive Conservative caucus can assist in this effort, we are prepared to do our part. In that regard, I was happy to offer, as did the leader of the third party, to sit down with the Premier and discuss ways in which we could send a united, multipartisan message in this regard in any way that we possibly could.

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Time is the enemy now, and the more that we as Ontarians and Canadians do right now, today, could very well make the difference between life and death. I think this is really what the minister was directing his comments to as well. As he did, I encourage any Ontarian with the means to contribute what they can to that international relief effort.

I had the privilege to be a volunteer fundraiser for decades for a variety of organizations across the province, and I have found in that experience many, many times that challenge grants can often stimulate more people to step up.

I know the federal government has offered to match private contributions made by individual Canadians over the next two weeks. I wonder if maybe the government of Ontario and the Premier would consider matching funds donated by Ontarians during the third week up to, say, an additional \$1 million as a means of trying to encourage people who are inclined to do the right thing, but more people to step up who might otherwise have not thought about that. In that third week, after the federal challenge grant runs out, it is a time, frankly, when the media coverage will be diminishing; it is precisely the time, however, when the real, hard work of relief and recovery will just be beginning.

In the days and weeks ahead, we must come also come together as a province and as a country to support the local families who have suffered losses and who have lost the most among us.

In a year that has already seen the staggering devastation wrought by the South Asian tsunami and the tremendous damage left in the wake of two hurricanes in the southern US and another in Central America, the Kashmir earthquake stands as yet another sobering reminder of how fragile life is when faced with nature's wrath.

In the days and weeks ahead, let us take a page from the response that we all showed together in response to the tsunami and to the hurricanes. Let us stand together in

support of the affected families overseas and here at home. Let us do all that we can to alleviate the suffering and repair the damage from this calamity, and do our part to help the families impacted to return to a normal life. I know that if we really work at this together, we can do even more, as we should.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): On behalf of New Democrats, I extend condolences to the families of the many victims in the cities and villages in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

The entire province of Ontario shares in the grief at this time of shock, loss and suffering on a catastrophic scale. With more aftershocks hitting these countries, the enormity of this tragedy in terms of loss of life across the regions grows each day. Small villages are destroyed and whole generations are lost, something that for most of us is beyond our comprehension. This disaster has extended beyond borders, beyond ethnic and religious differences. We are all affected and we all need to help.

The task ahead is immense, but the determination and collective spirit of the people affected by this earthquake, with the help of Ontarians, will make a difference. Rescue and rebuilding will require strong leadership from all people, including elected officials here in Ontario.

It is very important at this difficult time for the victims and the families of victims living in Ontario to know that they are not alone. For this reason, I urge all Ontarians to contribute generously to relief efforts. For this reason, I have called on the Premier and the leader of the official opposition to join me to discuss ways in which we can work together to further the aid and assistance to make a difference, not only for people in the countries affected but for their families and extended families here in Ontario.

As always, New Democrats are prepared to work with the government and the opposition in any effort to support relief efforts abroad and to comfort Ontario residents who have been touched by this catastrophe.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all those who have been affected.

CONGRATULATIONS TO SPEAKER

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Mr. Speaker, if I might take, before oral questions, on what is not technically a point of order, but let me just take the opportunity to congratulate you in a more formal way on your assumption of responsibilities as Speaker, and to offer, on behalf of our party, our every support and confidence. We wish you the very best in your new responsibilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Premier. It's not a point of order.

Oral questions.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm not sure what this is, then, Mr. Speaker, but may I join the Premier on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus in congratulating you on your election as Speaker and pledging our co-operation in working with you and wish-

ing you every success in the challenging job you have in the months ahead.

ORAL QUESTIONS

RCMP INVESTIGATION

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier and it concerns the diligence and standards applied to ensuring the legitimacy of the ministry. Can the Premier tell us when on Tuesday he received his very first indication of the search warrant we now all know about, and what was the substance of that information?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to speak to the issue. I received information later in the afternoon; I don't have the exact time. I think it's been well documented in today's newspapers. There may have been a Premier at some point in our history who moved as quickly as I did but I am not aware of that. Shortly thereafter, I met with then-Minister Sorbara and he tendered his resignation. We moved to make a shuffle of the cabinet and we proceeded with the throne speech the following day. That's the long and short of it.

Mr. Tory: I first heard in my office of the search warrant on Tuesday morning. I was asked about the search and about the search warrant at 1:45 at a news conference, which was attended by members of your staff. When we got to the Legislature at 4 o'clock, it was on the lips of people throughout the chamber. By 4:30 in the afternoon, a copy of the search warrant had some circulation in this building and there was open discussion of the fact that the former finance minister's name was contained in the warrant. My question is this: With all of the staff you have and all the discussion all day in the building, don't you think it is reasonable, if anybody really thought this was important, if anybody thought this would be at the top of your list in terms of things you are concerned about, that somebody might have made inquiries on your behalf prior to your hearing about this, according to the accounts you referred to, at 7 o'clock at night, over five hours after I was asked about it at a news conference?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not exactly sure what the Leader of the Opposition is driving at here. As soon as I was made aware of that information and within a span of six or seven hours, a minister had tendered his resignation, I had sworn in two new ministers, I had appointed a new House leader and I was getting on with our responsibilities. I'm not sure we could have moved any faster under the circumstances.

Mr. Tory: There are a number of commentaries in the media today suggesting that it might have been better if the Premier had enforced higher standards a year and a half ago with respect to this matter. The Premier made that judgment at that time in keeping with what I assume

are his standards, and that judgment now forms part of the record.

My question is this: Between the time of your initial agreement with your former finance minister in 2004 that he would remain, notwithstanding a number of investigations that were underway at that time, what specific steps did the Premier take to keep himself informed about the scope and status of those investigations, to the extent one could, in order to ensure that nothing was happening which required any action on his part?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I am not sure if the Leader of the Opposition understands what he is intimating. We took every possible step to remain at more than arm's length away from any investigation of any kind. So it's no surprise in some ways that we did not find out until the very end. In fact, the Attorney General has specifically requested that any overtures or requests for information be referred to the ministry of justice on Parliament Hill.

Let me take this opportunity to say thank you to former Minister Greg Sorbara for duly and faithfully serving the people of Ontario and the people of his riding for an extended period of time and performing remarkably well as our Minister of Finance.

1500

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

Mr. Tory: I say to the Premier, with respect, that this is not an issue about Mr. Sorbara's period of service as a minister; it is an issue that has to do with important standards and important benchmarks that have to be set in terms of ensuring the legitimacy of the ministry. I have said repeatedly in all of my comments—yesterday, today and the day before—that no one hopes more than I—we all do—that this results in the complete exoneration of the former Minister of Finance.

My question is this—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has the floor. He has the right, indeed the duty, to ask his question without undue help.

Mr. Tory: Again to the Premier: Would you agree with me that by the time a search warrant is executed, a criminal investigation has already been underway for some time and perhaps a considerable period of time?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I am not going to comment in any way, shape or form on any investigation of any kind.

I think the important thing here is that as soon as Mr. Sorbara was made aware of the fact that his name appeared on a warrant, which made it perfectly clear that he was, in part, the subject of an investigation—not a charge, an investigation—he stepped forward and did what was the right thing: He decided to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation. I think that was the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances, I think it was the right thing to do in the circumstances, and I commend him once again for it.

Mr. Tory: I'm not asking the Premier to comment on any investigation, nor am I saying anything about

whether or not the former Minister of Finance did the right thing. He did do the right thing. However, we both have legal training, I say to the Premier, and we know full well that by the time a search warrant is executed, an investigation has already been underway for some time.

What this is about is the standards, thresholds and tests that are going to be applied to ministers. Nineteen months ago, you made the statement that should your Minister of Finance find himself at the centre of an investigation, he would resign, that you and he had agreed on that. You made this agreement, I say to the Premier, knowing full well there was no way you could know if your former minister was the subject of an investigation until the RCMP literally arrived with a search warrant, and that is precisely the problem with your standard. Do you think it is a good enough standard to ensure the integrity of your government in cases like this that you should have to wait until they show up with a search warrant when you knew there were investigations going on 18 months ago?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think this is verging on the absurd. The Leader of the Opposition is indicating that I should somehow be going out of my way to determine whether or not there are investigations of any kind taking place at any time regarding any member of my cabinet. The only way we could do that would be to be in touch with those bodies that are conducting those investigations, which would be entirely inappropriate. The best we can do—and I make no apologies for this, I say to the Leader of the Opposition—is to act on reliable information as and when we receive it. That's exactly what we did in these circumstances.

