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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 27 February 2006

Lundi 27 février 2006

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

Monday 27 February 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 février 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'd like to take this time to call on the finance minister to include in his spring budget assistance for the Ontario grape and wine industry. I'll call to the minister's attention an article in the *Globe and Mail* on February 18, 2006, that cites "thin tourist traffic, oppressive regulations, high taxes and an all-powerful LCBO that favours big ... producers over boutique wineries."

Norm Beal, the chair of the Ontario wine council, said, "There are a number of properties on the market, and a real risk that some will go bankrupt."

I have five ideas for the finance minister. I know the Minister of Tourism, who was applauding a moment ago, is a big supporter of the industry, as well.

First, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant and I brought forward at the finance committee two motions, the first to incorporate and incentivize growth in the VQA category as part of the LCBO business plan, and secondly, for Ontario to participate in the national replant program as promoted by the Grape Growers of Ontario. Unfortunately, these measures were defeated in committee despite the support of the NDP, but I do hope the finance minister, nonetheless, will move forward with them.

The number three idea: Move forward with Bill 7. The Ontario VQA Wine Stores Act would open up a new channel for our boutique wineries across the province. It has passed second reading with the support of all parties. We'd love to see it come to fruition.

In addition, the minister should examine the punishing tax burden at the LCBO that will often take high-quality VQA wines out of the system. He should explore, as British Columbia has done, whether there are some dormant licences in the system that could be used to further the VQA wine store concept, and I hope—

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

MIKE POST

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today in recognition of the efforts of Mike Post and his team at Prime Time Fitness and

Boxing, who are helping Ontarians become much healthier, much fitter. Mike, the owner of Prime Time Fitness, is currently the undefeated WBE welterweight US champion and is looking forward to making Prime Time his home base as he breaks into the international rankings.

I was honoured to be his guest at the grand opening of his Oakville fitness centre last month. The event was attended not only by Bronte community members but also members of the business improvement area—chairs Murray Macdonald and Laura Killip—and also by some of the biggest names in Canadian boxing. On hand to celebrate the new facilities were world number one ranked super bantamweight fighter Steve Molitor, former Canadian champion Brian Mackie, six-time amateur national champion Jason Douglas, as well as young up-and-comers Ray Olubwale and Rey Morales.

Mike's goal is nothing short of ambitious. He wants to revolutionize the boxing training industry. He plans to use Prime Time to serve both the needs of professional clientele as well as the general public, and at the same time provide opportunities for our communities' youth to work and train.

I'm proud that, after having so much professional success in Canada and the United States, Mike has decided to come back home to Oakville to pursue his dreams. I extend my best wishes to Prime Time boxing for a long and prosperous future.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I stand to congratulate the OLA—the Ontario Landowners Association—on a successful founding meeting this past weekend. The convention was the culmination of years of frustration and determination for rural landowners whose issues have been largely ignored and pushed aside, issues like property and land rights; municipal restructuring; source water protection; the war on tobacco; farm regulations on eggs, cheese, chickens, farmers' markets; and, of course, the farm income crisis.

The weekend conference featured Liberal MP Wayne Easter and Conservative MPs Scott Reid and Darryl Kramp. I was in attendance, as well as former MPP Garry Fox.

This meeting of the minds included a debriefing on the federal election as well as strategy for municipal and, yes, provincial elections. The OLA founding declaration will "advocate for the protection of property rights," and, "should the need arise ... create a political party." Ontario

landowners will also hold elections to represent rural Ontario in the Senate. The OLA constitution states, "To uphold our rural identity, traditions, security and prosperity ... in keeping with the principles of natural justice."

Tired of lip service to rural interests and interested in hearing more? Come out to Port Perry March 8 to hear John Tory and—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.
1340

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to inform the House of a recent event that I had the privilege and honour of attending in the riding of Brant. The event was the annual awards ceremony for the Royal Canadian Legion, Brantford Branch 90. Every year, the Legion gathers to honour the ongoing service of its members and to celebrate their achievements not only in their branch but in the community.

Branch 90 of the Royal Canadian Legion has a rich, rich history in Brantford. The Legion handed out 11 60-year gold service pins and two 50-year gold pins for local veterans' service to our community. The Royal Canadian Legion in Brantford has a very large and dedicated membership. Ordinary members have contributed a total of 1,565 years of service to the Legion and the community. Associate members in total have contributed 1,030 years of service to our community. This clearly demonstrates the strength of the veteran community in Brant, as well as their dedication and involvement within their own organization.

I understand that one of the three remaining First World War veterans, Dwight Wilson, celebrated his 105th birthday surrounded by family and friends. We all congratulate him.

In the spirit of celebrating the sacrifices and commitments made by our veterans, we see construction of the veterans' memorial on the south lawn, the first new monument to be built on the grounds of Queen's Park in 65 years. We are indeed indebted to the heroic service of our veterans, and I encourage all of the members to join me in showing our support and gratitude wherever and however we can from this place. Congratulations—

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

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): The McGuinty government is making post-secondary education announcements without contributing any—or little—capital funding to support these announcements. Recently, a satellite medical school for Kitchener was announced with only \$3 million for capital construction from the province. According to Mayor Craig of Cambridge, regional taxpayers may be asked for \$20 million more.

This is becoming the norm in our community. When the creation of the University of Waterloo health sciences

campus in Kitchener was announced two years ago, the province refused to spend a dime on construction, and city taxpayers are paying \$30 million. When Wilfrid Laurier University announced it was relocating its faculty of social work to downtown Kitchener, the province contributed nothing for capital costs and Kitchener taxpayers were left with a \$6.5-million bill.

Something is wrong here. Our community has always been prepared to pay its fair share, but the responsibility for post-secondary education and health care lies with the provincial McGuinty government, not our regional taxpayers. I urge the McGuinty government to live up to its provincial responsibilities for post-secondary education and health care.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): On May 13, 2005, Mr. McGuinty said on post-secondary education, "By quality, we mean more faculty at colleges and universities, to accommodate higher enrolments and help students succeed, more faculty time for students, more students completing their undergraduate programs and going on to grad school and easier movement for students between colleges and universities."

Yet, in spite of this, as of March 7, some 9,100 teachers, counsellors and librarians at Ontario's 24 community colleges could be on strike. The number one issue for their members is updating the workload formula. They want smaller class sizes, more teachers and more faculty time for students. The workload plan should be improved in the areas of student evaluation and feedback, preparation time, giving teachers the right to determine the methods of evaluation and reducing class size, including looking for staffing improvements so partial-load faculty who are teaching seven to 12 hours are treated fairly.

Negotiations are to resume on March 2, to March 6. I am hoping and we are all hoping that management is going to negotiate a fair deal so that we can indeed reach the kind of goal and the expectations on quality that Mr. McGuinty is looking for.

FIRE IN BRIGHTON

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise to inform my colleagues of a fire and numerous propane explosions which took place Saturday evening, February 25, at Gerow Propane Ltd., in the municipality of Brighton in my riding of Northumberland. I commend Christine Herrington, mayor of the municipality of Brighton, as well as emergency officials, who declared a state of emergency at 12:12 a.m. As a precaution, residents within a 1.5-kilometre radius were evacuated, affecting approximately 400 residents. I was personally on hand at the command centre, and was impressed by the efforts of the municipality's emergency community control group as they coordinated the labour of six local fire departments, the Ministry of the Environment, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority as well as the Ontario fire marshal's office.

We can only imagine the risk these emergency workers undertook, knowing that the blaze they were battling had the potential for further propane explosions at any moment. I'm sure that the members of this House will join me while I congratulate and pay tribute to the more than 45 firefighters, along with OPP officers, who displayed tremendous bravery while battling this horrific inferno.

I spoke to Bruce Davis, CAO of the municipality of Brighton, and he is proud of the quick reaction which demonstrates how well prepared they are. He also indicated that those residents should sleep well at night, knowing their municipality has a tremendous plan in place to truly protect their community. This weekend's event indicated that the community is well prepared for any emergency action. I want to personally thank all of the people who took part, because they put other's lives before theirs.

CORNWALL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I am proud to recognize an outstanding fundraising effort in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. Several local radio stations under the Corus banner joined together last Friday for the Corus Cares: Our Hospital, Our Future radiothon. The intent was to keep the momentum going on fundraising efforts for our community hospital project, for which \$10.9 million has already been raised. The radiothon did far more than that. Over a 13-hour period, the event raised \$151,197. That's right: Donations poured in from all corners of the riding, from young children to seniors, from businesses large and small. Everyone has pulled together again to show how giving, how committed to their community, the people of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh and the city of Cornwall are.

I would like to thank our community's radio, Corus Entertainment, for organizing the event, local residents Tom and Gail Kaneb for co-chairing the hospital fundraising campaign and working tirelessly to get the word out, and each and every person who manned a phone or put in a donation. A special thank you goes to Premier McGuinty and Minister Smitherman for lending their voices and support to the radiothon.

I am impressed by the generosity of my constituents, but not surprised. In the words of Toronto-area businessman Mitchell Abbey, who is planning to locate an operation in the city, "Cornwall has shown itself to be extremely resilient and entrepreneurial." The results of this radiothon are another proof that the city is the little city with the big heart.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I rise in the House today to clarify some misconceptions about our plan for local health integration networks, otherwise known as

LHINs. There is a lot of misinformation out there, and unfortunately there is also a lot of misinformation being circulated. There are some who are alleging that the LHINs are somehow paving the way to health care privatization.

This could hardly be further from the truth. With LHINs, patients will still only use their OHIP cards to obtain services. No individual will ever get to the front of the line because they can better afford it. The fact is, this legislation contains no provision for increased privatization or expansion of competitive bidding. Furthermore, it very specifically prohibits the integration that would result in an individual being required to pay for a health service. This government's commitment to public medicine could not be stronger, which is why we enshrined it in the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

I am proud of this legislation because it's about giving more power to Ontario's communities. Local experts are simply the best placed to understand the health care needs of their own communities.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultation 2006 from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

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

Mr. Hoy: I want to thank the members of the legislative committee as well as the members of the public who attended those hearings, and all the staff who worked so hard to produce this report.

I move adjournment of the debate.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REGULATORY MODERNIZATION ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA RÉGLEMENTATION

Mr. Peters moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to allow for information sharing about regulated organizations to improve efficiency in the administration and enforcement of regulatory legislation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts /
Projet de loi 69, Loi permettant l'échange de renseignements sur les organismes réglementés afin de

rendre plus efficaces l'application et l'exécution de la législation de nature réglementaire et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

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

The minister may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Speaker, I'll defer and deliver my statement during ministerial statements.

OPTOMETRY AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES OPTOMÉTRISTES

Ms. Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to amend the Optometry Act, 1991 /
Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les optométristes.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The purpose of the bill is to amend the Optometry Act to allow optometrists to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents, TPAs, for the treatment of certain eye diseases.

While optometrists are responsible for the majority of primary eye and vision care in Ontario, they are not permitted to prescribe treatments for patients who present with eye diseases. Instead, patients must get a prescription from a medical doctor to access the treatment they need. This may result in delays in treatment or additional demands being made on walk-in clinics and emergency departments for those who don't have a family doctor.

Seven other Canadian jurisdictions have passed legislation to allow optometrists to prescribe TPAs. The Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, HPRAC, is reviewing the matter now. It's time for Ontario to ensure that patients can get the treatment they need for certain eye diseases when they visit their optometrists.

This is the third time the bill has been introduced, and I'd like to thank the member from Niagara South for the work that he has done in the past in this regard.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, February 27, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

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 1355 to 1400.

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

Ayes

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Arthurs, Wayne | Dunlop, Garfield | Peterson, Tim |
| Balkissoon, Bas | Flynn, Kevin Daniel | Phillips, Gerry |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Fonseca, Peter | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Bentley, Christopher | Gerretsen, John | Qaadri, Shafiq |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo | Hoy, Pat | Racco, Mario G. |
| Bradley, James J. | Jackson, Cameron | Ramal, Khalil |
| Brownell, Jim | Jeffrey, Linda | Ramsay, David |
| Bryant, Michael | Kular, Kuldip | Rinaldi, Lou |
| Cansfield, Donna H. | Leal, Jeff | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Caplan, David | Levac, Dave | Sandals, Liz |
| Chambers, Mary Anne V. | Matthews, Deborah | Smith, Monique |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Mauro, Bill | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Colle, Mike | McMeekin, Ted | Tory, John |
| Cordiano, Joseph | McNeely, Phil | Van Bommel, Maria |
| Crozier, Bruce | Meilleur, Madeleine | Watson, Jim |
| Delaney, Bob | Miller, Norm | Wilkinson, John |
| Dhillon, Vic | Milloy, John | Wilson, Jim |
| Di Cocco, Caroline | Mitchell, Carol | Wong, Tony C. |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | Munro, Julia | Wynne, Kathleen O. |
| Duguid, Brad | Parsons, Ernie | Yakabuski, John |
| Duncan, Dwight | Peters, Steve | Zimmer, David |

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

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Bisson, Gilles | Kormos, Peter | Martel, Shelley |
| Horwath, Andrea | Marchese, Rosario | Prue, Michael |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 63; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I rise today to present the House with details about the Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006, which I had the honour of introducing a few minutes ago.

This act, if passed, would strengthen public protection by introducing innovative improvements to the way we inspect, investigate and enforce laws across this great province. The legislation would, if passed, improve protection of the public by enabling staff in our 13 enforcement ministries and related agencies to achieve new levels of co-operation, use information more effectively, and target efforts where they count. This would result in better enforcement of the laws that protect our workers, our environment, our fish, our wildlife, the public and our farmers. At the same time, it would allow

businesses to operate more effectively by reducing duplication in information collection and other compliance activities. Simply put, better connections equal better protection.

The people of Ontario expect the government to introduce laws that will protect them. This we do. We have examined our approaches and have found a number of ways in which we can improve. Currently, 13 different Ontario ministries and other government organizations enforce a wide variety of laws to keep the public safe. In fact, it is not uncommon in this province for businesses to be subject to inspections from as many as seven or eight different ministries. This causes duplication of government compliance efforts and places unnecessary burdens on businesses. I want to be perfectly clear: Individually, these ministries are doing an admirable job, yet the pressures on our field staff continue to grow, and we have to come up with new initiatives and new tools to get the job done.

I would like to thank my fellow ministers and officials from 13 participating ministries who have been involved in the efforts for us to all work together. I would also like to thank Minister Bentley, who, when Minister of Labour, initiated and planted the seeds for this project. Most importantly, this idea came from the government's ideas campaign, our government's campaign to encourage members of the Ontario public service to contribute ideas to get better results for the public's money. This is an idea that came from ministry staff.

I want to thank all of those who were involved in coming up with such a bright idea. While I cannot personally name all of them, I would like to thank John Stager, assistant deputy minister for the inspections, investigation and enforcement secretariat, or the II&E, and Jane Mallen of the Ministry of the Attorney General. Both are here today in the gallery along with many colleagues from the various ministries, from the II&E and legal communities, so welcome them here. Welcome, all, and thank you all very much.

I'd like to summarize a few key points of the legislation. By changing the way regulatory ministries can use and share information, this legislation could make it easier to administer and enforce about 85 statutes and 600 regulations across this province. If passed, it would:

- allow ministries to share specific types of business-related compliance information amongst themselves;
- introduce a “heads up” provision that would authorize staff to notify another ministry if they observe something that is likely to be under the mandate of the other ministry;
- authorize ministers to create teams of field staff to work together; and
- allow ministers to publish information about an organization's compliance record.

This information would also target repeat offenders by requiring the courts to consider relevant previous convictions in sentencing.

Sharing information would allow us to reduce the burden of duplication businesses face as a result of our

regulatory efforts. This would let business get back to doing what they do best—supporting Ontario's economy.

A big impact of the legislation would be the ability it gives to address the issue of non-compliance, targeting companies that choose to not play by the rules. These rule breakers not only break our laws, but they undercut responsible businesses and put the public at risk. By creating teams of field staff from different ministries, we could work together to target these repeat violators. This would remove the competitive advantage that these rule breakers seek to gain, and support responsible businesses that comply with our laws.