Mr. Tory: I say to the Premier, that is precisely the point here. It was disclosed 19 months ago that there were three investigations underway by the RCMP, by the tax authorities and by the Ontario Securities Commission. It was well documented in the press and it was well discussed in this House. You chose to have a standard that said that, notwithstanding the former Minister of Finance's involvement in the companies that were at that time under investigation, you were going to leave him there until you were sure he personally was the subject of an investigation. It's not about him per se; it is about the standard you set to ensure that integrity is maintained in your government at all times.

Would you agree with me that the standard you have followed in this instance, by failing to act 19 months ago, did not maximize to the fullest extent possible the protection of the public interest and may have made a difficult situation even worse, for you, for your government and for the former Minister of Finance?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Leader of the Opposition may be inclined to be forgetful in this regard, but the fact is that some 18 or 19 months ago, the Integrity Commissioner ruled twice on this issue. He said that then-Minister Sorbara acted appropriately and responsibly and was not in contravention of any rules. I also said at that time that should Minister Sorbara become the subject of an investigation, he would step aside pending the outcome of that investigation.

I am confident that we made the right call some 18 or 19 months ago, given the circumstances as we understood them, bolstered by the Integrity Commissioner's report, just as I am confident of the decision I made just recently, as I am also confident that Minister Sorbara has done and always will do the right thing in the circumstances.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Speaker, before I begin, I want to congratulate you on your recent election.

My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty government's lack of a hydroelectricity plan left Ontario teetering on the brink this summer. There were four separate electricity supply warnings. At least twice, Ontario communities experienced brownouts.

Almost a year ago, with much fanfare, your government announced a number of natural gas-fired generating stations. You promised to have those natural gas-fired generating stations up and running by 2007. Premier, can you tell the people of Ontario, has construction started on any of these gas-fired generating stations yet?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'd like to refer this to our brand new Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): Thank you very much, Premier, for referring the question to me, and thank you very much to the member of the third party for asking the question. I am pleased to be able to respond. I will tell you, however, that even my mother would give me a little more time to get caught up to date. Being new to the portfolio, I'm hoping that the member of the third party will be gracious as I manage to answer his question.

In fact, there are a couple of generating opportunities that are there and underway. We're into 9,000 megawatts of new supply that will be put into place by the year 2007, and a number of these initiatives are underway in various stages.

Mr. Hampton: If the minister didn't want to answer the question, the Premier shouldn't have referred it. He could have answered it himself.

It was a simple question. I wanted to ask you, has construction begun yet on any of the natural gas generating stations that your government announced with much fanfare almost a year ago? Of course, the answer is no, construction hasn't started. As a result, we don't have, despite your promises, an affordable and reliable electricity supply plan in this province. This summer, your lack of an electricity plan forced industrial consumers like paper mills to pay hydro rates that went through the roof. Paper mills were paying 7.85 cents a kilowatt hour for their electricity. That is much higher than the five cents or 5.8 cents that residential consumers are paying.

So based on what happened to industrial rates this summer, can you tell residential hydro consumers how

much the McGuinty government is going to increase their hydro rate by in 2006? Will it be a 20% increase, a 30% increase? Would you tell hydro consumers that now, please, Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. I find it ironic that somebody who believes so strongly in public consultation and due process and due diligence would not recognize that all these projects have to go through environmental assessments, have to have some problems resolved with their municipalities and have to be able to talk to the constituent base. Instead, I guess he would just like to bypass all these processes and move forward. Unfortunately, that is not the way we work in the McGuinty government. We actually do believe in public consultation, due diligence and due process.

1510

Mr. Hampton: My point is that despite your government's promises of an electricity supply plan, we're not in fact going to see any natural gas generating stations providing electricity any time soon, and certainly not by 2007.

But my question was about rates. We know that residential hydro consumers are going to get another big shock from the McGuinty government. The government that promised a hydro rate freeze into 2006 is going to increase hydro rates again, by at least 20%.

In connection with that, though, you overcharged hydro consumers by \$528 million in 2004, and you knew that in February. Yet, since February, you've been hanging on to that money. When are hydro consumers going to get back the \$528 million of their money—not the McGuinty government's money; their money? When are you going to roll out the rebate, Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I again thank the member for the question. The Ontario electricity commission is in the process of working through that particular issue, and we hope to make that announcement very shortly.

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

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier, again: Forest industry communities across northern Ontario are in crisis. Yet, while they're looking for a plan from your government, you make the problem worse by constantly increasing hydroelectricity rates.

Cec Makowski, who is the Ontario president of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, put it this way today: "Ontario's forest-based industries, tens of thousands of mill workers and dozens of communities across the province are being abandoned by the provincial government at a time of crisis.

"No wonder there is a growing sentiment in the north for separation from Ontario."

Premier, as thousands of mill workers lose their jobs and communities are devastated, where is the McGuinty government's plan for forest industry communities?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Natural Resources would like to speak to this, but I want to take the first one, if I may.

First of all, let me say that we understand how important the forestry sector is, not just to the north but to the rest of Ontario, and indeed to our entire economy. We also understand that in this era of globalization, there is a consolidation that is taking place and there are ensuing job losses. That's not just happening here in Ontario, as my friend opposite knows. It's taking place in Quebec, Newfoundland, New Brunswick—indeed throughout the country—and in many other parts of the world. For the first time, for example, we're now competing against Indonesia, South Korea and South America.

In response to that, our minister put together a very solid package, a \$680-million strategy. Part of that is a \$150-million forest sector prosperity fund, which is designed to help the industry in northern Ontario transition into a more innovative, productive industry so that they can be sustainable going forward. So we have done, I would argue, much in order to support the industry in northern Ontario. Is there more to do? Of course there is. But we're proud of the efforts we've made so far.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you need to know that many of these companies that are closing mills in Ontario are in fact moving production to jurisdictions like Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia. They're very clear: Everything that you and your government have announced so far doesn't address the two fundamental problems. Electricity rates for paper mills in Ontario amount to 30 cents a kilowatt hour under the McGuinty government. Those same companies can operate a mill in Quebec or British Columbia for eight cents a kilowatt hour in electricity costs. Your so-called response doesn't address the problem. In fact, you make the problem worse by constantly raising electricity rates.

In connection with that, Premier, we've just learned that you seem to have a plan for more expensive, unreliable, private nuclear power. It's come to our attention that late tomorrow afternoon your government may announce that you are proceeding with the multi-billion dollar refurbishment of nuclear reactors at the Bruce nuclear plant. The people of Ontario deserve a public debate about this, not an announcement at—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Order.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It is no secret that our government has been in negotiations for about a year now.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): We have a tentative agreement.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We have a tentative agreement in place. That is not a secret, and neither is it a secret that we are up against it when it comes to ensuring we have a sufficient supply of generating capacity in Ontario.

This morning, the new minister was reminding me once again that we have to replace, renew or refurbish some 25,000 megawatts over the course of the next 15 years. It would have been nice had this work been begun some 10 or 15 years ago—but it didn't.

We have already brought some 2,200 megawatts of new energy on line and we have 9,000 more megawatts in the works. What I intend to say to the member

opposite, to the people of Ontario and to the international investment community is that this government will do whatever we have to do to ensure that there is a reliable supply of clean, reasonably priced electricity for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: I want to quote someone who said something during the election. This person said major government announcements should be made "where they belong, before the people's representatives in the Ontario Legislature." Premier, you know who made that statement: You made it.

You also know that nuclear power is a very contentious issue in Ontario. It's contentious because of the huge cost overruns in the past. The last Liberal government promised Darlington at \$4.7 billion; it came in at \$15 billion. There are also concerns about nuclear waste.

I'm asking the question again: Will any announcement about billion-dollar refurbishments of Bruce nuclear be made here in the Legislature with a public debate, or are you going to try to hide it at 4 o'clock tomorrow afternoon, on a Friday, when no one is looking? Will Dalton McGuinty—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: By way of an interesting contrast in approaches to this, the NDP, when they were in government, made rate increases on December 31, outside of the House. With respect to the negotiations with Bruce Power, we even announced the tentative agreement in this House. That strikes a stunning contrast in terms of openness and transparency.

I want to repeat something I said a moment ago. It is no secret that here in Ontario we lack an adequate supply of electricity. We are doing everything we can to ensure that we have a reliable supply. We've brought some 2,200 new megawatts on line; we have 9,000 more in the works; we have an aggressive conservation plan that we're about to roll out. It's no secret that we have been in negotiations with Bruce Power. Again, I repeat, we will do whatever is necessary to ensure that the people of Ontario have a reliable supply of clean, reasonably priced electricity.

RCMP INVESTIGATION

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Premier, yesterday in a press scrum you indicated that you would continue to seek the advice of the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora despite the member's being the subject of a police investigation. If this is accurate, in what areas and in what manner do you expect to receive advice on a continuing basis from the former Minister of Finance?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I would recommend to my friend opposite that he obtain a transcript of exactly what was said. That was the question. I said that if you're asking me whether or not I would sever my friendship with Greg Sorbara, the answer is no. That is exactly what I said.