It is important to note that there are a number of safeguards that have been built into this legislation. While it would allow for field staff to share information, it would not undermine the protection of personal privacy. There are specific limits in the heads-up provision that do not allow for so-called fishing expeditions. Field staff would be limited to sharing “plain view” observations only. I've personally met with the Information and Privacy Commissioner regarding this legislation, and she is comfortable with our approach. Even with the additional powers of this legislation, these safeguards ensure balance.

These are the key parts of the legislation that I've introduced today. In developing this legislation, we've examined the best practices for regulatory compliance in more than 40 jurisdictions. I'm proud to say that this legislation, if passed, would make Ontario a true leader in regulatory compliance.

This legislation is but one piece of a larger modernization plan. We'll be introducing a performance-based strategy to recognize those companies with exceptional records of compliance. We could then target enforcement efforts towards those companies that commit serious repeat violations. We've also launched a pilot project designed to assist small business in improving their compliance by introducing easy-to-understand tool kits that will help. We have consulted with our stakeholders, small business, other business groups, ministry field staff and the unions that represent those employees. All are in agreement with our approach.

The time has come to move forward with a bold new way of protecting the public by modernizing the way we share information and work together across government. I urge all members of this House to support the legislation. It's good for business, it's good for government and it's good for the people of Ontario, because truly, better connections equal better protection.

1410

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE ET FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We know that when we invest in post-secondary education and skills today, we build jobs and prosperity tomorrow. The brains and

know-how of a skilled workforce are the competitive edge of the 21st century.

But higher education is much more than that: It is the very foundation of an engaged citizenry and a strong democracy.

Le Canada a besoin de programmes d'éducation postsecondaire et de formation professionnelle qui comptent parmi les meilleurs au monde.

Achieving that goal will require us to build a new and successful partnership with the federal government. That's why I'm pleased to be able to report to the Legislature on an extraordinary event I was privileged to attend last week: the historic national summit on post-secondary education and skills training, held in Ottawa.

The summit was conceived in August 2005 at the Council of the Federation. At that time, Premiers asked Premiers McGuinty and Charest to convene a summit on post-secondary education and skills training and to lead a process to develop a Canada-wide strategy. The result was last Friday's Competing for Tomorrow summit, organized and hosted by Premiers McGuinty and Charest. Six other Premiers also participated in the discussions. I was honoured to work with the Premier to prepare for and attend this national summit.

The summit demonstrated a new way of doing business for Canada. For the first time, Premiers from all provinces and territories worked directly with stakeholders to create a Canada-wide strategy for post-secondary education and skills training. More than 200 leaders from across Canada came to share ideas on challenges, strategies and actions to prepare our post-secondary education and skills training systems for the 21st century. Premiers were able to hear from leaders from across the country, including students, university and college presidents, employers and representatives from apprenticeships, business, labour, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and other community groups.

Delegates at the summit were asked to discuss key issues, challenges and priorities for action in seven theme areas. Here are some of the things we heard from the leaders participating in the summit:

On access, we heard about the importance of access and the need for a commitment from all partners to support post-secondary education and skills training opportunities for all Canadians, including aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and students from low-income families.

On quality and funding, participants brought their ideas about innovative ways to maintain and increase the quality of Canada's post-secondary education and skills training systems. They agreed that new federal resources are required to support provinces and territories, and shared their ideas on the amount and types of supports that the federal government should contribute to this national priority.

On participation in the labour force, participants recognized that high levels of participation in the workforce benefit not only individuals but the overall prosperity of our society. They shared a concern about unfair

barriers encountered by many immigrants seeking adequate jobs to match their skills. They recognize many of our people lack the literacy skills to work and succeed in today's knowledge economy.

On skills for the 21st-century workplace, participants stressed the need for employer investment and training to build skills for the 21st-century workplace. They told us training is key to a successful strategy for strengthening workplace skills, especially as technology continues to evolve. They agreed that employers need encouragement to invest in the skills of their workers.

On research and innovation capacity, participants urged partners to work together to boost Canada's research and innovation capacity. They recognized that investing in research brings multiple rewards to post-secondary learning, to economic competitiveness and to society as a whole.

What of lifelong learning? Many recognized that students and citizens need help to make transitions from one stage of learning to the next and to skills upgrading opportunities. There was agreement that Canadians need to adopt a culture of learning that involves continuous training for all students and workers, whatever their age and wherever they live.

On the needs of rural and northern areas, there was strong representation that people in northern and rural areas face many barriers to participating in post-secondary education and skills training, and that governments must introduce solutions with a greater awareness of the challenges faced by those in both rural and northern areas.

In conclusion, it's clear that Canada needs leadership on this issue. Premier McGuinty provided the energy, passion and dedication that made the summit possible and that gives us all cause for optimism. We share responsibility now to move forward.

Ontario has recognized the need for action. Through the Reaching Higher plan, we are investing \$6.2 billion over the next five years, the largest investment in post-secondary education and training in Ontario in over 40 years. Reaching Higher focuses on quality, access and accountability, and these themes form the basis for much of the discussion at the summit. As Premier McGuinty told the summit, the most important thing we need to do is to ensure that all Canadians understand the importance and urgency of developing the skills and knowledge of our young people.

We need to achieve excellence in research and innovation, quality of teaching, student experience and workplace outcomes. We need to provide everyone with the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Our greatest asset in this country is our people, and we have a duty to invest to ensure that our post-secondary education and skills programs are second to none.

We need to develop a culture of education, skills and innovation as well as a love of learning, but we can't do this alone. As the summit participants told us, we need a partnership to provide the required level of investments, and the Premiers and participants called upon the federal government to join with the provinces and territories in

committing to a Canada-wide strategy for post-secondary education and skills training.

Premiers McGuinty and Charest will continue to take a leading role through the Council of the Federation in making post-secondary education and skills training a top priority for all Canadians.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I'll just spend two and a half minutes responding to the statement and the legislation that was introduced by the Minister of Labour to give sweeping powers to government inspectors. I'll say at the beginning that it's sad that you need to change the laws—or you feel you need to change the laws—because inspectors aren't able to pass on information today. I'm not sure that's totally true and I'm not sure you want to give this much power to the first inspector who walks on the premises. I've had bad experiences with government inspectors in the past—overzealous liquor inspectors, various overzealous labour ministry inspectors.

In response to a question from the media about, “Will this cut red tape?” you didn't do a very good job answering that. In fact, you said no. “Will this create any more jobs in the province?” You said no, it won't create any jobs. “Will this save any money?” You said no, it's not the intent to save any money.

In fact, I think this will discourage—I just looked at your website and you encourage self-reporting. Why would anyone self-report when one inspector shows up and now he can call 12 of his buddies in other ministries? You're going to have an inspector love-in on your hands if you don't bring safeguards into this.

You say this is good for business. I don't see anyone—we ran small businesses in my family and we had a heck of a time all the time with the health inspector because we owned a tavern that had a dirt basement. The fact of the matter is, if he had had those powers in those days, he would have shut us down every day of the week. Yet there was nothing wrong with the ice on our premises, I can tell you that.

You should have got up today—because you didn't talk about jobs in the whole press conference—and told us what you're going to do to reverse the trend we've seen: 56,000 manufacturing jobs lost in 2005; 33,000 manufacturing jobs lost in January of this year alone.

So I say to you, good luck. I don't believe that you need this legislation the way you think you need it. You've not made a good case for it and I don't believe it's as business-friendly as you say it is.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I want to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for his comments in the House today. I also want to thank him for reporting to this House, which is not always the

case with some ministers. So I wanted to say for the record that that is appreciated, so that we can comment on it.

Obviously the minister is painfully aware of the severe cuts for post-secondary education by the federal government that we've been experiencing over the last 10 years. It was the catalyst for much of the discussion. It's clearly been commented on by many.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Mr. Jackson: I suspect the Minister of the Environment wants to hear more. They pale by comparison to the cuts that Ontarians experienced in health care as Paul Martin attempted to balance the books on the back of Ontario health care and post-secondary education.

But Stephen Harper did indicate when he campaigned in the last election that he would make post-secondary—

Interjections.

Mr. Jackson: The government opposite really doesn't want to hear when there is co-operation between the Conservative federal government and the Ontario Liberal government. Somehow you think this is bad news. I think you really should learn how to get onside and work with a government that says it's going to do something here.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I need to be able to hear the member for Burlington.

Member for Burlington.

Mr. Jackson: When I check the websites for what the Liberals promised in the last election, it's no wonder Paul Martin didn't succeed in his last electoral endeavour, because his website was rather sparse when it came to commitments in post-secondary. Mind you, he was the minister who cut \$2.2 billion from transfers to the provinces.

1420

This is a new government in Ottawa that has promised to work with the provinces to increase family income thresholds for student loan eligibility—that will mean more students across Canada will get access to affordable education; exempt the first \$10,000 of student scholarship or bursary income from taxation; provide students or their parents with a federal tax credit on spending up to \$500 per year on their textbooks; and in co-operation with the provinces, remove post-secondary education funding from the Canada social transfer, and create an independent Canada education and training transfer to ensure that there is dedicated funding for post-secondary education and training. Clearly, this was a commitment made by the federal government. We're delighted that the two Premiers have seen fit to come to Ottawa and through this summit determine the future for post-secondary in our country.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats don't quarrel in principle with the proposition that there should not be arbitrary prohibitions against an

inspector for a given ministry reporting back observations that may be within the bailiwick or jurisdiction of yet another ministry. At the same time, we will be carefully watching this bill as it proceeds through second reading. It strikes us as a bill that inevitably and necessarily has to be subject to public hearings.

Let me tell you some of the fears that we have. These are not foreign to the minister; he anticipates these concerns, I'm sure.

One is the creation of a generic inspector, and the abandonment of the incredible skill sets that hard-working inspectors in any number of ministries develop over the course of years of dedication to the public sector here in Ontario. So we have concerns about the prospect of generic inspectors. We think it's imperative that inspectors from the Ministry of the Environment remain within the MOE and that inspectors from the MTO remain within the MTO etc.

Secondly, we're concerned about the prospect of inflated data or inflated statistics. In other words, we understand that an inspection by a Ministry of Labour inspector will be recorded as an inspection by the Ministry of Labour. But should that inspector observe infractions he or she believes of environmental laws or Ministry of Transportation laws, we don't believe that should be counted as yet another inspection. We want to make sure that the legislation makes it clear that these inspections cannot be multiplied by virtue of the multiple observations that could be made.

Finally, and without limiting our concerns, we're concerned about the proposition of there being checklists, in other words, of inspectors going in being called upon to do omnibus inspections. We find that an inappropriate exercise on the part of this ministry.

At the end of the day, it's really all about good public servants: inspectors trying to do their jobs with incredibly limited resources and tools. We put to you that during the course of the development of this legislation, we'll be calling upon this government to ensure that our ministries are adequately staffed with inspectors so that they're out there not only doing the inspections but laying the charges, proceeding with the prosecutions and getting the convictions of any number of bad bosses and bad operators across the province.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm happy to respond to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and I am very pleased to say that all the provinces and the federal government are now debating the importance of colleges and universities. In light of the fact that 80% of the new jobs that are being created in the next decade will require some post-secondary education or training, this is indeed a very timely debate.

Mr. Bentley speaks about quality, and adds that a tuition fee hike he will announce soon will increase the quality of education offered at community colleges and

universities. What we saw under the Conservative regime was that for every dollar in tuition hikes, the government took \$2 out of the system.

I remind the minister and monsieur McGuinty that they can't use the federal government as an excuse for hiking tuition fees at colleges and universities.

The Premier wants our universities to compete with the world's best, but how can our best compete if they can't afford university? Raising tuition fees will drive students out of school, cheat them of opportunities and weaken our province. Federal cuts have driven the cost of tuition fees up, but other provinces have maintained a freeze on tuition rates. Monsieur McGuinty and the minister should do the same. The Premier says failure is not an option; well, it's the Premier who will be failing our students, if tuition fees rise. Manitoba, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan have all maintained a freeze; Ontario should follow their lead.

Currently, medical school tuition fees at the University of Toronto are over \$16,000 a year, while Quebec medical students pay around \$3,000 per year to attend McGill University. Both institutions are considered to be top-notch institutions, yet Toronto students pay about five times the tuition fees of McGill students. Don't you go telling me, Minister and Monsieur McGuinty, that these costs to go to medical school—\$16,000; to go to U of T legal school here costs \$16,000—do not affect access. They do. Students are discouraged from entering these programs, and the government must reflect on the implications of that. Students in general programs are paying 5,000 bucks each, and the deregulated programs have been astronomical, as I pointed out. Students graduate with debts that look like second mortgages—in some cases, first mortgages.

What I say to the government and what I'm saying to students and the people of Ontario is this: Support my Bill 12, which calls for a freeze on tuition hikes until 2007, and then let each party go into an election with their plans. But until then, freeze tuition fees. That's what we call on Monsieur McGuinty to do.

VISITORS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the gallery opposite, we have a group of men and women, agriculturalists and rural residents from Lambton, Middlesex, Chatham-Kent and Essex. They're here taking part in Government 101, hosted by my colleague the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Can the minister tell us how many megawatts of new generation capacity

are under construction in the province at the present time?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): We have just under 9,000 megawatts that will be put into place in the next five years. Melancthon, which is close to where you are, will be up and going in March, one of the first wind turbine farms in Ontario.

Mr. Tory: Perhaps the minister misunderstood my question. The question was, how many new projects are under construction today? I don't think you really meant that there would be 9,000 megawatts of new projects under construction today, because the fact is, on most of these major projects that you've made such a big deal about, there isn't a shovel in the ground: Greenfield power, 280 megawatts, cancelled; Calpine, bankrupt, 1,000 megawatts cancelled or delayed; Invenergy in Lambton, 570 megawatts, can't get zoning; Thunder Bay, 310 megawatts, needs an environmental assessment to bring the gas pipeline to town; Greenfield South, facing delays by the host municipality, 280 megawatts. That's almost 2,500 right there where there is not a shovel in the ground. Nothing is happening.

Your plan for energy replacement is in a shambles. When are you going to do something about it, go back to the drawing board, come up with a real plan and stop putting families and jobs in this province at risk?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. In fact, Calpine is under construction. In fact, Site Goreway is under construction, and the first phase will be up in 2007. I would be very happy to sit down with the member opposite and provide an update on where each of the levels are.

Remember that a lot of our proposals are dealing with the wind. We have, for the first time, two wind manufacturers who have come into this province. So 2,800 came in. In the next five years, we have 9,000 under way. We do, in fact, have shovels in the ground. Calpine Mitsui is one of them.

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Mr. Tory: The fact is that the 2007—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): John, you need to get back to your riding.

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): She defies you all the time. No respect for the Speaker, Ms. Pupatello.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: In fact, the 2007 coal promise was predicated on many of the projects I've just listed being complete by now. Dalton McGuinty wrote to the Hamilton Spectator and said that there would be 5,500 megawatts of new natural gas projects on line and complete by 2006, which is where we now are. Of course, they're not on line; they're not complete. He also said that the Toronto waterfront project would be complete by 2004. That was

two years ago, and we know where that is today. None of these are really even under way at all.

Will you admit that your plan isn't a plan, that we need to go back to the drawing board in terms of the dates and the times with respect to the coal promise? Will you admit that you need to examine clean technologies and that you need to come up with some realistic dates that are not irresponsible, that are not going to put jobs and families at risk in this province? Will you admit that?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank you for the question. What I will admit is that nothing was done in this province for 10 years. In fact, not only was the generation neglected, the transmission was neglected. Not only was the transmission neglected, the conservation was neglected.

We said we would build, and we have. We said we would maximize our existing transmission, and we have. We said we would maximize our existing generation, and we have. We said we would build a conservation culture, and we are. So those projects are under way.

You're right: It takes some time to go through the processes. I'm sure you're not like the member of the other party in that you want those EAs done in a heartbeat. There is a process to work with the communities and we are undergoing those processes. But I have to tell you that for the first time there's more than 1,345 megawatts of renewable energy in this province that hadn't been there before.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: My new question is to the Minister of Energy as well. Will you confirm that you asked Toronto Hydro to provide a bid for the waterfront hydro project with a deadline of February 15, only then to turn around and award the project to the other bidder on February 10, without ever seeing the bid that you asked for from Toronto Hydro? Will you confirm that you did that?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Thank you for the question. Actually, I did not. I had nothing to do with it. I did meet with the proponents of both earlier in the year and at such time looked at what was available. I'll say this again: One of the proponents wanted us to give them our asset and I said, "No, that asset belongs to the people of Ontario." Another wanted us to waive the EA and I said, "Absolutely not. There is a process for the EA." There was a question of having emergency generation, which they then would tear down. I have things that I believe ratepayers would rather do with \$120 million than put up temporary generation.