Mr. Wilson: Premier, you didn't answer the question. Are you going to continue to seek advice and, if so, what

guidelines or post-employment rules or standards are you going to put in place so that it's clear what the rules are for the public, for members, for Mr. Sorbara and for the integrity of your own government?

Would you please answer the question. Are you going to continue to seek his advice, and, if you are, what guidelines or borders are you going to put in place to ensure that that's done appropriately?

1520

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I don't know whether or not the member opposite is suggesting that Mr. Sorbara should be ejected from our caucus, that he should not be permitted to participate in any of our caucus discussions or deliberations. If that is what he is suggesting, then he should state that publicly and in a forthright manner.

Greg Sorbara will continue to play a valuable role as the MPP for his constituency and as a member of our caucus.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): For the Premier again. Premier, two more cases of legionnaires' disease have been reported in Scarborough. The cases occurred outside the Seven Oaks Home for the Aged, where 17 people have already died, but you have refused to call a public inquiry.

During Toronto's outbreak of SARS a couple of years ago, you demanded a public inquiry. You said, and I want to quote you, that people "want the assurance that all the tough questions will be asked and answered through a full, independent, objective process." So I'm going to ask you the same question you asked Premier Eves during the SARS outbreak in Toronto. My question to you is, why are you afraid to call for a full, independent public inquiry?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health, Speaker.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think it would be appropriate first, on behalf of all members of the Legislature and Ontarians, to repeat what I've had the privilege of saying previously, which is that we send condolences to those who have been touched by loss or by illness. We recognize the incredible hard work of health care providers on-scene in a variety of different places over the last number of weeks. It's been a challenging circumstance, for sure.

I would say to the honourable member that at the heart of his question is a point that I think we can all agree upon, which is that it is imperative in our province that as challenges are uncovered, we seek to learn and apply as quickly as possible all of the lessons that are to be found. We believe that the prudent way to move forward—something that I've indicated as much as almost two weeks ago—is to ask a person of considerable eminence to offer some independent reflection on what went on in a timely fashion.

At the heart of it, what do we have to be afraid of? We have to be afraid that a public inquiry would lead to

delays, which would prevent us from learning and applying the lessons as quickly as is possible. That's the bottom line. You will see us moving forward on this basis in a very short number of days.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, 17 people have died, and more seriously, an outbreak which was supposed to be confined to the home for the aged is now somehow in the broader community.

In an election campaign you told people to choose change, but it would appear that in this kind of situation not much has changed. Public health and public health protection is still underfunded. It still doesn't have the tools or resources it needs to fight major outbreaks like this. During the SARS crisis, you said, "Why is it that you are great when it comes to putting out press releases, but you have yet to move forward and make sure that you actually send money to the people who need it?" and the issues that need it. Now your government is putting public image before public health. When are you going to hold an inquiry to get to the bottom of what is a very, very serious health problem?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It is an examination of the words in the honourable member's question that I suspect will be disheartening to a lot of people, especially those people of celebrated leadership in our province who have stepped up to the plate and are providing an even greater leadership role as a result of actions of our government.

I'm talking about a chief medical officer of health like Dr. Sheela Basrur, the fact that our province has reached out and asked Dr. Don Low from Mount Sinai to also serve as the medical director of the Ontario public health lab, that Toronto Public Health has been led by Dr. David McKeown, an established leader in public health, and that Allison McGeer, one of those courageous people who help to sort through these challenges, has been on the front line. These are the people who have been working on Ontario's behalf, consistent with the view that it is important to have some independent suggestion and review of what went on.

We will be doing that. We will move forward in the next number of days with an eminent Ontarian who'll help us get to the bottom of it, and get to the bottom of it faster. This member suggests that that is the work of lawyers, to be done over a period of time. We rather view the necessity of time, meaning we should move forward quickly and apply all of those lessons as quickly as possible.

BIRTH CERTIFICATES

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I, too, would like to add my congratulations to the Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Government Services. I was very pleased yesterday to hear the remarks in the throne speech about birth certificates, but to be frank, the idea that birth certificates will be delivered within 15 days and, if not, the good people of Ontario will get their money back has left me just a little bit sceptical. Birth certificate requests remain one of the

main issues that my constituency office has to deal with. I receive numerous phone calls with regard to the status of the applications. Some can take eight weeks or even longer. Minister, how do you think you can put a money-back guarantee on this service?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I too congratulate you, and please don't take that out of my time here in responding.

As we said in the speech from the throne yesterday, we very much remain focused on an ever-improving quality of service, and I might say that our public servants very much share that commitment.

Just to provide the member for Huron-Bruce with some comfort, it was in June that we began testing this. For those people who applied on-line for a birth certificate, we were able, within 15 business days, to deliver that birth certificate to them—99.7%; almost 100%. I hope it's some comfort to the member that we have tested this. We will, in the next few weeks, be announcing the details of the money-back guarantee for all on-line applications for birth certificates.

As I say, I'm actually quite proud of this. I think we're the only government in North America that has said that we are going to improve public service and we're going to demonstrate tangibly that we've done it, and if we don't do it, you get your money back. I think that's good for the public.

Mrs. Mitchell: Minister, that sounds very good. My constituents will be very pleased to hear that. But my constituents want to know why something that used to take six to eight weeks or even longer can now be offered in just 15 business days. What has changed that allows you to respond to on-line birth certificate applications in just 15 days?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Firstly, I'd say that the public servants who are working in this area have been working very hard, and I give a lot of credit to them. But I would also say that technology is playing a major role here. When you apply on-line, the errors are very negligible. When you fill it in by hand, we run into quite a few errors. When you fill it in on-line, we get it instantly and we begin processing it. So the technology is very helpful here. That's the basic reason why we can guarantee that within 15 business days you will get your birth certificate.

I just repeat: I actually was a bit surprised that the two opposition parties don't like this. I think the public understands that this is a government that's prepared to take a risk. It's a government that's prepared to say that we're going to improve the quality of public service with our public servants, and we're prepared to offer a money-back guarantee.

RCMP INVESTIGATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Mr. Speaker, my congratulations to you as well.

My question is to the Premier. I am somewhat acquainted with the burden of integrity that comes with

servicing as a minister in the cabinet of Ontario. As you know, I resigned my seat at the cabinet table pending the outcome of an investigation into how a family name of a former young offender was included in a throne speech. To preserve the integrity of my ministry and that of our government, I believe I did the right thing and stepped aside, a move that you vigorously called for in your role as Leader of the Opposition. Premier, why do you not insist on that same standard for ministers in your government?

1530

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I do.

Mr. Runciman: There's a different standard from one side of the House to the other, obviously. Nineteen months too late, he agrees.

Premier, this is a simple question about your judgment—and clearly there are more questions about that after today—and the leadership standard you have set for your government. Nineteen months ago, questions were raised about the ability of the former Minister of Finance to continue in his role given serious and now criminal investigations into a company he was involved with before being appointed to your cabinet. You chose not to act then. You chose not to live up to the same standard practised by former governments of all political stripes. Why did you not act then to uphold the highest level of integrity in your government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I did. The issue that was raised some 18 or 19 months ago, again, was the subject of two separate rulings from the Integrity Commissioner. On both occasions, he ruled that then Minister Sorbara acted responsibly and appropriately and was not in breach of any rules. I also indicated at the time that should Minister Sorbara become the subject of an investigation, he would step aside. That has in fact occurred just recently. That information was brought to my attention and in fact Minister Sorbara has stepped aside. It's as simple and as straightforward as that.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question. The member for Nickel Belt.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Thank you, Speaker, and my congratulations.

I have a question to the Minister of Health. There are residents of Sarnia and Lambton county here today to protest cuts at Bluewater Health. They are very concerned about the number of proposed layoffs and the cuts to programs and services which have been publicly announced. These cuts will have a serious impact on the number of front-line staff who are available to deliver high-quality care and on the number of programs and services that can actually be provided. My question to you, minister, is, why is your government forcing these cuts at Bluewater Health?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to welcome our distinguished

visitors from Sarnia. I had the privilege of being in the Sarnia community in the summertime, at which point I took the opportunity to make note of the fact that our government is very keen to make a significant new investment in Sarnia, in a new hospital, which everybody would agree is long overdue. This would be an investment on top of the \$13 million we have invested in that hospital since we came to office.

The circumstances that we're in are really ones of fairness. We are working on the basis of the view that hospitals should deal relatively equally with the resources they have and provide care consistent with that. We don't find that the situation currently in place at Bluewater is like that. It is a hospital that is operating well beyond the margins of its peer hospitals and, accordingly, it's important that they make efforts to operate on a par with peer hospitals. That's fair to hospitals in Ontario.