So in fact the proponent was not ready and needed all of our work in order for them to move forward. As a matter of fact, it was that same proponent who in a letter to me on January 11 indicated that we needed 550 megawatts of supply in the city by 2010.

Mr. Tory: In fact it was a deadline of February 15, set by the minister, where you invited these people to come in with a bid. Whatever discussions or meetings you had with them in between is really not the point. The point is that you put a process in motion to have more than one bidder. The deadline for those bidders to put in their bids

was February 15, and you then turned around and awarded the contract without even seeing the second bid.

You realize that this has got you involved up to your elbows in a bidding process and really calls into question that entire process. Your predecessor said, and made a big deal of saying, in November 2004, “This government set up an independent process, with outside consultants, overseen by a fairness commissioner. The bids were not known to the government. The government had no involvement in the selection of the successful bidders.”

In this case, there’s no transparency and your hands are all over it. You actually opened the first bid and awarded it before you even had the second one.

Will you re-tender this and follow proper process, as your predecessor indicated he was doing and as you should?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Thank you for the question. The simple answer is that the leader of the official opposition is mistaken. He is wrong. I had nothing at all to do with the February 15 date. In fact, I did meet with both proponents.

The Independent Electricity System Operator wrote a letter and declared that we were in a very serious crisis for the year 2008 for downtown Toronto. We looked at what was available in order to meet that deadline so there would not be rolling blackouts. We did it with the understanding that the asset belongs to the people of Toronto and Ontario, not to Florida Power & Light, and that under no circumstances would we transfer, at no cost, that piece of property to a private company. I don’t know how many times I have said this, but the leader is mistaken in his date.

Mr. Tory: The one thing we’re clearly not mistaken about is that you were involved, because you said you were meeting with the proponents. I find it very interesting and would ask you to explain why, if we got this letter—and we’ll look into and will access information about the circumstances leading to the IESO letter you mysteriously got at just the right time to declare a crisis in Toronto that others had been talking about for months. But the letter arrived declaring a crisis. Are you telling this House that to let five more days pass by to receive the bid that you asked for from these other people so you would have a basis for comparing these bids would have made a difference? And if the process is supposed to be, as your predecessor said, without involvement of the ministry and with fairness commissioners involved, why were you sitting down meeting with proponents, opening envelopes and generally messing around in this before the deadline that you set? Why were you doing that?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I did not open any envelopes, and I’d be very happy to give you the letter. The letter, dated January 11 this year, is by the independent system operator, Hydro One, the Ontario Power Authority and Toronto Hydro, and told us that a minimum level of generating capacity required by 2008 is 250 megawatts, and by 2010, 550 megawatts. So we worked with that letter in dealing with a crisis for this city, because we are going to keep the lights on. Remember: The property

belongs to the people of Ontario, not to Florida Power & Light at no cost.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Acting Premier, and it concerns the McGuinty government’s health disintegration networks. Section 28 of your LHINs legislation gives your health minister the unprecedented power to order the shutdown of local health services. Even worse, your health minister can order the shutdown of a local health service even if the McGuinty government is only a minority funding partner of the service. It means that even if the province funds a local health service, say, to the tune of 5% of its overall budget, your health minister can order that local health agency to shut down completely.

My question is simply, why does the McGuinty government want to give the health minister the unfettered power to go around and shut down local health care agencies?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I find it intriguing that the honourable member, who wreaked havoc on this province as part of a government for five years, succumbs to the temptation to use the word “disintegration,” because there is a party in this House represented by a smaller number of members that had associated with their record a reduction in the funding for hospitals, a reduction in the funding for OHIP, a reduction in the funding for the Ontario drug benefit.

The suggestion that there is some unfettered challenge here is a ridiculous assertion. The powers that the honourable member speaks about are powers that a minister could only use upon the recommendation of local health integration networks, which stand as the voice of community. At long last, we’re giving the health care system back to the people of the province of Ontario.

1440

Mr. Hampton: Here is the chain of events: The McGuinty government hand picks and politically appoints people who are not local representatives. Those hand-picked political appointments then say to the Minister of Health—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I need to be able to hear the leader of the third party. The rules are the same this week as they were last; I need to be able to hear the questions as they’re put, and the responses.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: The government doesn’t want to hear these questions; they certainly don’t want to answer them.

Let’s take a real world example here. Let’s look at the Alzheimer Society of Toronto. Only 8% of the Toronto

Alzheimer Society's funding comes from the provincial government. So 8% of \$1.3 million a year comes from the provincial government, yet you want to give yourself the unilateral, unfettered authority to shut down a local health service like that. My question again is, why does the McGuinty government want to give that kind of unfettered, unilateral authority to go around shutting down local health services that you only fund in a minority way?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There he goes again: "unilateral" and "unfettered." The reality is that a simple review of the bill would indicate to the honourable member that there is, associated with the execution of any of those powers, a tremendous new mechanism: It is the mechanism of community recommendation.

The honourable member may choose to take a look at the quality of people who were appointed to those boards and disparage them with a sweep of his hand, notwithstanding the fact that some of them are prominent members of the party that he is the leader of. We haven't been concerned about that because they all have associated with them the number one ingredient that we seek, and that is a connection to community. That is at the heart of these mechanisms, not unilateral, not unfettered, but in partnership, and it is one that recognizes that if the community makes a recommendation about a change, a minister ought to be in a position to be able to respond to it.

Mr. Hampton: To say again: The people who you're appointing to the LHINs boards are not community representatives; they are not elected by the community; they're not put in place by the community. They are political appointments of your government. I think now we know why First Nations are so concerned: Most First Nation health services are primarily funded by the federal government, yet you want the authority to shut them down.

I want to quote from the Alzheimer Society: "Section 28 gives the minister powers beyond what are required and which strike at the core of our civil society.... This is unnecessary, unreasonable, counter-productive and, we believe, undemocratic." I repeat, Minister, answer the question. Why do you want to have the unilateral, unfettered authority to go around the province shutting down local health agencies that may get their funding from municipalities, from the federal government or from charities, and not from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Last week they were here and they said that the sky was going to fall if we gave pensioners the opportunity to have control over their own pension funds. Now it's the assertion of the New Democratic Party that if we make the mistake of taking a significant degree of power that I have the privilege of exercising today and to pass that on to people chosen from the local community who most certainly—if we take a look at their resumé's, if we take a look at the people who have agreed to come and join these, who have gone to the committee, we see people who have one thing in common with one another, and it is a commitment to community.

Most of these people have been exercising their views on behalf of community in other health service provider organizations. We seek to tap them for that expertise based on the fundamental belief that the community deserves and should enjoy the opportunity to make important decisions about the future of the health care system which is, after all, theirs.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: Again to the Acting Premier, here's the pattern that's beginning to evolve: You have organizations like the Alzheimer Society of Toronto, a good, community-based organization, who have come forward and said, "Look, there's a real problem here with the legislation." The McGuinty government says, "We're going to ignore you." The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario warns your bill will mean privatization of key health services. They call that dangerous for patients. The McGuinty government says, "Ignore them." The Ontario Nurses' Association says your LHINs boards are "simply an additional layer of bureaucracy under the substantive control of the health minister." The McGuinty government says, "Ignore them."

Acting Premier, do you think all these dedicated health care organizations, all these dedicated health care providers, don't know what they're talking about?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Only you, Howie.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The government House leader took my line.

I want to say to the honourable member that the reality is that we worked very hard to engage the process at committee to work towards the opportunity to enhance the bill. We sought advice from a wide variety of parties. The honourable member characterizes the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. I had a conversation very recently with the executive director. Of course, there are points where there are differences, but at the same time, they've been very clear and understanding that we have sought to make accommodations where those were appropriate and consistent with the values at the heart of the bill. And the values at the heart of the bill are what offends this member, because this member sees in those values a transfer of power from government beyond the norms of the traditional stakeholder relationship, wherein we engage people from the local community and give them the opportunity, for once, to be able to influence the evolution of their health care system.

This must proceed. Any of the kind of use of powers that the honourable member speaks about—the pattern is clear: We believe in public health care—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Yes, the pattern is clear. We have First Nations who, after trying to engage your government, have concluded that you're quite prepared to trample on their treaty rights, their constitutional rights, and that you seek the power to shut down their health

care organizations, even when the majority of funding comes from the federal government. Or we have, for example, organizations like the Canadian Mental Health Association, who fundamentally disagree with what you're doing, or the Niagara region's francophone community, who have raised their issues only to be told by you and your government that they don't know what they're talking about.

I say again to the McGuinty government, don't you think it's time to pause and reflect when you have community health care organization after community health care organization after First Nations health care organization saying this is fundamentally a flawed bill? Don't you think it's time to fix it?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: At the end of the day, it's the obligation of government to reconcile a variety of different points of view. Ours is clear: At the heart of this bill are our values as a government. We believe fundamentally that it's about time that we brought more Ontarians into the opportunity to influence their health care.

The honourable member doesn't like to talk about several of those items you might think he'd be proud of—as an example, the kind of transparency that we're bringing forward in this bill. The member likes to jump to the conclusion of dire consequence, but he does a disservice to community because he wipes away the reality of community involvement, he wipes away the reality of engagement at the community level in the form of open public meetings and he wipes away the reality that under this bill and those provisions that he speaks to, no Minister of Health can move forward without the voice of community, after a transparent debate, coming forward and recommending that services be merged. Accordingly, this is a bill that seeks to transfer power to the community, and appropriately so.

Mr. Hampton: Again, you have organizations like the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario who are saying this is not a transfer to community, that this is centralization and consolidation in the Minister of Health's office.

The minister wants to talk about community. Here we have the Ontario Health Coalition, a community-based organization that points out exactly how centralizing this is. The Ontario Public Service Employees Union, CUPE, SEIU and, just to give an example, communities across northern Ontario see consolidation and centralization of health services in LHINs boards that are larger than most European countries. And the McGuinty government says this is local control.

Minister, all of these organizations have pointed out the fundamental problems with your bill. Are you going to ram it through and ignore them or are you going to pause and try to fix it?

1450

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm very pleased to address the concerns that the honourable member is raising, and two in particular, because he's got this scattergun approach. But I think two in particular warrant the consideration of this House more particularly.

The member has spoken about the needs of our aboriginal and francophone communities. Accordingly, that's why I'm proud that at the committee we were able to take advantage of advice from those communities and from honourable members to create, not just in the preamble but in the legislation itself, a requirement that the Ministry of Health create a capacity never before imagined in our province, where the government of the province of Ontario works with First Nations communities on a government-to-government basis to set the strategic parameters for the delivery of health care, with an obligation built into the legislation for community engagement and resourcing for First Nations communities to enhance their capacity to be involved in the important work of integrated health service plan preparation. Accordingly, our principles are sound, this bill is sound—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Energy. I noticed that when you announced the awarding of the generation contract to Portlands Energy Centre, you stated with great fanfare that this was the project that would be done sooner so that the lights won't go out in the city of Toronto. You were so certain that this was the one that you didn't even look at other bids. You assured us that this plant has all the necessary approvals needed.

Can you guarantee for us today, Minister, that this plant has all the necessary approvals such as an EA for the gas pipeline and zoning and building permits, or is this an example of "approve the project and answer the questions later"?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): What I can do—as I will tell you, this is written by the independent system operator, Hydro One, Toronto Hydro and the Ontario Power Authority, and it's dated January 11, 2006:

"We are writing to you to enumerate the immediate initiatives required to ensure the reliability of electricity supply to central Toronto for the summer of 2008 and beyond....

"We emphasize the requirements we set forth below are based on the physical realities of Toronto's electricity infrastructure as well as the application of internationally applied reliability standards."

It goes on to say that they need a minimum of 250 megawatts of firm capacity, over and above what we put in place for conservation, by 2008. The connection point must be the Hearn switching station in order to allow for load transfers between the eastern and western parts. It's a tight construction schedule and delays will make it difficult.

It goes on to say that the ultimate level of generation capacity—

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

Mr. Yakabuski: Minister, we're all very well aware of the generation issues within the city of Toronto. The problem is your response to it. Your government has consistently stated that you care deeply about energy conservation in Ontario, yet when you are provided with a proposal that would provide a \$30-million trust fund for conservation and education programs, you simply ignore it. In fact, not only did you ignore it, but you didn't even look at the full details of the proposal put forth by Toronto Hydro and Constellation Energy because you didn't even have it when you made your decision.

Minister, in typical Liberal fashion, your actions don't meet with your commitments. Will you guarantee for us today that you will reopen the selection process for generation in Toronto so that Toronto Hydro, a key partner in your supposed conservation plans, will get a fair hearing of their proposals? Will you guarantee us that today, Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Let me just conclude with one last point: "We recommend that you act on this matter expeditiously by issuing a directive" to the Ontario Power Authority, which in fact is what we did, but let me go through this again.

When the proponent came forward, they required an EA that would be waived. They would require \$120 million worth of temporary generation that would be torn down if, in fact, they could put it where they chose to. They had to buy out a contractor with a 30-year lease on a building that said it couldn't have generation in it. In addition to that, we would have to accelerate all of the permits, because they had nothing in place. In fact, the other proponent was much further along in the process, and working on the requirement from Toronto Hydro, the IESO, the Ontario Power Authority themselves, who demand that we work expeditiously—we did exactly that in order to keep the lights on.

The Speaker: Thank you. Point of order?

Mr. Yakabuski: Those answers were no answers at all. She never even dealt with—

The Speaker: Sit down. New question.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm going to file the proper paperwork for a late show.

The Speaker: You would know, if you looked at the standing orders, it's just a matter of filing that with the table.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Tenants in Ontario are afraid that your new smart meter scheme will give landlords the power to gouge them for electricity costs. You want landlords to be able to download electricity costs to their tenants without the guarantee of a corresponding rent reduction. You promised new tenant legislation for this spring; you are imposing smart meters on tenants today. Will you impose a corresponding rent reduction on landlords at the same time?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I can well understand the concern about this particular issue, but I can also tell the people of Ontario that we will be bringing in new tenant protection legislation that will include some of the various aspects he has mentioned. We want to be totally fair to both good landlords and good tenants. The system has not worked all that well over the last 20 or 30 years. There have been all sorts of different rules and regulations imposed on both landlords and tenants, and we want to get it right. We're taking our time to get it absolutely right because we think it's absolutely essential to both landlords and tenants. This particular issue will be dealt with at that time, as it is being dealt with currently by the Minister of Energy as well.

Mr. Prue: There's absolutely nothing in the bill currently before the House that provides that guarantee. Tenants have zero control over the energy efficiency of their building. They have no control over the insulation. They have no control over the energy efficiency of their large appliances. Yet you want landlords to be able to download the electricity costs to tenants without the guarantee of a corresponding rent reduction, and without mandating increases in overall building efficiency. Will you guarantee to tenants that smart metering will not be allowed unless there is a rent reduction for tenants negotiated by tenants and energy efficiency retrofits for apartment buildings?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I'd like to refer the question with respect to smart metering to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): Thank you for the question. In fact, the legislation does not affect the Tenant Protection Act. There has been a directive to the conservation bureau, through the Ontario Power Authority, to put in place a low-income strategy to deal with the issues that have been addressed. In addition to that, we actually have put in place a program for 5,000 units as a pilot in 20 communities right across this province to look at how we can deal with such things as retrofitting the appliances, because we know that those least able to afford the cost of electricity may in fact be those who need additional support systems such as ensuring that those appliances are changed.

One of the things I can tell you is that in one of our projects where we have had smart metering, there has been a significant saving that has gone back to the tenant. What is even more important is that we found 12 grow-ops, a reptile farm and a catering business that everybody was paying for. This way, people will not have to pay for something that is not part of their particular livelihood.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé. Monsieur le Ministre, cette fin de semaine il y avait des articles dans le journal Welland Tribune qui ont parlé de la loi sur l'intégration

du système de santé, et de tous les soucis des fournisseurs de services de santé francophones. Comme vous le savez, il y a une grande population de francophones dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans. Alors, ce sujet m'intéresse beaucoup.