We think it's important for the system to help the system. We have had a CEO from an adjoining hospital who has gone to Sarnia and has sought to work with Bluewater Health, to give them some advice around measures they could take to get to this more equitable position.

We recognize it's challenging, and we really do appreciate the work that a variety of people have been undertaking as we seek to make sure that our health care system is sustainable and equal.

Ms. Martel: The question is, why is your government forcing these cuts? These cuts are going to have very serious consequences for the community. There will be over 100 full-time equivalent staff people who will receive layoff notices and who will not be able to provide high-quality health care. There are a number of very important services and programs delivered at two sites that are on the chopping block.

People in this community voted Liberal in the last election because your government promised that you would improve health care services, not decimate health care services. These folks are here today because they want you to reverse your decision. They know their community needs enhanced and improved health care, not significant, dramatic, drastic cuts at Bluewater Health. Minister, your government, through your budget process, is directly responsible for the cuts that have been proposed. I ask you again, why are you forcing these devastating cuts at Bluewater Health?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member's attempt to characterize all of those changes that might take place in a hospital as front-line are inappropriate, and I don't think they're very reflective of reality.

One of the very significant areas where the peer reviewer felt there was room for improvement in this hospital environment was related to management and supervisory duties. I think it's very important that, as we discuss matters related to making more equal and efficient the operation of our hospitals, we work a little harder to distinguish between those things which are front-line and those things which are not.

In addition, the honourable member asked about investments in the Sarnia community. Let me make two points. The first is that we know there's a palliative care program in Sarnia that they're very proud of, and we are too. I went to the community and said, "In addition to those services being offered in the hospital, we would like to work with Sarnia to bring a residential hospice about," and accordingly, we have a spot in line and we await a community-based proposal. In addition, our government has brought significant new resources to the community care access centre, a satellite of a community health centre, alongside a variety of other community-based government investments. That really is designed to reflect the fact that if we are going to use the word "system" and talk about a health care system, it's important to make investments across the breadth of it. Our \$13 million in new investments at Sarnia Bluewater, a variety of other community investments, and the prospect soon on the horizon of a new residential hospice and a new hospital does represent, I think, very significant investment on the part of our government in the Sarnia community.

ANTI-SMOKING PROGRAMS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question. The member for London North Centre.

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and might I say you look very distinguished in your new robes. Congratulations.

My question is for the new Minister of Health Promotion. The health hazards of smoking are no longer a mystery. We know that cigarettes have a serious and sometimes fatal effect on a person's health. We know that many smokers begin to smoke at a very young age. Today, 30% of young people say they smoke regularly—an astonishing number. Not only is this a very expensive habit, but it's a very dangerous one. I know we've made it more difficult for young people to obtain cigarettes, and we've imposed harsh penalties on vendors who sell cigarettes to minors, but we need to do more to convince young people not to pick up this deadly habit.

Minister, what is your plan to curb smoking among Ontario's youth? How will you be addressing this issue in the months to come? What specific initiatives will you be undertaking to keep people from taking up the habit of smoking?

The Speaker: Minister of Health Promotion.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Thank you very much, and congratulations, Mr. Speaker.

I thank my honourable friend from London North Centre and congratulate her on the front benches.

We all know the challenges young people face, the temptations they face. We also know that 16,000 people a year die of tobacco-related injuries; 44 every day. Many of these people begin smoking in university, and that's why I was very pleased to join the honourable member from St. Catharines at Brock University, which originated a program called Leave the Pack Behind. It has been

a very successful program. I was pleased to be able to announce \$600,000 in funding to expand that program to five additional campuses, to bring the total now to 18 campuses. This program is reaching 250,000 university students, and in its first year the program has had a tremendous degree of success compared to other programs that have been offered. Let me just give you one statistic: 13% of the smokers using the program have quit—

The Speaker: Thank you. You may want to put some of that in the supplementary.

Ms. Matthews: Minister, let's hope those initiatives go a long way to curb smoking addiction among young people. But what about people who have already become addicted? At any given time, 80% of smokers say they're trying to quit, but we know that few are actually successful in that. So how does a smoke-free Ontario campaign address the millions of Ontarians who are smokers now but are looking for programs to help them quit?

Hon. Jim Watson: This is a government that takes this issue seriously, and I commend the Minister of Health for initiating the smoke-free Ontario legislation. I'm very proud to now be the minister responsible for that important piece of legislation.

The strategy has \$50 million attached to it that was announced in Mr. Sorbara's budget, and that's the first time we've had comprehensive and a significant amount of new resources to battle the tobacco industry through prevention, cessation and protection of those exposed to second-hand smoke.

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Earlier today, I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Rob Cushman, the former medical officer of health for the city of Ottawa, along with Garfield Mahood, from the Non-Smokers' Rights Association, and a young gentleman named Shaine Peters who has been very instrumental in a program called Exposé, a program run by young people for young people to encourage them not to start smoking and to quit smoking. It's a successful program, and it's something I'm very proud that the McGuinty government has put at the forefront of the health promotion agenda in this province.

RCMP INVESTIGATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, let me add my congratulations to you on your new position.

My question is for the Premier. Premier, the situation you now find yourself in with respect to the former Minister of Finance did not just begin with the RCMP search warrant. Sadly, that's when you finally acted. Serious questions were first raised about 19 months ago. I ask you, why did you not put the integrity of your government first and act 19 months ago to meet the burden and the test of leadership that comes with your job?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I place a great deal of

confidence in the Integrity Commissioner. The member opposite may not. To repeat myself, on two separate occasions he ruled back then, some 18 or 19 months ago, that Minister Sorbara had acted responsibly and appropriately and was not in breach of any rules.

I also indicated at the time that should it become apparent that Minister Sorbara was the subject of investigation, he would step aside pending the outcome of that investigation. That's essentially what has happened, and I'm not really sure what the member opposite or the party opposite hopes to gain by pursuing this line of questioning.

Mrs. Witmer: Well, I can tell you, Premier, that I was a member of a cabinet where members did step aside. In fact, it was what the Premier of the day expected them to do. They did this in order to ensure the integrity of their office and of the government.

Nineteen months ago, there were very serious questions raised about your finance minister's possible involvement in the activities that were being investigated by the RCMP, the Ontario Securities Commission and the federal tax authorities. I ask you again, Premier, why did you not live up to the same standards that we have come to expect of Premiers in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the Integrity Commissioner ruled on this twice in the past. It was recently brought to Minister Sorbara's attention that he was the subject of an investigation. That made it obvious, I think, to all of us that the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances was for him to step aside, which is what he did.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you, Speaker. I add my congratulations, and I want you to know that if you need help maintaining order, I'm just a phone call away.

A question to the Premier: How does your government's shutting down of Ontario probation and parole and terminating Ontario's probation and parole officers make Ontario's communities safer?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I think the member opposite knows no final decisions have been made. I think he also understands that we have a shared responsibility to explore efficiencies wherever we could. He may also know that we're one of only three provinces, I think, that operate their own independent parole and probation officer regime. So, yes, we are talking to the federal government and exploring whether or not these services might be consolidated in one level of government. We think we owe that to Ontario taxpayers. And of course, we're also committed to doing this to ensure that we do not compromise, in any way, public safety.

Mr. Kormos: I'd suggest that what you owe to Ontario taxpayers is to maintain the high quality of supervision that Ontario's probation and parole officers conduct over convicted criminals.

Why would the province, a province of 12 million people, want to relinquish control over the standards set for the parole board in terms of release on parole and over the levels of supervision required of probation officers to a National Parole Board which, with all due respect, has a rather spotty record?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Look, I understand where the member opposite is coming from on this, and he has a different perspective. He doesn't think that we should ever enter into any negotiations with any other level of government at any time that might result in job losses in the Ontario public service.

First of all, let me say that we have the highest possible regard for Ontario's public servants. Let me say secondly that we also have an obligation to co-operate and coordinate with other levels of government, where that makes sense to do so, on behalf of the people that we are all privileged to serve. So we are, in fact, having discussions with the federal government, and we will continue to explore the possibility that we might transfer responsibility entirely for parole and probation to the federal government. But again, we will do so in a way that does not compromise public safety, and we will also do so in a way that ensures that we can minimize job losses, in fact, if any must occur.

EARTHQUAKE IN SOUTH ASIA

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Speaker, I too congratulate you on assuming your new role.

My question today is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Mike Colle. Minister, as you are aware, South Asia, Afghanistan, India and particularly Pakistan were hit by a devastating 7.6 Richter scale earthquake. I'm sorry to have to report to this chamber that the death toll now exceeds 40,000 and is rising. There are whole districts in Pakistan, for example, in which all the children have been wiped out.