The concerns were from a francophone long-term-care home and community health centre that was seeking assurances that they will continue to have the ability to provide French-language services to francophones in their community. Minister, can you speak of how the LHIN legislation deals with the provision of French-language health care services?

1500

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the honourable member for his question and for his keen interest in this issue. I think we all know that our francophone community experiences more profound challenges and difficulties with their health and with access to health care. That's why we took the opportunity, through the committee process, to enhance in the legislation those commitments that will ensure engagement with our francophone communities.

I just want to read this from the preamble:

"The people of Ontario and their government ... believe that the health system should be guided by a commitment to equity and respect for diversity in communities in serving the people of Ontario and respect the requirements of the French Language Services Act in serving Ontario's French-speaking community."

We went further. Right in the body of the legislation, we established the provincial advisory council to advise the minister about health and service delivery issues related to francophone communities. We'll be engaged with the actual francophone leadership in that. Accordingly, there will be a provision that will explicitly require local health integration networks to engage francophone communities in the development of integrated health services plans.

We're making sure that the francophone community has access to power and access to the opportunity to influence it from the standpoint of improving health care outcomes for—

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

Mr. McNeely: Thank you for providing clarification on this matter. It is clear that this bill enshrines in legislation the government's respect for the delivery of health care services to those Ontarians who need services in the French language. In fact, I know our government has already demonstrated this commitment before these new amendments to the Local Health System Integration Act.

Minister, can you speak more broadly to how our government approaches health care delivery as it pertains to the francophone population, which may face barriers to care?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I had the chance to say before that we know that francophones have experienced

significant barriers to care. One study of many done in 2001 by the federation of francophone and Acadian communities of Canada found that access to health care services in French for Franco-Ontarians is severely lacking in hospital services, community health centres, medical clinics and home care, and that 74% of Franco-Ontarians said they have either no access at all or rarely have access to hospital services in French.

That's why I think it's important, if we look at the issues with respect to the Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie, that we are defending its mandate to provide French health services to the francophone population in Cornwall expressly because we've come to understand that certain communities in our population are significantly less healthy or experiencing challenges in access to care, which warrants the application of particular resources to be able to address the population health circumstances that are occurring.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week, while the Minister of Health and the member for Peterborough were having one of those love-ins on a government-inspired question, there were people waiting in the hallways at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre to get proper accommodations. I visited the hospital on Friday, and the staff described that day as a better-than-average day. On a better-than-average day, there were six people lying on stretchers in the emergency room, waiting for a bed.

The administration and the hospital medical people say that the only way this problem is going to be fixed is if you provide the funding for more acute care medical beds, funding they have been asking for for three years. Minister, when are you going to approve the money for those beds to alleviate the crisis situation in that emergency room in Peterborough? When are you going to do it?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's interesting that the honourable member made it all the way to Peterborough on Friday but didn't have the capacity to bring back a little bit more information about the changes in the Peterborough circumstance over the last three years; for example, a great big new hospital coming to life, which your party couldn't manage to get done, or the reality that, in this very same community, tremendous leadership supported by our government is bringing a new family health team to life with new nurse practitioners who are already giving access to health care to people in that community who didn't have access to doctors and to health care. The honourable member didn't mention either our more recent investment of three new ICU critical care beds or 18 interim long-term-care beds.

The point is that we're working carefully with the people in Peterborough to enhance their capacity to meet the needs and to make up for a lot of lost time that is your legacy.

Mr. Tory: The fact is that the people of the Peterborough hospital say that what has been done is nowhere near enough, and the fact is that there are patients today looking out the window at that construction site you talk about, lying on gurneys where they've been, sometimes, for days waiting for a bed in that hospital.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Minister of Community and Social Services, come to order. Order, Minister of Finance.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: On my way back from Peterborough, I decided to see if I could go in and get some money from the Central East LHIN office, one of those great world focal points of local input. I got there at 10 to 5 on a Friday afternoon. The office was shut tight. There wasn't a person in sight. The lights were off. All you could see through the door was the new furniture that's in there, paid for with taxpayers' money. The fact is, the money you blew, the money the minister blew on that new furniture for those offices, could have helped people like Marilyn Burrows. You see, she doesn't quite share your view about all this and all that you've done. She spent two and a half days in the hallway near the X-ray room across from the staff lounge, waiting in the emergency room. She said, writing to the Peterborough Examiner, "On any given day there is a lineup of patients with small children who are ill and nowhere to go.... Shame on Health Minister George Smitherman and the Ontario government."

I can attest to that because that's what I saw. You came up with \$2 million for furniture in the LHIN offices that are closed and shut tight and dark on a Friday afternoon. When are you going to come up with money for the Peterborough hospital, for the medical beds they need that are going to solve the problem?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: When, indeed, is that honourable member either going to stand in his place or lean over to the person to his right and ask the fundamental question, "Why is it that when we were in government we closed thousands of hospital beds and 28 hospitals in the province of Ontario?" That is your legacy, sir. That is your legacy. And while you're at it, stand before us and tell us how it is that you're going to reconcile your desire today to increase hospital funding across the board beyond the \$25 million we've provided to Peterborough, consistent with your promised \$2.4-billion cut to health care. Reconcile that, Mr. Tory.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The government House leader, order. We have members waiting to ask questions.

New question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. You haven't made the provincial investments that you promised to expand Ontario's child care program. Now the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and

worried municipalities have asked that you put your government's child care funding promise in writing. Minister, will you commit to providing this written guarantee so that cities like Hamilton can proceed with their plans to create more affordable child care spaces without worrying about the collapse of the federal deal?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm really happy that the member from Hamilton East is once again giving us the opportunity to talk about the NDP's lack of support for the agreement which the government of Ontario secured with the government of Canada on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I will ask once again, because I've asked this twice already in the House—you know, the problem that I find sometimes is that we don't celebrate what we have. We had an awesome five-year agreement between the government of Ontario and the government of Canada, on behalf of people whom the member from Hamilton East is supposed to be representing in a non-partisan fashion. Because when parents say they want child care for their kids, they don't say they want Liberal child care. They don't say they want—

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

1510

Ms. Horwath: Minister, as you know, Quebec is in a much better position to protect its child care program because Quebec invested the provincial dollars required for a universal program, but you have used federal dollars to replace rather than supplement your own. Ontario municipalities want to know how they can continue to both plan for and deliver child care spaces. If you're really and truly concerned about maintaining a made-in-Ontario child care program, when will you provide municipalities with your written assurance that your promised funding, the \$300 million promised several years ago, is actually going to flow?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: It was our government, the government of Ontario, that worked on behalf of every single riding, regardless of partisan ideology, in this province, including Hamilton East, where what's at stake is 2,390 spaces, \$93.61 million for Hamilton East. Hamilton East is also one of three demonstration sites that go well beyond early learning and child care into the larger, more comprehensive Best Start plan that our government has introduced.

Now, if you are really serious and sincere about protecting your constituents' interests, you would be standing beside us. You would be contacting your federal cousins, Jack Layton, Olivia Chow and all of those people who are in Ottawa, to say, "Stand by my constituents, please. We cannot afford to lose—"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Thank you. New question.

CO-OP EDUCATION

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Education.

Minister, as you know, I'm extremely interested in anything to do with the education of Ontario's youth. Having spent more than 32 years teaching at schools in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, I like to think I have some knowledge of what's involved in transforming curriculum materials into practical knowledge for our students, knowledge that will serve them well when they leave the school system and look for spots in the workforce.

One of the key elements in translating information into marketable skills is hands-on learning. It's the old "teach a man to fish" principle: Provide a student with direct experience and they will not only have the skills required, but will have added an important plank to their CV and made contacts that will serve them well into the future.

I have read recently that you have initiated change in our high schools program to facilitate co-op education opportunities for students. Minister, could you elaborate on this initiative, please?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I want to commend the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, because he has really understood well that what all members of this House need to advocate for is some redress for the 14,000 additional people who were dropping out under the last government who needed to have a response.

One of the less-known things is that the co-op experience was also reduced under those terms where students got left out and were not given consideration. Going right to the heart of that is to get at the reasons students drop out in the first place, which is quite often feeling that the school is irrelevant and that work, despite a lack of educational attainment, is an attractive option.

By enhancing co-op programs, which we're doing now by making them part of the compulsory curriculum—we're also putting them in as early as grade 10—we're giving young adults a chance to have one step in the work world, where they can still be learning, where they can still be acquiring a tremendous amount of knowledge but also finding out what ultimately they want to do, giving them the motivation to stay in school in the first place.

Mr. Brownell: Thank you, Minister. We can all agree that providing our youth with the experience they need to succeed increases their opportunity for happy and productive futures, which, in turn, increases the chance that Ontario will continue to thrive for decades to come.

Our schools must be able to provide our students with the greatest diversity of experiences possible, with hands-on experiences forming an essential part of their training. For schools to provide the opportunity is essential, but it's only half of the equation. Businesses of Ontario must be willing and prepared to accept these students and ensure the experiences gained are beneficial to their growth as individuals.

Minister, could you explain to us what mechanisms are in place to facilitate student placement at businesses in Ontario and how we are ensuring that our students

have positive and useful experiences during co-op placements?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: I want again to enjoin all members of this House to join with the member opposite in his advocacy on behalf of these students, because we do. We've made a \$2-billion investment in education, part of the second year of a four-year plan, but it does require the involvement of the entire community.

Recently, I was in both Kingston and Niagara. The members there have been working closely with their local communities, as the member opposite has, to encourage businesses to take on some of these additional co-op opportunities. Conveying an education advantage to our students is conveying an economic advantage to our businesses in Ontario. It is a unity that we need to draw upon now in terms of creating the kinds of opportunities that students require.

We are trying to expand the number of co-op placements and the quality of co-op placements in areas like tourism and hospitality, in trades and so on. It's making a tremendous difference across the province. I would enjoin every member here to help the member from—

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

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Mr. Minister, in January you changed the rules regarding documentation required to get a driver's licence, in response to the Auditor General's report. However, young people who are reaching the age of 16 are having problems with your new requirements. They do not have acceptable identification with a signature. A 15-year-old does not have his own passport, he doesn't have his own health card, and student cards do not generally have signatures.

The choice that a 15-year-old becoming 16 has is that he must then apply for a passport before he can get his driver's licence, or he must acquire a health card before he can get his driver's licence. Both of these take time and money. Mr. Minister, what are you going to do to address this problem?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member for asking this question. It is important for us to protect the integrity of the driver's licence system. These were the recommendations made by the Auditor General, and these were the recommendations that the opposition party actually advocated that we should implement. That's exactly what we have done.

We are aware of some of the issues that our students are facing. There are other choices they can make. Some of those choices are: They can have an identity card that can be used made by the school, with a signature on it; the other is, they can apply for a health card, and we will facilitate that process so they can do that quickly and efficiently, so that the integrity of the driver's licence can be protected.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary? The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): You don't understand, Mr. Minister: This does not work in rural Ontario. Again, you've made a law for the large urban centres. It doesn't work in rural Ontario. Just like Mr. Sterling said, they don't have a passport. You just said that they could get their health card and you would help to expedite that. Are you now taking over the health ministry? That doesn't work that easy.

We have kids phoning our office every day. They are unable to get their licence because of your new rules. What we'll ask you today is, would you consider looking at these rules again, and maybe the parents could sign? Something like that could work, or someone that can sign, say, for a passport, like a lawyer, an MP or an MPP—someone like that who could sign something that would allow them to do this.

There's just no way that they can get these licences. Mr. Minister, will you look at this again and help sort it out for rural Ontario, at least?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: We need to balance the security of the licence system with convenience, and we want to make sure that is done.

Let me say that there is only a very small number of students who are facing this kind of issue. Whatever this member is suggesting is actually part of those 13 documents that are required. There is one affidavit that can be provided to get the driver's licence. So I'm not sure what he's talking about. It would be worthwhile for him to look at the 13 requirements that we ask for the people to produce, and ask for the student to produce, but we need to protect the security of our driver's licence system. That was advocated by that party. That was advocated by the Auditor General. Now they are changing their mind on that issue as well.

1520

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Mr. Minister, the McGuinty government's refusal to pay its bills on downloaded services continues to break the backs, the hopes and the dreams of municipalities and communities across this province. The newest one is Tecumseh in southwestern Ontario. It is proposing to cut its funding for its annual corn fest—a tradition and a festival they've had for 31 years—because they have to pay your bills. Southwestern Ontario is already suffering because of your failure to address the farm income crisis and your refusal to pay your share for provincially mandated programs. Now the threat is to strip this community of an important local festival. When are you going to pay the bills you admit are your own?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I find it a little hard to believe. We realize that municipalities are not having the easiest time of it, but on the other hand, let's look at all the posi-

tive programs that this government has initiated just within the last two and a half years that we've been in power:

We've got a COMRIF agreement to deal with the capital needs of rural Ontario that will spend up to \$400 million in phase 1, and fairly soon phase 2 will be announced, which will be another \$400 million.

When you look at the gas tax, which basically went to those municipalities that had transit systems, it's a lot of money. I'm trying to find the exact amount here.

When you look at the affordable housing programs that help those local service providers put up new affordable housing, some \$602 million is being spent by the province and the federal government.

There has been a lot of good things happening in the municipal world, and we intend to continue with that in the years to come.

Mr. Prue: I see from your answer there's no hope for Tecumseh, just as yesterday there was no hope for the town of Kenora, because yesterday the town of Kenora had to raise its taxes and said that they cannot even do the land ambulance, when you promised to bail them out.

You continue to require municipalities across the province to fund provincially mandated programs off their limited property tax base—something your government vehemently opposed in opposition, something that you oppose when you're out there in the scrum outside the Legislature. Yet failure to pay your share means communities are left to cut funding for important local services and, today, for the first time, a festival. When are you going to find the courage of your own convictions when in opposition and pay your share or, in plain and simple words, upload the download?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I will agree with this member on one thing: that the previous government left this province, and particularly its municipalities, in one heck of a position as far as the downloading that was done. We're trying to correct that. We've started it in public health, for example. Slowly but surely, we're uploading the cost of public health from 50% that the municipal share is to only 25% in the years to come.

The gas tax money, by the way, is \$130 million that will be flowing to municipalities this year. If you include the federal gas tax money, it's another \$290 million that will be flowing to all municipalities across this province this year.

Just last week, at the ROMA conference, the Premier announced that land ambulance would be funded at a rate of 50-50 between the province and the municipalities. We are dealing with this situation, we're dealing with it in a very orderly matter and we want to make sure that the municipalities and, most of all, the people of Ontario are the beneficiaries of this.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. It's about elder abuse, a very

important topic. Elder abuse is often defined as any act or omission that harms a senior or jeopardizes his or her health or welfare. It's a topic that all Ontarians, particularly members in this House, are very concerned about, and it's certainly a problem that I hear a lot about from my hard-working local senior advisory group in my own riding.

We all have an interest in ensuring that our parents, grandparents, elderly friends and relatives live in a secure and safe environment. According to Stats Canada, somewhere between 4% and 10% of our seniors experience financial, emotional or physical abuse. Minister, these stats show us a really important issue. What type of initiative is this government taking to combat this problem of elder abuse?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I'd like to thank the member for his excellent question. It's a very important issue he's dealing with, and I agree with the member that elder abuse is most certainly a serious matter and one which, over the years, has been underreported.

Our seniors deserve to live safely with dignity and as independently as possible, and that is why our government is involved in a number of initiatives to raise awareness and to help combat elder abuse. Last month, Monte Kwinter, the Minister of Community Safety, and I joined the Ontario Association of Crime Stoppers to launch the seniors' Crime Stoppers initiative. This initiative will provide seniors with education on how and when to use the Crime Stoppers program. It will also train staff at the Crime Stoppers after-hours answering service on communication with seniors and on elder abuse and neglect issues. In fact, this morning, I was at the third Ontario elder abuse conference in Mississauga being sponsored by our secretariat, the Ministry of the Attorney General and—

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

Mr. McMeekin: Thanks very much, Minister. Having worked very closely with the staff from the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat during some time in another post, I'm familiar with the good work they do. I want to say to all of them, thank you for that great work. It often goes unheralded.

One thing that I feel is important, Minister, is to note that elder abuse takes place in many different settings. Stats are indicating that some 68% of our seniors who report that they were physically abused actually state that they were assaulted by a family member—very, very serious. While I'm glad to hear that our government is responding to this very serious matter, I also feel that the issue is so complex that we really need an overall strategy for it. Minister, can you describe for us in a bit more detail exactly what we plan to do as a government to end the scourge of elder abuse?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Our government is working with others who want to build safer communities for our seniors. We're doing this with our partners at the Ontario

Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse through implementation of the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse. This five-year strategy is designed to basically do three things: (1) help coordinate services at the community level; (2) help train staff on the front line on how to recognize and respond to elder abuse; and (3) help to raise public awareness of this growing problem.

Also in 2004, our government marked the first Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and I'm pleased to say that Ontario was the first province to establish an Elder Abuse Awareness Day. This is an important step toward raising awareness of the matter and asking Ontarians to make a collective effort to make Ontario finally free of elder abuse.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Finance: Your own ministry reports that out-migration from Ontario to other provinces is at record levels in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario—in fact, a factor triple that of 2004. Why are so many Ontarians leaving Dalton McGuinty's Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Employment is up, unemployment is down. Inflation is down and growth is up. Health care wait times are lower, and there are more nurses. More kids have access to post-secondary education at a lower cost under this government. Since we took office, 216,000 net new jobs in Ontario. Let me tell you, as long as one family, one individual in this province, wants a job, this government won't rest.

1530

What do we know from the other side? They want to cut taxes and close hospitals. They don't share our commitment to post-secondary education—\$6.2 billion invested to take Ontario to a leadership position. This party has a plan for the province. It's working. Jobs are up, unemployment is down. Our record is better—

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

Mr. Hudak: Minister, people are voting with their own feet. Maybe you didn't listen to the first part of the question, but record levels of Ontarians are now leaving Dalton McGuinty's Ontario to go to better offers in other provinces and territories—seven out of 13. I mentioned last week in the Legislature that the number of bankruptcies growing in Ontario is the worst record in the entire country and, sadly, some 88,000 manufacturing jobs, well-paying jobs, have left Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. I heard the minister, but people are voting with their own feet. Can we hope for some relief from your high-tax, high-energy and runaway spending budgets when you present this spring?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Ontario got its relief in October 2003, when they chose Dalton McGuinty to be the Premier of Ontario. Let's look at the record: 74,000 new jobs in the education sector, 62,000 in finance and insurance, 43,000 construction jobs and 21,000 professional,

scientific and technical service jobs. The indices that need to be up are up. The ones that should be down are down. This government's plan is working. We're undoing the mess they left in health care, in education, and as long as one family wants a job, as long as one person needs help, this government will stand up for them and undo your legacy of neglect of health and neglect of education, because we have a better way and we're going to see it right through.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'd like to get to petitions.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by a great number of my constituents in Oxford county, and also in counties and ridings around the province.

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature to the petition.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads:

"Whereas every Ontario worker has the right to a secure pension that is indexed to inflation and provides the dignity of a stable and sufficient income for retirement;

"Whereas pensions represent workers' deferred wages and all pension contributions belong to the workers;

"Whereas people who work all their lives deserve the right to retire with a decent pension at age 65 without having to worry about making ends meet;

"Whereas the pension system is sorely in need of reform; it hasn't been reviewed since 1987 and many

Ontario seniors have seen the value of their pensions vastly reduced over the years;

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

"We call on the government of Ontario to form a special legislative committee on pension reform to study ways to ensure that all workers have the ability: (1) to participate in a pension plan; (2) to have a real say in how the plan is managed and governed; and (3) to have vesting from day one, indexing, portability from job to job and absolute protection of their pension through a much-enhanced pension benefit guarantee fund and stronger provincial legislation."

I agree with this petition. I have signed it and I send it to the Clerk's table by way of Mark.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario's early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it."

I agree with this petition and I affix my name to it. I give it to Sarah.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

“Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

“Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients.”

This has my signature of support as well.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that’s been sent to me from people in Caledonia and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we are asking that access to Velcade treatment be made available in Ontario. Ontario is the only province in Canada not currently making funding available for this drug, even though approximately 40% of people diagnosed with multiple myeloma in Canada are from Ontario;

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

“To provide immediate access to Velcade, while the review process continues, so that this treatment is available to patients in Ontario as it is in every other province of Canada.”

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

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Human Rights Code guarantees the right to work in an environment free from sexual harassment, and Lori Dupont was the victim of sexual harassment by the man who murdered her at their place of employment; and

“Whereas the inquest into the workplace murder of Theresa Vince proved that sexual harassment is a dangerous workplace circumstance that can and has resulted in death; and

“Whereas sexual harassment is a significant and widespread occupational health and safety hazard for women in the workplace, and current workplace legislation has proven to be ineffective in preventing gendered workplace violence and murder; and

“Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act demands an inquest whenever a workplace death occurs, and Lori Dupont deserves no less than any other worker; and

“Whereas the coroner’s office has appointed the domestic violence death review committee to examine the death of Lori Dupont, whose murder is both an intimate femicide and an act of extreme workplace

violence, and because the DVDRC does not have the mandate or the expertise to critically examine those aspects of her murder that pertain to the workplace, and because the DVDRC will not conduct a public review;

“We, the undersigned Ontario residents, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to conduct a full and public inquest into the workplace murder of Lori Dupont at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor, Ontario, on Saturday, November 12, 2005. We respectfully make this petition in memory and in honour of Lori Dupont.”

There are some 9,000 names on this petition, and I too have affixed my signature.

1540

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): This petition is entitled “Support the Land Rights and Responsibilities Act.” It was launched at the Belleville convention of the Ontario Landowners Association.

“To the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is silent on property rights; and

“Whereas the Alberta Bill of Rights specifically protects the right to the enjoyment of property; and

“Whereas the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms provides that ‘Every person has a right to the peaceful enjoyment and free disposition of his property, except to the extent provided by law’; and

“Whereas Ontario no longer has property or land rights;

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

“To pass Bill 57, the Land Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been signed by hundreds of people from the Blenheim, Chatham and Leamington areas. I want to thank Roger Renaud, SEIU Local 1.0n representative, and the stewards for gathering the petitions and sending them to me. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has introduced Bill 36, the Local Health Integration Act; and

“Whereas this legislation will integrate, amalgamate, restructure and privatize health care services; and

“Whereas health care workers will see their jobs put up for auction through competitive bidding; and

“Whereas many Ontarians will be forced to travel further for medical care; and

“Whereas LHIN boards are unelected, order-in-council appointments, their allegiance is not to the local communities but to the Minister of Health;

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

"The Legislative Assembly delay passage of Bill 36 until a strategic plan for health care is developed with broad public consultation. And further, Bill 36 be amended to include a human resource plan; include all health care providers; ensure no health care providers, LHIN or the Minister of Health can privatize any health care services through a competitive bidding process."

I agree with the petitioners, and I've affixed my signature to these.

OMERS PENSION FUND

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that I'm going to read on behalf of some constituents in Mississauga West. I tried to get it in last week and didn't make it, so I'll get it in this week. It reads as follows:

"Whereas no government of Ontario employees are covered by pension benefits from the Ontario municipal employees retirement system, known as OMERS; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has proposed, through Bill 206, to pass control and management of OMERS to the municipalities and employees who pay into and benefit from OMERS pension benefits; and

"Whereas all members of OMERS will have access to the same base pension plan; nothing in Bill 206 would affect current pension payments; and retirees will continue to receive their pensions as usual; and

"Whereas extensive debate, consultation and amendments on Bill 206 have resulted in a fair and equitable distribution of representation, governance and dispute resolution;

"Be it therefore resolved:

"That the government of Ontario should enact Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act."

It's my pleasure to add my signature to this petition and to ask page Michael to carry it for me.

SPECIAL CARE HOMES

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

"Whereas hundreds of vulnerable adults live in homes for special care that provide them a warm and secure, stable and friendly environment which allows them to lead fulfilling lives; and

"Whereas the alternative for many of these individuals is a life of homelessness on the street; and

"Whereas special care homes have had only a single 3% increase since 1999, which in no way matches the rising costs they face; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised Ontario in the election they would 'significantly increase supportive housing options for those suffering from mental illness';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to bring in an immediate increase in funding to homes for special care."

As I am in agreement with this, I will affix my signature and give it to page Chelsi.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3907.

"Whereas rebuilding our post-secondary education system is critical to the future of our communities and our province; and

"Whereas high tuition user fees are resulting in massive student debt; and

"Whereas Ontario ranks second-last amongst all provinces in terms of total PSE budget received from government grants, and has the highest percentage of total post-secondary education revenue from private sources; and

"Whereas working and learning conditions must be healthy and safe because working conditions are learning conditions; and

"Whereas the deferred maintenance cost at Ontario university campuses is estimated to have already reached the \$2-billion mark;

"We, the undersigned, support the Canadian Union of Public Employees' call on the provincial government to invest sufficient public funds that will:

"(1) Restore public money cut from operating funds since 1995 and bring Ontario up to the national average for funding post-secondary education;

"(2) Finance the \$1.98 billion needed for deferred maintenance; and

"(3) Provide the funding needed to continue the tuition freeze beyond 2006 and increase grants to working-class families."

This was signed by hundreds of signatories, as well as myself.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario’s early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it.”

I will affix my signature, and give this petition to Mark.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition from students from Muskoka, and it says,

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education plans to remove the study of derivatives from the grade 12 mathematics curriculum; and

“Whereas the grade 12 university preparation course Advanced Functions and Introductory Calculus is designed for students intending to study university programs that will involve calculus; and

“Whereas the course currently provides an introduction to the fundamental concepts of calculus, which are also required in grade 12 physics; and

“Whereas it contains three strands: advanced functions, in which students explore the properties and applications of polynomial, exponential and logarithmic functions; underlying concepts of calculus, in which students develop an understanding of the basic concepts of calculus by analyzing the rates of change involved in applications; and derivatives and applications, in which students develop, consolidate and apply to graphing and problem-solving the rules and properties of differentiation; and

“Whereas all of these strands are requirements for most university programs, and to remove any of them from the high school curriculum will leave the students of Ontario at a disadvantage when compared to the students from other provinces;

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

“To ensure that the Ministry of Education continues to retain all parts of the current grade 12 mathematics curriculum and stop making changes that put the future careers of Ontario students at risk.”

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER CITY OF TORONTO
FOR A STRONGER ONTARIO ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 CRÉANT
UN TORONTO PLUS FORT
POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 13, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 53, An Act to

revise the City of Toronto Acts, 1997 (Nos. 1 and 2), to amend certain public Acts in relation to municipal powers and to repeal certain private Acts relating to the City of Toronto / *Projet de loi 53, Loi révisant les lois de 1997 Nos 1 et 2 sur la cité de Toronto, modifiant certaines lois d’intérêt public en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs municipaux et abrogeant certaines lois d’intérêt privé se rapportant à la cité de Toronto.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I understand that the member for Beaches–East York has the floor.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It is indeed a delight and a pleasure. On the last occasion, just to recap where I was before the time ran out, I had described, for most of the first 15 minutes, what Toronto was like before amalgamation, what had happened, in fact, to the city as a result of amalgamation, and how the city really lost its soul. The city was unable to look after its needs, its wants and its desires. Through a series of events, all of the monies that were available in terms of the reserves that the six municipalities of metropolitan Toronto had built up over many years were dissipated; they were gone. The city now finds itself in the unenviable position of being amalgamated and having no money. I went on, then, to talk a little bit about the upload. That’s about where I got to when the time ran out.

1550

I’d like to talk today about the remaining elements of the speech, which I listed the last time. I wanted to talk about the consultative process, about taxis—let me just get them all here so I don’t miss any—about electoral reform. I wanted to talk about the board of trade, uploading the download etc. That’s where I’m going to go today.

First of all, the consultative process: There’s a very good quote that I found here. I believe it’s from the minister; yes, it is. It’s from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He waxed eloquent on the province’s new relationship with the city of Toronto. I want to quote him, because this is what he’s promised, and then I want to contrast that with what is really happening. This is a quote from him: “Ontario has been a leader in fostering a strong consultative relationship with its municipal sector. We believe that the relationship between the province and the city of Toronto should be one of ongoing reciprocal consultation. The city should be advised of proposed future provincial directions, and we would expect the city to consult with the province on upcoming decisions or policy directions that affect the provincial government. This is far removed from the paternalistic approach that the province has traditionally taken. Instead, it’s a new kind of relationship—a relationship between peers, a true partnership. That’s the kind of autonomy our government wants for the city of Toronto.”

That’s what the minister had to say when he introduced this act. That’s what the minister would have you believe is the true intention of this act and his true intention when dealing with the city of Toronto. But if

you actually look at what is contained within the bill, there are some very puzzling and disturbing elements that I would ask members of the Legislature to have a very close and careful look at.

The first is the provincial override. This is an override put in the legislation that, notwithstanding what the city of Toronto and its council want to do in setting up its own governance structure, notwithstanding what the city of Toronto and its council want to do with electoral reforms and how people are elected and how the boards and committees sit and who sits on them, the province of Ontario has an override, the ability to go beyond, without the say-so of the city of Toronto, its mayor and its council. It is contained right in the bill that that is what the province allows itself to do. Now, I wonder, how does that jibe with the promise and the eloquent words of the minister? Quite frankly, it does not.

It reserves the right to appoint an executive committee—the province—and it allows the mayor, not the council but one person, to appoint council committees, to appoint a deputy mayor or deputy mayors and to appoint all the chairs of the boards and the standing committees of the city of Toronto. How does that jibe with democracy? How does that jibe with the province of Ontario having a mature relationship of consultation? I don't think it does at all.

There is much in the bill, and there's been much talk about this much ballyhooed proposal to allow the city of Toronto, alone among municipalities, to impose taxation for the first time. The taxation it is allowed to impose under this bill is limited to entertainment, alcohol and cigarettes. The city of Toronto has estimated, and I believe the province of Ontario has concurred, that should they do so, it could bring in as much as \$50 million. This is not a power that should be contained in this bill, quite frankly, and I think that the municipality of the city of Toronto wishes it were not there.

I will tell you, and everyone will know, that the mayor has been up here asking for money. The newspapers in Toronto, the television, the radio shows, have all talked about Toronto's huge need for money. I'll get to that later, because I think the key to that is in uploading the download. But what this government does is give an authority that no municipality has ever had before to tax those sin things that take place in the city of Toronto. The entertainment, the shows, the movie theatres and everything else can be taxed in a way that they are not taxed elsewhere in this province or elsewhere in this country. It gives them the authority to tax cigarettes, so that cigarettes would cost one price in Toronto and a lower price everywhere else in Ontario. It gives them the authority to tax alcohol that is dispensed in restaurants and bars and in the entertainment industry throughout this city.

There has already been a public reaction to this, and the public reaction has been negative. People do not want to pay taxes in excess of what they are already paying and do not want to see another level of taxation meted out by the city of Toronto over and above that which is already done by the province.

I go back to see what people have said about this, and I come first to a very good quotation on the city of Toronto act from the board of trade: "Grunwald"—the chair of the board of trade—"notes that with the provincial legislation to be introduced today, 'The city and province will have addressed two major issues—governance reform and new powers and authority. Now they and the federal government need to ensure that Toronto has the financial support and arrangements required to meet its investment and spending needs. Then we'll have a city ready to thrive, succeed and meet the requirements of its people and businesses.'"

I have to question the members, particularly the members opposite, how \$50 million is going to do that, how \$50 million is going to wash in a city that came here last week to tell the Premier that they were \$212 million short again this year and that they will be more than that, and increasingly more than that, in the years to come. Quite frankly, it just does not happen.

I want to talk as well about the second quotation, from Mayor Miller. I think Mayor Miller has said it all in this quotation. This is about something that's not contained in this act, but it's something that this government is forcing against the will of the people of Toronto on its waterfront. Mayor Miller has said, "The proposed plant will be adjacent to the long-awaited Lake Ontario Park and the future Filmport studios. To date, the province has been a genuine partner on Toronto's waterfront revitalization. This proposal"—the megaplant—"flies in the face of the progress we are beginning to see emerge." David Miller, February 10, 2006.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Does he like this bill?