Minister, I ask on behalf of all Ontarians, but particularly on behalf of the 500,000 Canadians of South Asian origin who reside in our province who are reeling from this event, myself included, what has been the government of Ontario's response?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for the question and also thank him for his expression of hope and his hard work in helping his constituents who have been directly affected by this devastation. I know his own extended family and friends in the South Asian community have been affected, so I know how personal this is to him, his father and his mother, and to all his friends and relatives.

I want to say that I've been so impressed by the response that your community in Etobicoke North and the general South Asian community has undertaken. It's really as I said, remarkable.

We, as the government of Ontario, are trying to partner with the federal government to ensure that all the resources available from our government are used in co-

operation with the federal response. We've got two of the best front-line people in Ontario working daily in ensuring that all the resources of all of our ministries are available. The Commissioner of Emergency Management, Julian Fantino, and also the chief medical officer of health of Ontario, Dr. Sheela Basrur, are—

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

Mr. Qaadri: Minister, Ontarians of South Asian origin are mourning the loss of friends and relatives and loved ones, while others wait for news of those missing. How have you reached out to the local South Asian community in this time of need?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I have been at community events. I think I was at one with you in Mississauga with ICNA, one of the community-based organizations. I've been to a number of very impressive mosques in the last couple of evenings during Ramadan, where I've tried to express the condolences of all of us in this Legislature and our government and our offer of support.

We have indicated that we have already donated \$1 million. We are going to continue to work in partnership with them and to let all of Ontario know that we have to share in our efforts to help our South Asian friends and colleagues and fellow citizens. So this is a continual outreach that we'll do, to encourage everyone to please be generous, as the South Asian community has been so remarkably generous.

1550

RCMP INVESTIGATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is also for the Premier. The former Minister of Finance has enjoyed special access to you as your senior adviser, your most trusted cabinet minister. Have you broached the subject with him about how the rules of that engagement must change, and can you let this House and the people of Ontario know that the access to yourself and the cabinet is different as a result of his resignation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Again, Mr. Sorbara remains, hopefully, a very active member of our caucus and a representative of his constituency. In that capacity, he will be participating in all areas characteristic of those responsibilities of a member of provincial Parliament. Obviously, he will not be participating in cabinet deliberations.

Mr. Yakabuski: The people of Ontario expect that the integrity of government is of the highest priority and it is your responsibility to give them comfort in that regard. Premier, the question is not about Mr. Sorbara, who is the subject of a criminal investigation. It is about your clear rules and your judgment. Have you set the rules to ensure that the integrity of this government is beyond reproach and the people of Ontario can be comfortable that access is not as it was before?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I am confident that the people of Ontario will bring a very objective and fair approach

to what has taken place here. I think what they will want to take into account is that some 18 or 19 months ago, when the issue first arose, the Integrity Commissioner ruled on two separate occasions that then-Minister Sorbara acted both appropriately and responsibly and was not in breach of any rules. They will also understand that at that time I indicated very clearly that should Minister Sorbara become the subject of an investigation, he would step aside pending the outcome of that investigation. They will also understand that when I received that information just recently, I acted within just a matter of hours to ensure that Minister Sorbara had stepped aside and that we had shuffled the cabinet so that we were ready once again to begin to do the people's work. I think the people of Ontario will judge that to be fair and balanced and responsible.

RESPIRE CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. In our community, we have an organization, as in other communities, called Access Better Living. One of the services they provide is respite care for families of children who have autism. When parents have to care for those children, you know very well that at times they need a break and we need to give respite care to those families. These families, six months into the budget of Access Better Living's fiscal year, have been told that their services are now going to be rationed to 49 hours of respite care for the next six months.

My question to you, Minister, is a very simple one: Are you prepared to make sure that your colleague and yourself work in order to put the money back into the budget of Access Better Living so they can provide full services to those families in need?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I very much appreciate the question, and we can discuss after question period whether it's specifically between me and the minister for children.

What we are doing is working together in our development services. As you know, I've been fairly non-partisan, if that's possible, on this issue, because every government of every political stripe has ensured that each year the amount of support that goes into this sector to care for people with developmental disabilities grows. That has just been our history—the NDP government, as well as the Conservatives, and certainly ours. We have set records in this last two years for the amount of investment that we've made in developmental services.

As to the specifics, I'm happy to address that after the next question. I can tell you that we are committed to see that people with developmental disabilities get the care and support they need.

Mr. Bisson: First of all, the other minister who was at estimates, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, said that there was no rationing. I come to this House today and I'm telling you there is. Families in our

community are being told they are going to be rationed services for the rest of this fiscal year, to a total of 49 hours' service for the rest of the six months. There are some families to date who have had to take as much as 700 hours of respite care because of the current situation they find themselves in. But I'm also somewhat shocked that between the two ministers they can't figure out who's in charge. Maybe that's part of the problem. So I'm going to put the question directly to you. What we need is an increase in the budget from your ministry, community and social services, to the budgets of Access Better Living. My question simply is this: Are you prepared to say in this House today, "Yes, we'll make sure that agency has the money necessary to provide these much-needed services to the families in need"?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Thank you once again for the question. I can tell you that this Ministry of Community and Social Services, through our regional offices, gets very involved through those offices in the specific amounts that will go to all of our agencies across the province.

I will tell this individual member, though, that we have never had such an historic investment in developmental services as we have had in these last two years. It began more than a year ago with a \$110-million investment, which also included the closure of the remaining three institutions, but a huge amount of money going into our community with that announcement. That was followed up by a \$41-million investment, which includes the development and enhancement of specialized services for people at extreme high risk with developmental services. In addition to that, and most recently, three months ago, a \$59-million investment, which was also across the board for the foundations program for children who are aging out of high school, to enhancing special services at home—a significant investment, one-time.

Let me tell—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. The time for oral questions has now expired.

PETITIONS

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to have the first, and congratulations to you as well, Speaker.

I have a petition from the Ontario Association of Optometrists that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) expired March 31, 2000; and

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

“Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists, in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

“Whereas it is in the best interest of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care that they need;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario.”

I'm pleased to also recognize optometrist Daryl Workman, whom I visited this past week.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been signed by 22,000 residents of Sarnia and Lambton county, residents who are very concerned about the cuts that have been proposed at Bluewater Health. It reads as follows.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Could you sit down just for a second. The member for Halton, I can't see the member for Nickel Belt.

Member for Nickel Belt.

Ms. Martel: Thank you, Speaker.

The petition that's been signed by 22,000 residents reads as follows:

“Whereas we are the residents covered by the local health integration network (LHINs);

“Whereas we are the taxpayers covered under Bluewater Health Sarnia;

“Whereas we are the health care providers and users;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind layoffs and reinstate all services to Bluewater Health, slated to be eliminated by December 2005.

“We denounce the reduction of health care services and the closure of the palliative care unit that will directly compromise the well-being of this community.”

I agree with the petitioners. I'd like to thank Claudette Drapeau of SEIU in particular for making sure all the signatures came in.

1600

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from the Credit Valley Hospital and it reads as follows:

“Whereas on August 22, 2005, the government of Ontario, through the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Public Infrastructure Renewal, announced that

the Credit Valley Hospital's phase 2 expansion project will proceed, with construction starting in 2007; and

“Whereas the new A and H blocks at Credit Valley Hospital will dramatically improve service and care to the approximately 4,800 babies delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital, improving a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

“Whereas the expanded capacity will expedite the movement of acutely ill admitted emergency patients on to a nursing unit where they will be cared for in a timely and professional manner, decrease wait times for surgical patients requiring in-patient care, and also motivate local donors to support our community's hospital;

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

“That the Credit Valley Hospital, its staff, patients, donors and community thank the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Public Infrastructure Renewal for the government of Ontario's solid commitment to the care and well-being of the growing municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital in western Mississauga.”

I wholeheartedly support this. It was my pleasure and privilege to announce phase 2. I have signed it, and I'm going to ask page Mandy to carry it for me.

CORMORANTS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I know this is a very important issue to Manitoulin as well.

“Whereas cormorant populations in the Great Lakes basin have increased to over 450,000 birds in the past several years, are continuing to grow, and are significantly depleting fish populations; and

“Whereas numerous scientific studies have clearly shown the serious negative impact on fish stocks and freshwater habitats; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources continues to study the impact of cormorants and possible management strategies; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has committed to experimental control of cormorants at specific sites;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources to immediately begin to significantly reduce cormorant populations in areas where they are having a demonstrably negative impact on local fisheries through managed culls.”

I affix my signature in full support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Consideration of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I move, 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.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Crozier moves, seconded by Ms. Matthews, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman:

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

The member for Essex.