Mr. Prue: No, he does not.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Prue: This government has promised to consult. This government chooses not to consult whenever it is convenient to them. When it is convenient to consult about a city of Toronto act, they consult with the mayor. They still have the right and still impose their will inside the body of the legislation. When it suits their convenience that they don't want to consult, when they make decisions to impose a megaplant on Toronto's waterfront against the wishes of the mayor and the council and against the wishes of Toronto Hydro, against the regeneration committee that is looking at fixing Toronto's waterfront, against the neighbourhoods, the citizens and the communities, then there is no consultation at all. I do not believe that this government truly and honestly wishes to consult. I wish that the words of the minister were true words, but when he says that in accordance with this act, I have to question very strongly whether that is true.

I have to question it more. I'd like to go on to electoral reform because there's nothing really in here about electoral reform of the city of Toronto. There is, "You will conduct your elections, and if we don't like how you are elected or the governance structure, we'll impose our

own.” That’s really good electoral reform. I’m being sarcastic, if you haven’t caught that.

1600

I watched in awe what unfolded last week, because it was just last year that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing told people that four-year municipal elections were not on the radar. Then, with no consultation, with absolutely nothing, with no discussion in this Legislature, the Premier goes down and announces to the ROMA conference that there’s going to be a four-year term. I’m not sure whether it’s a good thing or a bad thing. I could see merits in both sides of the argument. I can see what the newspaper columns are saying in Toronto. Some are in favour of it; some are opposed to it; some think it’s the worst thing that’s ever happened to democracy in this city. But you know what wasn’t done? There was absolutely no consultation—here we have the city of Toronto act before us—with the mayor and the council of the city of Toronto, and there was no public consultation in any way—

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): They asked for it.

Mr. Prue: They didn’t ask for it. There was no public consultation even inside this Legislature.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I’d like to hear the person who has the floor.

The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Prue: If my honourable friends want to help me out, they should at least provide factual and correct information while they heckle.

I would suggest that this is a very big bone of contention among many of the people of Toronto. They believe that, had you really wanted to consult with them, you would have done so and that the mayor would not have used the occasion to simply go down and announce a fait accompli: that he was going to do something which his own minister, one year before, had said was simply not on the radar.

The city asked you, this Legislature, this government, to do something last year. They asked you to reform the way fundraising was done in municipal elections in Toronto, Ontario’s biggest city. They know, their council knows, their auditor knows, their finance department knows and anyone who has studied it knows that an awful lot of money is collected in municipal elections in Toronto. They wanted a reform package. They wanted a package that did a couple of things. The most important was to limit the amount of money that unions and corporations could give to those people who were trying to obtain a municipal seat, whether it be on a school board, whether it be on council, whether it be the mayor himself or herself. They wanted to limit the amount of money that could come from corporations and unions. They thought long and hard about this, and they sent that request in a council motion to this Legislature. What did the minister do with it? He did absolutely nothing with it. He sat on it for a year. He sat on it until it could no longer be done. Here was the big reform that the city of

Toronto wanted, but was that on the radar? No, it was not on the radar. It wasn’t even looked at; it wasn’t even contemplated. There was no mature discussion that was being said was going to happen.

What else did they want in that legislation? They wanted to—I’ll come back to that. I’ll come back to electoral reform later. I can’t remember the second point.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: There you go; escaped right out of my head. Okay.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): You know what my mother says about it.

Mr. Prue: I know.

All right. I come back to consultation and reform. We were in this Legislature last fall. There was a piece of legislation on the books that we were debating. It was Bill 169. You will remember that bill. It was a transportation bill, most of the provisions of which were agreed to by all members of the House. But there was one very contentious provision, and that was the scooping provision at Mississauga airport. Members will also remember that at that time there were many and multiple demonstrations of Toronto taxi drivers going around and around this building honking and beeping their horns and holding a demonstration outside and demanding that the minister come out and speak to his proposal and why he was doing these scooping provisions within a transportation bill. I remember at the time that the minister would not go outside, but the minister did address the House through a series of questions put forward by members of the opposition as to why he was putting in a scooping provision that only affected the taxis at Pearson airport and did not affect the multiple scooping that he knows and we know and the taxi drivers know takes place in reverse every day in this city.

The minister said he was satisfied with his bill—and all members of the Liberal Party voted for it—because the city of Toronto bill was going to resolve the difficulties that the taxi drivers in Toronto had. So you can imagine the eager anticipation I had in reading through the bill and trying to find that magic provision, trying to find exactly where the city of Toronto cab drivers were finally going to get equality with those in Mississauga. Do you know what? It’s not there at all. Of course it’s not there. What there is is an opportunity for the city of Toronto, under the provisions of this legislation, to put in a licence for limousine drivers to pick up in Toronto. That means that all those who are now licensed in the city of Mississauga and who pick up at the airport may be required by bylaw to get a licence for Toronto.

The city of Toronto, of course, could charge any amount of money for that. It could charge \$5, \$100, \$1,000, \$10,000. It doesn’t limit the amount they can ask. But I will tell you how it is an absolutely useless provision. It’s useless because no matter how much money that licence sells for to pick up passengers in the city of Toronto, unless it is a very small amount, anyone from inside the boundaries of this city who wants to go to the airport will of course have to pay more to offset the cost

of the licence. So if the cost of the licence is a large amount—more than \$1,000—one can expect, rationally and reasonably, that the citizens of this city are going to end up having to pay higher fares. That's the very first thing that's going to happen: higher fares if you choose to take a limo rather than a taxi to the airport.

The second thing is that it is going to make enforcement nearly impossible. Although the city will be able to claim an additional amount of money, there are thousands of kilometres of road in this city. It's not a closed quarter or half kilometre road that exists at Pearson airport, where the RCMP, the OPP and the local police can look out for scoopers, can look at the licences as they are lining up in front of the terminal to pick someone up and see who has the right licence and who doesn't. Even though the city of Toronto can collect whatever they want, and even though the people can pay even more money, it will be impossible, even if all the money is used to hire police and follow cabs around, to stop the scooping.

There you go. The city of Toronto cabbies were told that this bill was going to help them. They were told they were going to be consulted. They were told that this bill was going to work for them, the same way as Bill 169 is working for the limo drivers at the airport. It is not, in fact, the case; it is not the case at all. Those Liberals who followed the minister and said it was going to work have an obligation to change that provision and to strengthen it.

I go on to talk about uploading the download. I think this is really where we need to talk about that. I would like to start with a quote from David Crombie, president and CEO of the Canadian Urban Institute, former mayor of Toronto, former member of Parliament, former federal cabinet minister. This is the quote, December 5, 2005: "When the Harris government downloaded social services and social housing, I said at the time that it was wrong in principle and disastrous in practice. It is still the case, and it would be a responsible action for the current government to upload both these services to restore the balance."

Over the past number of weeks—as a matter of fact, over the past number of months and maybe even a year—I have been asking those questions in the House. I have been asking questions of the minister, of the government, of the finance minister in committee, and of others. I want to ask, what is involved in this download? What was downloaded that is so wrong?

1610

The answer is quite simple. There are five areas of provincial jurisdiction where the money is taken from those who are homeowners, business owners and apartment dwellers in the city of Toronto, and in fact in all municipalities. All municipalities suffer from this, but we're talking about the city of Toronto today, and I just want to say why it is particularly important to the city of Toronto.

I'm reading here from Statistics Canada and from the office of the chief administrative officer, city of Toronto.

Those are quotations in a little work from the University of Western Ontario by Luis Silva. He quotes these two. I'm just going to take it from the original source. It says, "While Toronto comprises less than half the region's population"—that's the GTA—"the city has 71% of the region's low-income families, two thirds of the single parents, two thirds of children and seniors living in poverty, 80% of the homeless and three quarters of the tenants." That is the lot of Toronto.

Toronto is being forced, in spite of these social difficulties and in spite of the lack of money, to pay a great deal of money, as all municipalities are, for child care, social assistance, social housing, ambulance and public health. I know that ambulance may have been slightly resolved last week, but I'd just like to go over the amounts of money that ratepayers in the province of Ontario are paying through their municipal taxes—money that should not be paid on the backs of homeowners and business taxes and money that should not be paid by those who live in apartments.

Child care: The municipal amount that is taken from homeowners is \$193.4 million. The amount for social assistance is \$1.3309 billion. The amount for social housing is \$880 million, ambulance is \$312.7 million, and public health is \$266.4 million. Some of these were supposed to be cost-shared under the terms of the previous government. Child care was supposed to be cost-shared, I understand, at 80-20. I could be mistaken on that, but I believe it was 80-20. It's not 80-20 at all; it's 73% by the province and nearly 27% by the municipalities. So they're paying even more. Social assistance, which is cost-shared at 80-20, is not 80-20 at all; it's presently 73% by the province and nearly 27% by the municipalities. Social housing—I'm not sure what the cost share was supposed to be—is being borne largely by the municipalities, 60%, to 40% for the province. Ambulance is 55-45, and that was supposed to be cost-shared at least 50-50. Public health, which was supposed to be 75-25, is in fact the municipality paying 52% and the province paying 48%. So the province is not paying its own bills. The province is simply not doing it. The province needs to start very seriously considering uploading the download.

I was a little heartened last week when I heard that land ambulance costs were going to be uploaded in some way. It was \$300 million spread out over three years, which is \$100 million a year. Some \$100 million a year will bring it back into line with where it's supposed to be, not having the whole thing uploaded, which it should be, but in fact only the province paying its portion. As near as I can understand, that is all that is going to happen: The province will assume its portion. The municipalities cannot afford to pay for this service. The city of Toronto—and this is the city of Toronto bill—is seeing its core starting to suffer. I would not say it has gone as far as some American cities did 10 and 20 years ago. I do, though, see potholes where I never saw them. I see sidewalks crumbling where they did not crumble before. I see parks where there is litter and I see garbage on the streets. I see homeless in a way that I have never seen in

my entire life. Although I have lived my entire life in this city, I have never seen as many homeless people or such destitution as I see today.

I invite all of you, if you really want to see what that homeless situation is, to take a few minutes, go down to the Eaton Centre and go out the back door. There's a little church there, the Church of the Holy Trinity, and on that church is a memorial to those who have died on our streets. If you look at it, you have to know how very sad the reality of homelessness and poverty is to this city, a city that can no longer afford to look after these people, a city that watches them die on the streets.

Back in the early 1990s, there were 10 and 12 names per year on those rolls. Today, there are 50 and 60 and 100; that's 50 or 60 or 100 people who die on the streets without adequate social care, care that the city cannot afford to pay for, care that the city struggles to provide and cannot find the money to do so. This is part of the download. This is what the province needs to do to get those people into decent homes, to get them into shelters, to get them proper medication and doctors. Go down, take a look. It's very moving. It's very simple. All it is are names on a church board, and the names are added to every month as people die on these cruel streets.

I would like to talk some more about the download. The Toronto Board of Trade came up with what I thought was a fairly reasonable, well-thought-out plan. The Toronto Board of Trade recommends—and this is in conjunction with the city of Toronto act:

“(1) Ensure that Toronto can continue to fuel Ontario's economic growth by:

“—taking back the responsibility for funding Toronto's social service and social housing programs (the city of Toronto should, however, continue to administer programs under contract to the province where it is best placed to deliver these services) and revert to the government of Ontario's pre-1996 transit funding formula; or

“—providing the city of Toronto with new revenue sources and tax room that would enable the city to meet its expenditure responsibilities in an equitable, effective and accountable way; and

“—providing Ontario's municipalities with a 100% rebate on PST paid to the provincial government.”

This is their first recommendation. I think the Toronto Board of Trade understands that this is not about an act in which this government can impose its will on governance structure with the citizens and the council of the city of Toronto, and it is not about the little, tiny things contained in the act, that the city no longer has to come to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of the Environment to ask for permission to put a speed hump on one of the roads where they're trying to slow traffic. These are the kinds of small and perhaps welcome measures that are contained within the bill, but it is certainly not what the citizens of the queen city, the capital city of this province, want or expect.

The board of trade has said it very well. You are going to have to show not only your willingness to consult, not

only your willingness to allow the city to have some form of favourable and/or charter status, but you are going to have to give the necessary funding to make the city work. This is sadly what is not here, and it's sadly what we want to hear, because if there was a commitment on the part of this government that there would be funding available to all of Ontario's cities and, in this case, with the city of Toronto, we would all know that the new city of Toronto act could work. But in the absence of funding and in the absence of consultation, we are left to wonder, what good is it to raise cigarette and alcohol taxes and taxes at movie theatres? What good is it going to be to have a new city council where you can substitute your own structure for what the citizens want? What good is it if there are not going to be new revenue sources and tax room? That's a question I have to ask each of the government members.

1620

They go on to say:

“(2) Ensure the city of Toronto's governance structure is strengthened prior to receiving new powers or revenue sources under the City of Toronto Act by,” and they list three things:

“—strengthening the power of the mayor by allowing him/her to select an executive committee from city council. Executive committee members would chair the city's standing committees,” etc. I'm not sure I agree with that, but that certainly is their position. I think the second two are far more important:

“—ensuring that Toronto has an innovative, professional civil service that works at arm's length from the elected representatives; and

“—strengthening the city of Toronto's checks and balances, including a more powerful Auditor General and Integrity Commissioner.”

I want to just describe to this Legislature what the city of Toronto has done in that regard; I have to take my hat off to them. I was there, and I know Councillor Balkissoon was there. We were both on the audit committee, and we both fought very, very hard to have an Auditor General. We believed that process was going to work. We knew that the Auditor General, once instituted, would be able to find if there was any corruption, if there was any waste, if there was any money that was not flowing in the right hands. And it was the Auditor General, in combination with city of Toronto councillors, who uncovered the MFP scandal. That's who found it; it wasn't anyone else. It wasn't the newspapers; it wasn't this Legislature. It was the Auditor General. That institution is working very well.

I have looked, and I don't know how this bill strengthens. It's in the bill, but it's something that already exists.

The city of Toronto civil service is exemplary. I have worked with them and with the civil service in the province of Ontario. I have to tell you that I think they are two of the finest public bodies with whom I have ever been associated. The men and women work hard, they work with loyalty, they work with great knowledge. I

only wish sometimes, when I hear about cutbacks and other things, that there were even more of them. I wish there were even more of them to do the good job they do, to provide the services they provide. I would tell you, and I think most citizens would agree with me, that the services they provide are absolutely necessary to the well-being of this province and of the city of Toronto, and to the well-being of all the municipalities and all the people who live here.

I talked about downloading. I need to talk for a few minutes about property tax reform, because this too will have to be done in conjunction with any changes in monies that flow from the province to the city or from the city to the province. When some of the uploads are downloaded or downloads are uploaded, depending on the mood of any particular Legislature at the time, there is a very real need for tax reform. The questions have been asked in this Legislature, and the answers have not been forthcoming.

When the previous government, the Mike Harris government, instituted MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., and current value assessment on all municipalities, there were many promises made at that time to ordinary citizens that it was going to be revenue-neutral. There were promises made that it was going to be phased in over a period of time so that no one was hurt unduly. There were promises made that there were going to be five-year rolling averages. Some of those things have not happened.

We can see what is happening in the tax revolts that are starting to take place in some of Canada's larger cities. There are three places where they are going to take place. They're going to take place downtown, as they take place in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and London—any of the larger cities or towns. The tax burden is primarily downtown. When the housing rates go up, they go up in the more urbanized areas as opposed to the suburban ones first. I will tell you that that will happen. I will tell my good friends from Scarborough that ever since amalgamation, ever since it was all put under one roof, the taxes have not gone up in Scarborough once, have they? I'm looking at you as you smile, because they haven't. They have not gone up once. They have not gone up in Etobicoke or North York either. They've gone down. But they have gone up in Toronto, York and East York as a result. The people there know full well that they are paying an increasing burden of the taxes.

Mr. Duguid: They should.

Mr. Prue: As my friend here from Scarborough Centre says, "They should."

Mr. Duguid: They're paying their share.

Mr. Prue: "They're paying their share," is what he says. I want to tell you, though, that there is an awful lot of angst out there in the downtown area.

The second place where taxes go up is along waterfronts. If you live in Ottawa, as does my good friend from Ottawa—Orléans, he will tell you that the properties that are going up fastest in value, and the taxes that rise accordingly, are those that are along the river—is it not

so?—the same as it is true in Toronto along the lakefront, along the bluffs in Scarborough and along the rivers and creeks where people have lakefront or riverfront property inside municipalities.