Mr. Crozier: Thank you, Speaker, and may I too begin by adding my public congratulations to you on your election as Speaker of this great House. I enjoyed working with you in the campaign to that end. I want to point out too that I will be sharing the time for my remarks with Ms. Matthews, the member for London North Centre.

I want to say that on behalf of the people I represent in the riding of Essex, it's my privilege and indeed my honour to move the adoption of the speech from the throne from the government led by Premier Dalton McGuinty. This is a traditional honour, and I want to give a little background, before I get into the actual throne speech, of what it is we're doing here today: what the throne speech is, what it means, and where we go from here.

The motion you just heard on the introduction uses rather archaic language, calling the members "loyal subjects" of the Queen. The wording reflects the long history of the speech from the throne and the debate that follows it. Yesterday, the Lieutenant Governor, the monarch's representative at the provincial level, read the speech from the throne. But the words are not those of the Lieutenant Governor. They are not the words, therefore, of the monarch. The contents of the speech are, in fact, written by the government.

The monarch's representative started reading the speech from the throne during medieval times, when monarchs called Parliament whenever they wanted to and dictated their wishes to Parliament and to its members, or appointed someone to do that job for them. By the 18th century, however, the "King's speech," as it was known, contained the government's words and not those of the monarch. And although monarchs or their representatives might have read them, they didn't necessarily agree with what was being said.

In one rather humorous instance that I would like to recall for you, in 1756 an industrious printer published a fake speech from the throne and was arrested for having

done so. King George II remarked on that incident: "I hope the fellow's punishment will be light, for I have read both speeches, the real and the false, and so far as I understand them, I liked the printer's speech better than my own."

With that, my colleague and I will have some comments—and there will be several days of debate following this—on the throne speech that was given yesterday by the Lieutenant Governor. I want to say at the outset that we are at the midpoint of this government's mandate, and that it continues to work on the economic advantages that we feel the province of Ontario provides in this great land of ours, Canada. We recognize that everything—the ability of our businesses to compete, our capacity to fund a caring society, our need to have opportunities available for children—depends on the prosperity of this province. That's why we're working with Ontarians to strengthen Ontario's economic advantage, by strengthening the educational skills of our young people, improving the health of all our people, and working to foster innovation and leveraging our diversity in getting the fundamentals right. The positive results we've seen over the past two years, from the higher test scores in our schools to shorter wait times in our hospitals to over 193,000 new jobs, are the products of Ontarians working hard, working well and working together.

Now is the time, we feel, to accelerate this progress, and now is the time to strengthen Ontario's economic advantage. What are those advantages? To begin with, smaller class sizes in early grades and higher test scores in our schools will be followed by new legislation that will make it mandatory for young people to keep learning in a classroom, in apprenticeship or in a workplace training program until the age of 18, instead of allowing them to drop out of school at the age of 16. Also, a new alternative high school diploma will recognize the importance of learning a skill or trade. The government is implementing its Reaching Higher plan for post-secondary education, which will invest \$6.2 billion more in universities and colleges, apprenticeships and skilled programs. The government is also carrying out Best Start, which will equip Ontario's youngest learners as they begin school.

1610

Part of that economic advantage, we understand—particularly in the automotive industry, where there's competition from around the world—is our health care system. Dramatic increases in the number of CT scans, cancer surgeries, cataract surgeries, cardiac procedures, hip and knee replacements and MRI scans will continue to produce shorter wait times for patients.

Shortly, patients and prospective patients, those who need care, will be able to see what wait times are at hospitals across this province. When you think about it, how can you imagine that we can have what we would call a health care system if up until now we've never had any ability to track wait times? What we are saying is that by doing this, by setting the point from which we start and the standards we're going toward, we will be

able to judge and be judged as a government by the way we've invested your health care money and how it has affected those wait times.

We must also improve the level of care for patients and ensure that medicare is strong enough to care for Ontarians for generations to come. That's why, when I mentioned wait times for key medical procedures, there are going to be 8% more CT scans, 11% more cancer surgeries, 16% more cataract surgeries, 17% more cardiac care procedures, 28% more hip and knee replacements and 42% more MRI scans. These represent some of the largest increases ever in our health care system by any government. Your government will work with medical experts to spell out the appropriate length of wait times for these procedures, how long that wait really is and how much progress is being made when it comes to reducing those wait times.

I want to talk a little bit about innovation in this 21st century that we are rapidly coming into. It seems to me it was only five years ago that we celebrated the turn of the century.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): Wasn't it?

Mr. Crozier: Isn't that amazing? My point is how quickly those five years have passed and how much has happened in those five years.

To ensure that Ontario is the first to discover new ideas, turn them into products and services and market them to the world, the government is bolstering research and development while making strategic investments in innovation in key sectors of Ontario's economy.

These investments include the auto sector, which has announced \$4.5 billion worth of investment in Ontario over the past two years; the agri-food sector, which is important to me in Essex county, with the greenhouse industry, the grain and oilseeds producers, the fresh vegetable producers and of course where the best tomatoes in the world are grown. The agri-food sector has benefited from support for beef farmers hurt by a US ban on Canadian beef and from the government's plan to require that gas include ethanol.

The forestry sector is receiving more than \$680 million from the province to help modernize it for the 21st century. As the Premier said today, the forest industry is not only key in northern Ontario but it certainly affects the lives and standards of all Ontarians.

This is why the government moved quickly to deliver assistance to the cattle farmers affected by the ban, why it continues to act on concerns regarding the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program and why it's requiring an average of 5% ethanol in all gasoline sold in Ontario by January 2007. We want to create new markets for our farmers, clean up our air and provide a hedge against volatile gasoline prices.

Beginning with the Premier's agri-food summit, your government is working with leaders in this sector to develop a common vision for the future. At this point, we are focusing on three priorities in the agri-food industry:

—Innovation: Your government will support research and development that helps create new markets and ways of doing business in agri-food.

—Marketing Ontario food: Your government will work with the industry to develop a new branding and marketing strategy.”

I can say that in my own area of Essex county there are ads out right now for tomatoes grown in greenhouses and for mushroom farms—we have two mushroom farms in our riding. The government can help with branding, marketing and promotion in these two areas to make those products in even more demand. I go to a mushroom farm and find that upwards of 80% of its product is shipped to the United States. Those of us down in the Windsor-Essex area know that when we see Meijer stores, a huge retailer in Michigan—our mushrooms are being shipped over to Michigan every day.

The third area we are emphasizing:

—Farm income: Ontario is working with the federal government to improve our system of safety nets.”

I want to say that, with a \$15-million increase in the agriculture minister's budget over last year, we recognize the need to support our farm groups. That isn't to say we probably won't be met with challenges in that sector. The rural caucus of the government meets regularly, and we meet with farm producers regularly, so that when any challenges come up that we are not expecting, we will be able to meet and act on their behalf.

We, as a government and as a province, want to leverage our diversity. We are a diverse province. We are a province that is made up of individuals and citizens from around the world. It's because of this diversity that we are, in fact, so strong. We want to diversify into jobs and investment by attracting the best and the brightest from around the world and helping them settle and integrate into our economy.

The government is expanding training programs and English-as-a-second-language instruction. Funding is available because of the Premier's campaign to narrow that \$23-billion gap between what Ontarians contribute to the federal government and what they get back in programs and services.

Ontario will ensure timely access to professions and trades for qualified professionals trained outside of Canada by ensuring that regulatory bodies create a fair and transparent registration and appeals process.

Ontario's drive to tell its diversity story to the world will include the Premier's trade mission to China next month.

Our government, in my view, remains focused on ensuring and ever improving the quality of service to Ontarians. This commitment is shared by a public service that is truly second to none and one that demonstrates each day an exemplary work ethic and unqualified professionalism. Working with them, your government will unveil what is believed to be the first money-back public service guarantee in North America.

You know that part of the reason we're here—in fact, a big part of the reason we're here—is simply to serve Ontarians, not only in the areas of health care, education, transportation and community services, but just to service some of those everyday needs of our constituents. Later

this year, Ontarians will fill out birth certificate applications on-line and get their certificate within 15 days, or they'll get their money back. The minister said today that he will announce very shortly how that will work and how we intend to make it work. We also look forward to announcing other types of services that will be delivered with a money-back guarantee. As the Premier has often said, we live in a 100-channel world today. The Internet is more and more becoming part of our everyday lives. We have to look at technology; we have to use technology to our benefit. That's what we're looking at here.

1620

Another area that was mentioned in the throne speech, that I know has been brought to my attention by my constituents, is the Drive Clean program. The Drive Clean program was started some years ago by a former government for a very good reason; that is, because of the smog from air pollution of cars that we suffer from in Ontario—those hot, muggy summer days when all the vehicles on the road contribute to pollution. What was done was that the Drive Clean program was put in place and emission tests were given to vehicles of certain ages. What we are finding is that some vehicles—in fact, more than 99% of vehicles; those cars that are, of course, newer than some others that are on the road—are passing their emission test. What we plan to do is reform the Drive Clean program to the end that we use the money spent on it by Ontarians in its most effective way, and that is to get to the cars that are doing the most polluting.

Mr. Sergio: Dirty cars.

Mr. Crozier: Dirty cars, it's been mentioned—and that's exactly what it is. So we're going to look at the Drive Clean program and modify that program where we feel it's necessary from the experience we have had up till now.

I remind driving constituents in the province of Ontario that when it comes to automobiles—they're a necessary part of our lives, a necessary part of our economy; they're a driver, if I may use that word, in the economy. But in having to have those cars of ours on the road, automobile insurance rates have been an issue over the last few years. I'm pleased to say that we have successfully brought auto insurance rates down by an average of 11%, and it's assumed that those rates may be reduced even more. My colleague Mr. Mike Colle, now the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, had an awful lot to do with our success.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): With good advice from my MPP colleagues.

Mr. Crozier: Your government will continue to implement the most sweeping and comprehensive changes to Ontario's consumer protection laws in more than 30 years, including stronger enforcement and larger fines. Again, I emphasize that we're here to serve the people of Ontario. There is really no other reason for me to have this seat, or for any of my colleagues to be in this Legislature, if it's not to serve the citizens of the province of Ontario, and we have to continue to strive to do a better job at that.

But we don't do it alone. You know, Ontarians have worked along with us to reduce the deficit from some \$5.6 billion to around \$1.6 billion. The work of my colleague and seatmate, the member for Vaughan–King–Aurora, Greg Sorbara, had an awful lot to do with that. The province also, under the guidance of Minister Caplan, launched a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan which includes roads, public transit, hospitals and infrastructure. I want to tell the folks back in Essex that when it comes to infrastructure, Minister Caplan and Minister Takhar in particular are interested in our concerns about the Highway 3 bypass, and I will continue to work with those two ministers so that we soon see improvements on that highway—not to say, though, or not to diminish the fact that there is more work being done on Highway 401 through the riding of Essex than I can recall since Highway 401 was even brought down that far.

In just two years the government has brought more than 2,200 megawatts of electricity on-line, and projects that we will deliver another 9,000 megawatts as part of our plan for a reliable supply of clean energy at a reasonable cost.

Consumers can look forward to getting smart meters that will help them save money by telling them when they can pay less. I hope all consumers of electricity have listened to the now Minister of Energy, Donna Cansfield, and are doing their part in conserving: changing to those light bulbs in their homes that take less electricity and turning that light off when it isn't needed.

It's a bit of a joke around my house, and our children remind me of it constantly. When I was younger, I was a junior power warden. We had a little card and a little button. My job around the house when I was a kid was to make sure that all the unnecessary use of electricity was looked at, to turn those lights off. Our lovely kids had to grow up with that legacy I've left, and I hope now to be able to teach it to my little granddaughter Emma and grandsons Adam and Benjamin. Grandpa is now a senior power warden and I'm trying to make them junior power wardens.

The government will offer Ontarians, as I said earlier, the first money-back guarantee if we don't deliver on some of these services.

The government's drive to form effective partnerships with the private sector and other levels of government includes less paperwork for small business and continuing gas tax money for public transit. We're the first provincial government in history to give gas tax money to municipalities for transit.

Of course, it's of interest to a small-urban, rural member like me that the largest city in our province functions well and functions as a driver in our economy. This government is working on the introduction of a new City of Toronto Act and legislation that would treat all municipalities with respect.

Interjections.

Mr. Crozier: I'm surrounded by friends here who appreciate that.

There it is, folks: A throne speech that said “strengthening Ontario’s economic advantage,” and the ways we can do it. If you think about it, that’s what we’re here to do. When you think about health care and the advantage it gives us over even our closest neighbour when it comes to production and costs of manufacturing, when you think of education, when you have the brightest and the best and you give them the best education you can, it’s for all our benefit.

I get the question every once in a while: “Why should I pay education tax? I don’t have any children in school any more. They’re grown,” and so forth. Well, somebody paid for our education when we were younger and, in growing up, we paid for part of our own education. I know our children worked when they went to university. Among ourselves and our family, we were able to educate two bright young children through university. My point is that we have to continue to do that. Just because we’re older and maybe don’t access the education system any more, I want to be there for my grandchildren, for your grandchildren and for everybody else. We need to emphasize that we need bright, well-educated young people in our province.

Transportation is another area that is an integral part of the economy we have today. We have to have a good transportation system.

I could go down the line with each of the ministers and the ministerial posts we have and say that it all really contributes to a growing, healthy economy, and that’s what it’s all about. In the next two years we’re going to see this economy grow like it’s never grown before and we’re all going to be there working on behalf of hard-working Ontarians.

Now I would like my colleague from London North Centre, Ms. Matthews, to have a few words.

1630

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre):

I’m honoured to have the opportunity to second the speech from the throne delivered yesterday by our treasured Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable James Bartleman. What an extraordinary man he is.

Yesterday the Lieutenant Governor began his speech by thanking those who have made his book drive a success. This book drive collected well over a million books from Ontarians for Ontarians that were distributed in schools in our most northern communities, schools where there were bookshelves but no books.

I’m told that when the boxes of books were delivered in the remote towns and villages it was difficult to get them from the trucks to the schools because the kids were so anxious to see what books were inside the boxes. They were thirsty for the knowledge, the ideas and the stories that were contained in those boxes.

In my own riding of London North Centre over 35,000 books were collected. I would like to echo the Lieutenant Governor’s thanks for the generosity of all those in my riding who joined in the spirit of the campaign and donated books they had read so others could read.

I especially want to thank the staff, the students and the community of St. Mark school, led by their wonderful

principal, Marg Clendenning, and of St. Mary Choir school, led by their dedicated principal, Kathy Fraumeni, and a special thank you to John Simcoe and his friends at St. Michael’s school, Labourers’ Union Local 1059 and so many others who made this such an overwhelming success.

Lieutenant Governor James Bartleman, the inspiration behind the campaign, the person whose actions produced this outpouring of generosity, I say to you, sir, thank you, merci, meegwetch. You have done more for the people of the province than you could ever imagine, and I applaud your newest initiatives to reduce the number of suicides among native children. If anyone can tackle this issue, you can. Your understanding, your imagination, your optimism—you have within you the unbeatable combination of traits that are required to address a problem of this depth.

Now I’d like to turn my attention to the initiatives contained in the throne speech, and I’m going to touch on a few that I think are especially important to me and to my constituency.

Clearly the intention of the government is to make sure that our economy is strong so that people enjoy a high quality of life, and that there is money to spend on social services, on health care, on education. It’s our intention to continue to move toward our stated goal of rebuilding and restoring the services in Ontario that make this the finest place there is in the world.

We’ve made a remarkable turnaround over the past two years, but there is still much to do to rebuild and restore our education system, to fix our health care system and to lay the foundation for economic prosperity for future generations. We will do all this within the context of being good stewards of our environment and good stewards of our fiscal situation, ensuring that we leave for our children cleaner water and cleaner air, less burdened by the debt of previous generations.

We are not content with merely returning to past excellence in Ontario. We are determined to reach even higher, to accelerate our progress, to address issues of social inequality, to open doors to whom in the past the doors have been locked shut, to ensure that everyone in Ontario has the opportunity to be the best they can be, to maximize the human potential in each one of us. We all benefit when that happens; we all lose when it doesn’t.

We all know that a good education is the foundation for a good future, but for many in Ontario, the barriers to a good, successful education are insurmountable. So they drop out of school at alarming rates before attaining the accreditation that is so important in today’s job market, and then have no option but to struggle in low-paid, sporadic employment with no benefits and no job security, to access social assistance when they can’t find work, to try to balance their precarious financial situation, deciding whether to pay the rent or feed the kids.

This throne speech reviews the steps we’ve already taken to lower some of those barriers to education and sets out the steps that we will take in this session to lower them further. We will lower the barriers to learning for

our youngest children, for those at risk of dropping out, for those for whom the financial barriers to post-secondary education are prohibitive, for those for whom systemic barriers mean that entire groups of people in this population are grossly under-represented in our post-secondary institutions, and for newcomers to Canada with the potential to prosper in their chosen country.

Starting with our youngest Ontarians, the Best Start program will make high-quality child care and early learning opportunities accessible for thousands of low- and middle-income families. It will also fund 25,000 new child care spaces and assistance so children arrive at school ready and eager to learn, to be the best they can be, to reach as high as they are able to reach.

Once they get to school, they will benefit from smaller class sizes in JK to grade 3. Already, 2,100 schools have smaller class sizes because we made it a priority to hire 2,400 new teachers.