The third place, of course, that they go up is on recreational properties. The recreational property owners in Ontario are starting to see double-digit increases in their taxing as a result of the cottage properties and the retirement properties that many people have bought.

There are a great many problems with this and it requires some considerable property tax reform. When questions are asked of the minister in this House, he pooh-poohs it. He says it's not important. He says the government is not going there. But I believe that if you are looking at municipal reform, if you are looking at reform in the city of Toronto, a reform is long overdue in terms of how people are taxed. The easiest and simplest thing to do is to upload the download. If you can take \$3.3 billion off municipal taxes, you can do a great deal to assuage the consternation of ordinary citizens about their municipal taxes. You can take it off. You can do it. I know we can do it in a better way. But the second problem you are going to have to look at, and we are going to have to look at, is long-term, five-year rolling averages so that ordinary people do not suffer losing their home.

I want to go on and talk lastly, because I have a few minutes left, about consultation with the city of Toronto, or the lack thereof. I think I would not be doing my own community much good if I did not talk about the fiasco of the port lands, so I would like to end it with that. This is a government that promises under this bill to consult with council and with its citizens but has chosen to absolutely not consult with the citizens, with the council, with the waterfront regeneration, with Toronto Hydro or with anyone else because it is in their interest, they believe, at this time to unilaterally impose an energy solution on the city of Toronto.

The city of Toronto, of course, has come up with its own plan. I have to tell you that its own plan—I got it on Friday—is such a superior plan. It is absolutely superior in all ways to that being put forward by the government. It focuses on conservation and demand-side management. It will build entirely within the restored R.L. Hearn station, therefore not taking up valuable land on the waterfront. It will have community benefits in a manner consistent with the long-range plans for the development of the port lands area in Toronto. It will have an environmental impact, because the new group is committed to pursuing an unabridged environmental assessment and public consultation process, something the government's plan does not do. Further, construction of the new proposal requires little or no excavation of hazardous materials and no new penetrations of the channel seawall.

The project cost—even the darkest heart has to listen to this one—at 582 milliwatts, if it is completely built out, is 24% less on a per milliwatt basis than the total project of the Portlands Energy Centre as reported in the Minister of Energy's February 10 directive. At 291

milliwatts, which is the first phase, the project is 12% less expensive on a cost-per-milliwatt basis.

That's what is being proposed. That's what Toronto Hydro, the city of Toronto, the mayor and everybody wants to talk about. But does this government want to talk with the elected officials? You say so in this bill but you don't do it in reality. In reality, you do nothing of the sort.

1630

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Yes, we do.

Mr. Prue: No, you do not. My friend says he does. My friend says that they do talk. They do not talk meaningfully. I have already quoted the mayor on this.

The mayor is very upset about what you're doing on the port lands, as is the council and as is everybody involved in this city. "This proposal would allow for the repowering of the Hearn station using modern, high-efficiency cogeneration. It would restore the Hearn station, which is a designated historic property under the Ontario Heritage Act, and would utilize that portion of the facility not needed for a new power plant in a manner that is (a) synergistic with a clean and environmentally responsible energy centre and (b) sensitive to the concerns and interests of the local community." They even want to take 45,000 square feet and use it as an energy interpretive centre for children. That's what they want to do. And you guys say no. You don't even want to open it. The minister doesn't even want to read it. They don't want to consult with the city of Toronto. They want to build something which is environmentally wrong. They want to build something that goes against the dream of this city, the dream that this city has had for a generation: to redevelop that waterfront to make it a place of green parks and beauty. I think the consultation really needs to take place.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to stand up and speak about Bill 53, the Toronto municipal act. I know I'm not from the city of Toronto, but I get the privilege every once in a while to live about three or four days in Toronto.

I know why our government is bringing this bill forward, why we want to enhance the ability of the city of Toronto. Toronto is the heart of our province of Ontario. Toronto is one of the biggest cities not just in Ontario but maybe in the country of Canada. Also, Toronto is the economic capital for the whole nation. I think this bill came as a response to the needs of the Toronto people and also the municipal leadership in the city, which asked our government to perform, to do something about their needs. This bill responds to the needs of the great city of Toronto.

Our Premier is in constant dialogue with the mayor of Toronto. I was listening to the member from Beaches–East York when he was talking about this bill. He said that it's not enough, that it doesn't respond enough to the needs of Toronto. We know that our government is trying

to do its best to enhance the ability of that city, because if strengthened, Toronto will strengthen the whole province of Ontario.

I believe the member opposite wants to give Toronto the tools of flexibility to enhance some kinds of issues, to give them the accountability and to give them some kind of power on certain issues, like changed governance, land use planning, business regulation, fiscal issues, housing etc. I know our government is the first government in a long time to respond to the needs of the great city of Toronto.

Look at the gas tax. Our share of the gas tax will be almost \$350 million the next three years; the federal money, \$400 million; TTC, \$350 million—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I'm always interested in hearing Mr. Prue, the former mayor of East York, talk to this Legislature about his city of Toronto, because I believe very much that his experience in the past in municipal politics brings a lot of light to the Legislature on a bill, particularly like the city of Toronto bill. So I listened very closely to him when he talked about some of the problems associated with this bill. Generally speaking, what I took from his speech today was that this is really nibbling at the corners of the problem that the city of Toronto has with regard to its finances and its governance.

Mr. Prue has stated in this Legislature before that he would have liked to have had the cities stay as they were. I could say that, perhaps, about the city of Ottawa and some parts of the city of Ottawa which would have liked to have stayed in a looser form in the region as they were before, but we can't go backwards.

The one point that I think becomes clear when he talks about the uploading and the downloading is the whole fiscal nature of that particular transaction that took place back in the late 1990s, but I think there's a real question as to whether you can pay 100% funding for a program that is administered by the municipal government, and whether you can make that particular kind of program truly accountable back to the next provincial government if you do that.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): All of us should be grateful for the participation of Michael Prue, the member for Beaches–East York, in this debate. Mr. Sterling makes reference to Mr. Prue's extensive municipal experience, and his comments around Bill 53 should be well heeded, I put to you, by members of this assembly.

On the one hand, perhaps it's not appropriate for Mr. Bradley or Mr. Hudak or myself to tell folks representing ridings in the city of Toronto how the city of Toronto should be addressed in terms of redesigning its tax capacity and its governance design. But having said that, nobody here representing the city of Toronto or cities like Ottawa has any hesitation in telling small-town Ontario, like where I come from, like Welland or Port Colborne or Wainfleet or Thorold or Pelham—you don't have any qualms about telling them how to conduct their affairs.

One thing that I found remarkable—I'm grateful to Mr. Prue for very clearly identifying the enhanced taxation powers that this government would give to the city of Toronto, including tax on entertainment and on alcoholic beverages. I was just reading, over the course of the weekend, in the dining review section in *Toronto Life*, a commentary about the little theatre strip down there. Roberto Perrone, a general manager of several restaurants, says:

"Before 9/11, half our pre-theatre business was American tourists—coachloads from Buffalo and Rochester, families here for the weekend. Then we had SARS, the war in Iraq, the stronger Canadian dollar, the price of gas, delays at the borders. We get some Europeans in the summer, but Americans aren't travelling anywhere anymore."

That's in an article by James Chatto, a dining reviewer for whom I have a great deal of regard. I've relied upon his recommendations frequently.

I want to speak more to that when I get a chance to speak to this during my 20 minutes of debate.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): As a former member of the city of Toronto council who just left recently, I stand to speak in favour of this bill.

I attended the announcement between the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Premier and Mayor Miller, and I have to tell you that Mayor Miller's speech was complimentary in all regards. In fact, I was taken aback when several of my former colleagues from that council were present and also supportive of the announcement.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): All sides of council.

Mr. Balkissoon: There were members from all sides of council, as my colleague just said.

Let me say to you that one size doesn't fit all. The previous Municipal Act had some problems for the city of Toronto, basically on its size. To me, this is the start of an evolution, of a new era in respecting Toronto and allowing Toronto to manage its own business. I must also tell you that the act, the whole consultation process, started with the city of Toronto staff in a joint task force with the province's staff.

At that time, I approached Mayor Miller as a member of council and said I had several concerns and wanted input into the process. I made a submission to the city of Toronto staff, and a lot of the issues I raised were included in the discussions that went on in the province.

This bill is incorporating things that the public had raised to me as a city councillor. Many of them surrounded enforcement of property standards and inspection of private property. This bill gives the city of Toronto a lot more in enforcement rights than it had before, and the public will welcome that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York, you have two minutes to reply.

1640

Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank my colleagues from London–Fanshawe, Lanark–Carleton, Niagara Centre and Scarborough–Rouge River.

The member from London–Fanshawe, I think you acknowledged in your speech, and it's something that was honourable, that perhaps it's not enough. Really, that's all I'm trying to say: There is not enough.

Where this bill has failed is not so much in the provisions that the member from Scarborough–Rouge River is talking about, because there are some minor provisions around speed humps, around enforcement, around things that municipalities generally do where they don't have to run off to the province. But the reality is that there is simply not enough money, there is not enough authority in financing and there is not enough of allowing them to go on their own.

This is the problem I have with the bill. When the bill allows a municipality to set its own structure but then has a provision right in the body of the bill that if the Legislature doesn't like it, the Legislature can do away with it—and the Legislature even has an 18-month provision: the Legislature can put it on hold for 18 months once the city—

Mr. McMeekin: I know.

Mr. Prue: It's in there, and that's wrong. My friend agrees it's in there, and it's wrong. If you believe that the city of Toronto is a mature enough municipal structure and large enough—it is Canada's largest city, and all by itself it does contain approximately one fifth or one sixth of the entire population of this province—then you have to also believe that it can run its affairs effectively and ought not to have the long arm of the province there.

They need to find the finance. I agree with the member from Lanark–Carleton that the finance, the governance and the accountability have to be found.

The member from Niagara Centre talked about tourism, and sadly, he is right. The city no longer competes in the field of tourism in the way that it once did, and that important source of revenue has been really, really reduced.

We need to find ways to help the city of Toronto. The first way is to help them find the funds to do it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Zimmer: It's my pleasure to participate in this debate both as the MPP from Willowdale, one of the Toronto ridings, and as the chair of the Toronto caucus. This is truly landmark legislation for the province's capital city, Toronto, and it's landmark legislation for essentially two core underlying reasons: First, we are moving away from an attitude of paternalism which has governed the relationship in the past between the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto; and second, we are moving to a new relationship built on respect between the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto.

The city of Toronto is a mature order of government, some 2.5 million people. All the skills, all the talent, all the political skills, all the administrative skills are resident in the city of Toronto. They're across the street at the Toronto city hall, and the city can draw on that skill pool to administer itself within the framework of this legislation.

The fact of the matter is, notwithstanding what the members in the opposition parties have said, that our

government has received praise from various quarters throughout the city and the province for this legislation. Community leaders of all backgrounds, business and political leaders of all backgrounds and, I say to the members opposite, labour leaders, academics and a variety of local politicians have been following this file closely. They've recognized that the Premier and Minister Gerretsen, responsible for the act, have displayed leadership, vision and hard work in bringing this legislation to fruition. This legislation is going to put Toronto and our province—Toronto has a very special role to play in this regard—in a position to succeed economically, politically and socially.

The legislation is consistent with the overall approach of this government to municipal affairs. That approach is one of building partnerships with local governments wherever. This is the right way to address the challenges that all municipalities face. The municipalities and the province have to work together.

In reforming municipal affairs, our government has certainly focused on strong consultative leaderships with the municipal sector and the citizens within those sectors. This is apparent in the way we approached the implementation of this legislation. What did we do to further this consultation? A joint Ontario-city of Toronto task force spent more than a year working. They worked up a series of recommendations. The task force was composed of a broad sector of community and political leaders. They came up with some suggestions. A key part of that work was further emphasizing this concept that the province of Ontario ought to recognize the city of Toronto and, indeed, other municipalities as mature orders of government. We took into account the views of citizens from all walks of life within the province.

What we're doing in this legislation is giving the city of Toronto the tools and the flexibility to address their needs and challenges. Some of the things that we have worked on are broader authority when it comes to such areas as permissive powers to pass bylaws regarding a number of matters; accountability, with the provision of an auditor general; and in particular, and most important, I would argue, changing the government structure of the city of Toronto to better integrate the role of committees, the mayor's office and various boards of administration within the city. Land use planning, the local appeal process, business regulation, fiscal issues, raising revenues, housing controls—these are the kinds of things that we want to work with the city on, recognizing that they have the skill and the maturity and the responsibility to accept that accountability and, having accepted that accountability, to execute the delivery of the types of government that we expect to achieve that accountability.

It's for these reasons that I support this legislation. I urge all my colleagues in the Legislature to support this legislation.

I'm happy to share my remaining time with the member from Don Valley West.

The Deputy Speaker: You got that under the wire, didn't you? The member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): It's with great pleasure that I stand to speak to this legislation. Some of you will know that when I was first elected to this House, one of the things I wanted to do was to get this issue on the radar screen. It was something that was near and dear to my heart, having been part of a thrust in the city of Toronto and an activist group that, in fact, the member for Beaches–East York was part of, fighting against the amalgamation of this city. I really believed that what had happened under the previous regime was not the right thing for the city and I believed that we needed to have legislation in this House that would start to heal the damage that had been done by the amalgamation. In fact, in October 2004 I introduced a private member's bill that pointed to and asked for some of the reforms that are included in Bill 53. I'm very happy to see those reforms there.

I think it's interesting that the member for Beaches–East York spent most of his time talking about things other than this legislation because, in essence, this legislation is something that he should be supporting. The people of Toronto understand that if the city of Toronto is going to move on from amalgamation, that back-of-the-napkin plan that Al Leach put in place when the previous government was in office, if we're going to move on from that legislation and that governance structure that was put in place, then we're going to need a different relationship with the province of Ontario.

I want to talk about what this legislation is going to do. I'm going to quote from part II section 6: "The powers of the city under this or any other Act shall be interpreted broadly so as to confer broad authority on the city to enable the city to govern its affairs as it considers appropriate and to enhance the city's ability to respond to municipal issues."

What this legislation does is put in place that broad framework. Then, complains one of the members of the opposition, it limits those powers or puts an override in place that could override something that the city would decide to do. What the legislation does is it opens up those broad permissive powers. And, yes, there is indeed an override that recognizes the constitutional relationship between the city and the province. We're not saying that we, as the provincial government, are going to disregard our constitutional responsibilities. What we are doing, as my friend from Willowdale said, is putting in place a new relationship that is not as paternalistic but is much more permissive in terms of what the city is able to do.

1650

I think the other thing that is important is that we have to recognize that people want their city councillors and their mayor to have the authority to do what is in the best interests of the city. They want their city to be configured and bodies within the city to have the powers they need to have in order to make the best decisions close to the local communities. For example, we have in the city of Toronto a large city council and community councils in four regions of the city. The city council may choose at some time to devolve to those community councils some

of the authority it currently holds. That could be a very good thing. Without this legislation in place, it's not possible for the large city council to do that. That means the large city council has to remain accountable for and make decisions on very local issues for the north part of the city, the east part of the city and the west and south parts of the city. It doesn't make much sense that speed bumps in a neighbourhood in Scarborough should be decided on by the large city council downtown. With the powers conferred on it by this legislation, the city may at some point decide to devolve some of those powers to other bodies. That's the kind of thing that I think is really important, not to mention that this legislation gives the city more control over architectural design, more control over what the city is going to look like. It changes the possibility around having an appeal body that would do some of the work the Ontario Municipal Board does at this point and puts those decisions at the local level; it allows the city to do that. Those are the kinds of things that real people in their real lives in the city want to see. We need to heal from amalgamation, and we need to move on and allow the city to grow up in its relationship to the higher orders of government.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I've listened with interest to the government members espousing the virtues of this legislation. There's no question that all municipalities are seeking greater autonomy, and without doubt each and every one of them is seeking greater taxing power. In the case of Toronto, it finds its fiscal house sadly not in order and, as such, working with this Liberal government, has determined that the taxpayers in the city of Toronto have an even greater capacity to be taxed than those in the rest of the province.