I talked with one of those teachers in London just the other day. He told me what a difference smaller class sizes make for the students in his classroom. He told me how he is now able to teach every one of his students, to ensure that each one is keeping up, to make sure that each one has grasped the content, that they're getting the personal attention that young people need to build a strong foundation for future success. He contrasted his teaching experience this year with that of previous years, and he told me that our government has already made a real, lasting difference in the lives of his young students.

We will continue toward our goal of having our youngest students in class sizes of 20 or less by 2007-08, because we know it's the right thing to do for the children. We know that, in time, that investment will make a real difference to the economic prosperity of this province, because our prosperity depends on having a well-educated, highly skilled workforce.

We're going to make our progress on this important initiative accessible and transparent through a Web site that will provide information on class sizes in each school, and across the province. Parents, teachers and students will be able to see for themselves how we are keeping this promise of lower class sizes in the early years.

We're committed to having more children doing better in math and literacy by age 12, an age where kids start to firm up their goals and dreams for their futures, when they start formulating ideas about how smart they are and about how high they can reach.

We've already made progress on this front. We've hired hundreds of specialist teachers in literacy and numeracy, trained thousands more and provided new textbooks and library books for our schools. We've established a Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat to focus exclusively on this challenge. Test scores are moving higher, and we fully expect these new investments will pay off in even higher test scores in the future.

We must accelerate that progress, and one of the ways we will do that is by expanding community involvement in our schools. Volunteers, businesses and non-profit

organizations can and should play an important role in supporting teachers, parents and the others already devoting their lives to students. We will do a better job of tapping into that potential in our communities.

I'm delighted to introduce the Legislature to my mother, Joyce Matthews, who's with us in the gallery today. My mother is an example of how volunteers can make a real difference. She has volunteered her entire life, much of it with Frontier College. It was during her time at Frontier College that she pioneered the establishment of reading circles, of which there are now thousands. She worked in community centres and recruited volunteers to come with her to read to kids in Regent Park. One of those volunteers was a young man named George Smitherman. He's done well for himself. The kids at Regent Park called my mom "the book lady," and they looked forward to her arrival with her bag of books and her warm smile. Many of these kids had never before owned a book until she gave them one to take home.

I know that there are adults today who read because of my mom's work as a volunteer when they were kids. In fact, I met one of those people a while ago in London; she had also volunteered at Wheable school in London. This fellow told me what a difference my mom had made to him graduating from high school. She worked with him learning to read. I was quite moved by what he had to say about her. Then he charged me \$150 to fix my computer. It took him about 10 minutes to do that. So I think she taught him well.

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I know that there are lots more like my mom out there in Ontario, people who would be delighted to read with kids, who might not have anyone else to read with them. We are going to work to tap into that potential.

Another initiative I'm very happy about is the new alternative diploma. I've spent some time at a school in my riding called Sir George Ross Secondary School. It's a school that's specially designed for kids who have trouble in the regular academic schools. These kids go from school into the trades. The principal, Len Bartholomew, very passionately explained to me how currently his students, who are perfectly capable of and anxious to learn a trade, are prevented from doing that, prevented from entering apprenticeship programs, because their skills are not in the area we test for in order to graduate from high school. So because they currently are not able to get that graduation diploma from high school, they cannot enter apprenticeship trades. We have set up a big barrier for these students. They cannot move forward under the current situation. Now they will have their chance to be the best they can be. That's a good move for them, and it's a good move for our economy.

On the post-secondary front, one of the most exciting developments for me is tuition grants for low-income students. These are not loans; these are grants—grants that will cover their tuition costs. This year, 32,000 first- and second-year students are receiving grants—the first time that has happened in over a decade in Ontario. This is a very progressive initiative and one in which I take great pride.

The reason this has happened, of course, is that this government has set accessibility to post-secondary education as a priority. I anxiously await details on the initiatives to improve participation rates in post-secondary education for people from communities that are under-represented in those institutions: people from low-income backgrounds, people with disabilities, people from aboriginal communities, people who would be the first in their family to attend post-secondary education, and francophones. We know that not just financial barriers stand in the way of some very bright and capable people continuing with their education. There are other barriers as well—barriers within our power to lower.

For many people, what they need is someone who believes in them—perhaps a teacher—someone who instills a sense of confidence, who urges them to reach higher, to go further, to be the best they can be. For others, the barriers begin in the earliest years, because they have inadequate child care or they get lost in a crowded classroom and fail to achieve their full potential. For some students, attending college or university simply is not within their understanding of the realm of the possible. No one in their family has ever done so, and there is no expectation that they will. Our new first-generation plan will help those students who are the first in their family to go on to post-secondary education.

In the past, I think we have failed to adequately recognize and address the barriers that are faced by some students. This government is going to change that. We're going to understand the many and diverse causes of underachievement and we're going to do everything in our power to fix them. For that, I am very proud of this government.

The other issue that I will briefly touch on in my remarks today is the improvements we've made in health care and what we're going to do to make our health care system even better and stronger.

In my community, I hear more about health care than I do anything else. For my constituents, having a health care system they can count on when they need it is their biggest concern. Their concerns tend to centre around two different areas. The first, of course, is access to family doctors. I'm sure every member in here gets phone calls on a far too regular basis from people who are looking for a doctor, and looking to us for help to get a family doctor. I'm also disturbed not just by the numbers of people looking for family doctors, but the fact that it is the sicker people, the people who need doctors the most, who are having the most difficulty getting doctors. So we're addressing this problem head on. This is a problem that has not happened overnight. It's taken years to develop, and we have taken speedy action to ensure that in the future, access to family doctors will be something that we all have.

I remember not too long ago people would say that if you don't have a good relationship with your doctor, if you don't communicate well with your doctor, then just find another doctor. You sure don't hear people say that any more, do you? Of course, if people don't have

doctors, they go to the emergency room, they go to walk-in clinics or they don't go at all. This presents real problems in continuity of care, and it's a very expensive solution, too.

I look forward to the next round of announcements on family health teams. There are already 69 family health teams that have been announced, 80 more this year, and by the end of our mandate, 150 family health teams will be up and running. This will use the full range of expertise that is available in the health care system. Nurse practitioners will be able to do what they are trained to do, as will dietitians, mental health workers and pharmacists. We don't always need to see a doctor. If you have a healthy baby and you need to take the baby for a check-up, you don't need to see the doctor for that. You don't need to see a doctor for ear infections or advice on nutrition. Because of the family health teams, doctors will be able to see half again the number of people they can now see. It's a wonderful innovation, and one that will improve the level and quality of health care for individuals in our province.

The second thing that we've done, in addition to more family health teams, is increase the number of spots for medical students, with further expansions coming. I am very proud of the initiative with internationally trained medical graduates. We've doubled the number of spaces so we're not wasting the education they received in a different country. We'll help them reach the high standards we demand in Ontario as quickly as they can.

The other issue, of course, in health care is that of wait times. I'm very excited about the initiative we will be posting on the Web site: the wait times for different procedures in different communities, in different hospitals, so that doctors and patients can check on-line and see how long they have to wait for specific procedures in their hospital and in hospitals in their area and across the province. You know, it's astonishing to me that we have not had a system in the past where we can measure wait times. This is an extraordinary innovation. Wait times were always under the control of the physicians and nobody collected the data. We talked to our neighbours, we talked to people about how long they had to wait and what doctors got a shorter wait list. This is going to be all open and accessible and fair, so that patients across the province can see how long they have to wait and where they can go for faster service.

This is a government that is committed to good governance and to good public policy. We have a long-range vision. We are working to build an Ontario that reflects the values of the people in this province. We're working to build a just and caring society, one in which each child has the opportunity to be the very best he or she can be, where every newcomer is welcomed and given what they need to become a full, contributing member of our society.

I'm proud to be part of this government. I'm proud of the initiatives outlined in the throne speech. There is much to do, but we have set our goals and we have taken many steps in the direction of our goals. We are moving confidently in the direction of our dreams.

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

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I've heard a no, so all those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

Monday, October 17, in the afternoon, the official opposition will reply to the speech from the throne; in the evening, third reading of Bill 159.

Tuesday, October 18, in the afternoon, third party reply to the speech from the throne; in the evening, third reading of Bill 128.

Wednesday, October 19, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 211; in the evening, throne speech debate.

Thursday, October 20, in the afternoon, opposition day of the third party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): If I could just recognize Doug Reycraft, former MPP for Middlesex, in the 33rd and 34th Parliament.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I now move adjournment of the House.

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

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, October 17.

The House adjourned at 1650.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement t	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Eglington-Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Erie-Lincoln Essex	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Crosier, 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)
	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, 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 des ministres
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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