I was out with Hazel McCallion at an event in Oakville a couple of weeks ago, both of us celebrating our birthdays around the same time, and I asked her what she thought of this legislation. She said to me, "You know, I have concerns about giving to councils that much power to tax."

We had opportunities when we were the government to hear from municipalities about additional opportunities for revenue enhancement. I know that in the area of tourism this is a very sensitive issue. We've seen, for example, that in Toronto we have a destination tax, a room charge for all persons who come to Toronto. They don't have that in other communities to a large extent, and we find that the province has cut back the funding it provides to the city of Toronto for its tourism infrastructure and for its tourism marketing strategies. If giving the municipalities additional taxing power allows the province to exit from its responsibilities in certain critical areas, a concern that is being raised by Toronto council now, I think we should have some further assurances that that will not occur.

Mr. Kormos: I'm pleased to comment on the participation by two of my favourite government backbenchers, Mr. Zimmer and Ms. Wynne. I want to tell their whip that he did them and their constituents a disservice by

permitting them only half of the 20-minute slot they would have been able to share and restricting their comments to but five minutes each, give or take, instead of the 10 minutes each. They had stuff to say that was important to hear, and I, for one, will stand up for their right to say it even if their own whip won't let them do it.

But I've got to tell you that for the life of me—how giving a municipality the power to tax amusement, entertainment, beverages and theatre tickets, I presume, amongst other things, helps an industry recover. We're talking about recovery, Ms. Wynne. We've all seen it, like you—you live in Toronto—or like me—I'm merely a guest here; you've seen the devastation. You don't have to restrict it to Toronto. Down where I come from in Niagara we've had similar—incredible, eh? At the end of the day it's all about people's jobs too, the little people, people making some of the very lowest wages.

For the life of me, how you consider that a progressive move; how, quite frankly, you consider giving the city of Toronto the power to set liquor licensing hours and business hours vis-à-vis the Retail Business Holidays Act when adjoining communities—a business simply literally across the road is not going to be able to offer the same hours or the same opening times—how you consider that fairness to the business and the community literally across the road, once again, is beyond me.

I look forward to your explanations in that regard, your further comments.

Mr. Duguid: I want to thank the member for Willowdale and the member for Don Valley West for their comments in this debate. But more than that, I want to thank both of these members for the leadership they've shown on this issue. I can tell you unequivocally that we would not be here debating this bill today had it not been for the input of these two members.

The member for Willowdale, as chair of the Toronto caucus, played a very important role in this bill. The member for Don Valley West, who has a great understanding of the problems and challenges of Toronto that were brought on by amalgamation, has played a very important role in finding the right policies to bring forward within this legislation that ensure that Toronto will move forward in a very effective and progressive way. So I want to thank them for the great work they've put into this. They've really served their constituents well through this bill.

I heard the member for Burlington, Mr. Jackson, get up and talk about fear over taxes. You hear this time and time again from the Conservative members: the hand-wringing, that the people of Toronto won't be capable of making judgments as to how high a tax threshold they want. This government has every confidence in the people of Toronto. We have confidence that they will indeed be able to keep their municipal government in check and ensure that their government works within this new legislation in a responsible way.

Toronto deserves to be competitive with other cities of its size around the world. This legislation will ensure that they have the tools to be able to compete with all cities

around the world. They'll have the autonomy, they'll have access to alternative sources of revenue and they will be accountable at the same time.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to comment today on the speeches from the member from Willowdale and the member from Don Valley West on Bill 53, An Act to revise the City of Toronto Acts, 1997. Like the member from Niagara Centre, I am surprised that they didn't take full advantage of their 20 minutes each to speak on this rather hefty bill that we have before us. I know that our caucus looks forward to getting into the details of this bill further as time allows for debate.

1700

The basic question I would ask is, has the government done its homework on this bill? I think the answer is no. There seem to be some things like the provision for a new office of an Auditor General when there is already a similar office in place in the city of Toronto for that position.

Let's be clear: The city of Toronto is a very important city, not only for the province of Ontario, but for the whole country. I think it's safe to say it's the most important city in terms of the economy and the effect it has on the whole country. But I would also like to point out that the small towns in Parry Sound–Muskoka are also very important to our area, and they face challenges, although the dollar value may not be the same as Toronto, for those small economies, like the townships of Ryerson or McDougall, or Parry Sound. When Ryerson has to build a new bridge, it's equal to their whole budget for the year for one bridge. So in that very tiny municipality, that challenge is very significant for them. I know that the dollar value in Toronto may be greater, but those small municipalities too face some very significant challenges. I know that we, as a province, need to deal with those challenges as well.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Don Valley West has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Wynne: Thank you to all the speakers who have commented on our remarks.

The permissive nature of this legislation is very important, and I think one of the things that we need to remind ourselves of is that Toronto didn't need to have more imposition of legislation that it wasn't ready for or didn't want. So the permissive nature of this legislation was very important to all of us in the Toronto caucus to make sure that the city of Toronto could grow into and choose what it wanted from the permissive powers that it had been allowed.

The other thing that I wanted to comment on is that other cities have comparable powers in terms of the taxation issue. Cities like Vancouver, Saskatoon, Regina, Halifax and Winnipeg have various authority to levy the kinds of taxes or levies that we have put forward in this legislation. So this is not a new idea, and what it does is allow Toronto to be on a level playing field with some of the other cities in the country.

Finally, I wanted to say that I really anticipate public hearings on this legislation, because I think it will be a

grand opportunity for people in Toronto to talk about the issues that are raised by this legislation. I certainly look forward to all the members in this House who are from the city of Toronto having an opinion on this legislation.

For example, the Leader of the Opposition, who is a Toronto resident and a Toronto man, was very silent during the amalgamation battles. I think it will be very interesting to see how he supports this legislation and the people of Toronto as they grow into a more mature relationship with the upper tiers of government. I think that there is no reason for any member who lives in the city of Toronto and who understands Toronto issues not to support this legislation. This is an important and a golden opportunity for the city of Toronto.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Sterling: Let me say at the outset that our leader, Mr. Tory, will be speaking certainly for more than five minutes on a very important bill like the city of Toronto bill. We would have expected each member of this Legislature from the city of Toronto to speak for at least 20 minutes on this bill as well. Surely, their city deserves that kind of response with regard to this bill.

I think a bill like this is difficult to paint in black or white. I think there are some good parts to the bill and some bad parts to the bill, but it is somewhat minimal, given the kind of talk that we heard prior to the bill and the talk that we heard on the introduction of the bill.

As a somewhat dual citizen with regard to the city of Ottawa and the city of Toronto since I have been a member of this Legislature for over 28 years now, along with my good friend Mr. Bradley—both he and I have spent a fair bit of our lives in this great city of Toronto during that period of time. I must say that my observations from afar in terms of municipal politics with regard to this city have been that when I arrived here in 1977 the streets were a little cleaner, the city was not populated by nearly the number of homeless people, and you actually could walk up and down the sidewalks without bumping into a news box every 20 or 30 feet.

I do think there have been some problems. As well, I must say that when I drive along the Gardiner Expressway to and from the airport, I wonder whether the planning of the waterfront has really been that prudent in terms of the number and size of buildings that are going along that very precious piece of real estate and how much of it has been reserved for the public at large to enjoy.

Notwithstanding that, I have talked from time to time with the media, who have not only covered Queen's Park but have covered city politics as well. I can remember not long ago talking to a member of the media who described Toronto city council as dysfunctional. I also have opinions with regard to the Ottawa city council, which I think this bill in some ways relates to because the city of Ottawa has been requesting changes, new powers, new taxing powers for themselves as well.

I do think it is proper for this government to look at how municipal governments are functioning, particularly with regard to larger bodies like the city of Ottawa and

the city of Toronto councils. In the last municipal election, in the county of Lanark, which I represent as well as the west part of the city of Ottawa, there was a considerable change in the municipal councils in the county of Lanark. It seems that in the smaller municipalities, there's a greater change in the representation that occurs there. I think that's healthy in some ways, although I saw some good friends lose their positions. It does bring to council, it does bring to the municipalities of Lanark a new vision, a new thought, a new idea in terms of the municipal representatives who are there. Unfortunately, it seems that in our large municipalities, the change in council is minimal. In other words, an incumbent has a lock on his or her particular area, and until that particular member of council decides to voluntarily retire, the representation doesn't change.

So when the Premier announced without consultation the increase from three to four years at the ROMA conference last week—that's the Rural Ontario Municipal Association—that particular announcement was not met with a lot of enthusiasm from our rural municipalities, and I can tell you why. Their particular view on this issue is that to give a four-year commitment to municipal council is, in a lot of cases, too long for them, because in the rural areas it is primarily a volunteer position. So it's very, very difficult for someone who has just retired or is close to retirement to say, "I want to give four years of my life to serve on council." Many of them do not want to give that kind of commitment. One councillor from Almonte told me that if it did go to four years, he probably wouldn't stand for re-election in the next municipal election.

There is a side of this that I wish and hope that when this bill is brought in, municipalities will be able to decide whether they want to go for a three- or four-year term. In other words, it will be optional for the present council to do that, because it's not universal with regard to the choice of going that way.

1710

I want to bring to light what has happened in Ottawa. When Ottawa heard that some new powers were going to be given to the city of Toronto, the city of Ottawa brought forward a recommendation in July. I think it's interesting to know how wide and far our city wanted to go with regard to their powers and what they were seeking, and then perhaps we should compare them to what, in fact, was given to the city of Toronto. The city of Ottawa wanted to raise much, much more money in taxing and get more taxing powers than what was given to Toronto in this case. I'm trying to find the article, Mr. Speaker. I'm having a little difficulty doing that.

Basically, one of the taxing powers that they sought was an ability to tax land transfers within the city of Ottawa and raise as much as \$900 on the sale of a \$300,000 property. They wanted, as well, to charge a \$25 licence plate surcharge on a motor vehicle. They wanted the power to enter, without warrant, any business that was licensed by the municipality. They wanted a hotel tax which would have raised \$7 million for the city of Ottawa. They wanted other taxing powers as well.

When the report was produced for the city of Ottawa, I think it's fair to say that all hell broke loose. The business community, the radio shows, the newspapers all said that higher taxes—we're all one taxpayer, and the province should not give these additional taxing powers to the city of Ottawa. Mr. McGuinty has heeded that political warning and told the city of Ottawa that in spite of the fact that the city of Toronto is going to be getting these additional taxing powers, the city of Ottawa shall not.

We heard previous speakers talk about what the new taxing powers would in fact give to the city of Toronto. It would give them about a \$50-million possibility with regard to taxes on entertainment, alcohol and cigarettes. My prediction is that the city of Toronto will not tax any one of these three.

When Mr. Prue and I were in Scotland this summer looking at the electoral process for the Scottish national Parliament, we got into a significant discussion with the parliamentarians in Scotland about their taxing powers. When Westminster delegated the powers that they had held for 300 years to the Scottish Parliament, they gave them very limited taxing power. They give them the right to tax 3% on the income of the people in Scotland. They've been in Parliament now for seven or eight years, I believe, and the Scottish Parliament has chosen not to tax one cent under their own auspices. They receive a cheque from Westminster, and they allocate and spend that money in Scotland.

I suggest that we're going to have a like situation here. If you give the city of Toronto only \$50 million, and I say "only \$50 million" in the context that they have a \$500-million shortfall—it's unlikely that municipal councillors will want to attract the heat associated with raising the \$50 million when they have a \$500-million problem. I think they will choose to come, hat in hand, back to the province and say, "We're short \$500 million." They won't tax for \$50 million and come, hat in hand, and say, "We're short \$450 million." I think that will be the politics of the situation that will arise with regard to this bill.

Notwithstanding that I hear the Toronto members from the Liberal backbench heralding this as a great new revenue source for the city of Toronto, I suspect that we're not going to see those taxes come forward within the city of Toronto. One of the reasons was outlined by my friend from Welland, and that is, how are you going to tax alcohol on one side of the road and not on the other side of the road? You're going to have inequities with regard to where people buy their cigarettes or their alcohol or where they go for their entertainment. It's just going to go back to the same old problem we had in this province that I thought we did away with when we brought in the law with regard to banning smoking in all restaurants across Ontario, which I think makes sense in the long term.

The other part of this bill which I think is a little misleading is the fact that they're going to set up in legislation an Auditor General's office. The city of Toronto has been very progressive in that regard and has set up its

own Auditor General department. Under their structure, the Auditor General carries out value-for-money audits. That's where the auditor goes in, looks at a program and says, "Are the taxpayers getting their value out of this particular program?"

I only wish that the city of Ottawa would do the same. If in fact the city of Ottawa does not do that in the future, I suggest that I would support a bill from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, or I would bring forward a bill, that would enforce an Auditor General with value-for-money auditing ability. I think it's important for large municipalities to have that kind of check with regard to the expenditures of the city. We have had problems in the city of Ottawa. We had \$4 million or \$5 million being spent on credit cards without any kind of proper control. I think that's where an auditor, who is reporting in public on whether or not good business practices are being used, identifies that there's waste and requires remedial action.

We also had a very significant problem with Ottawa Hydro, where the mayor sat on the board and the board was awarding its own board members consulting contracts of considerable value, including the chair of the board at that time. We need to have a check on those particular matters in the city of Ottawa as well as other large and complex municipalities. Therefore, I would suggest that an Auditor General be implemented in all of those municipalities and not just the city of Toronto.

The other part that my leader identified when he responded to the introduction of this bill was the whole matter of the responsibility for different programs. When I was listening to Mr. Prue, in his remarks he talked about the split between the province and the municipality in paying for some of the social costs. He mentioned child care—73% province, 27% city; social assistance was 73%-27%, even though it was supposed to be 80%-20%.

The problem with all of those kinds of fiscal sharing responsibilities relates to the fact that the cities are administering these programs. Notwithstanding the fact that we all have a great deal of empathy for those people requiring social assistance, we also have to operate within budgets. Therefore, if we give the city the right to administer and make decisions with regard to spending, the spending envelope cannot be paid 100% by the province handing, in essence, a blank cheque to the municipalities without some kind of fiscal responsibility coming back the other way.

1720

We have seen, in terms of ambulance, where municipalities have chosen, in some cases—well, they have chosen unilaterally to improve response times, which everybody is in favour of, but nobody's in favour of paying for that particular service. There has to be a balance by those who are deciding on whether a service like ambulance, fire, police or whatever is going to be more responsive, is going to spend more money—those who are making those decisions have to have some responsibility in taxing to pay for those particular services.

My leader, when he was talking about these particular issues, talked about who is doing what with regard to making decisions and taking responsibility. He also talked about the other big problem that this bill does not address, and that is that we're not talking about a \$50-million shortfall, which this bill might address with regard to the taxing powers. We're talking about a \$500-million problem, and therefore this bill, while having some positive aspects to it, is minimal at best.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Prue: I listened intently to the member from Lanark–Carleton. He makes a number of very good points. The first is that this bill, of course, is restricted to the city of Toronto. I have said from the beginning, and I think many members of this House have agreed, that in the long term it cannot be limited only to the city of Toronto. We have 480 municipalities, more or less, in this province and eight or 10 of them are very large. I would like at a minimum for the eight or 10 very large ones to have much the same powers that are going to be conferred on the city of Toronto. I would include in that group, of course, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Mississauga and perhaps Brampton. There are a number of very large—

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): Owen Sound.

Mr. Prue: And perhaps Owen Sound—you never know how far—but the eight or 10 biggest ones should be the first ones to get these additional powers as well.

Second, I agree with him that it is unlikely, in the short term at least, that the city of Toronto will attempt to use its taxing powers for the \$50 million. They would be afraid of losing restaurants. They would be afraid of people going across the border into Pickering, Vaughan or Mississauga to buy cigarettes or alcohol and/or to seek entertainment elsewhere. There would be a very large push against them exercising that power.

Last but not least, he talked about the administration, and it is here where I would diverge somewhat. The administration cost for most of these programs is under 10%. If the city is going to continue to administer or be told to administer as part of their contribution, then surely it does not have to reach the heights or levels of money at which it now is. If something can be sawed off, if something can be shown that the city could do for under 10% and wants to keep that power, I would leave it, or else the province also has the opportunity of purchase of service, to ask the city to continue to do it because it's at the local level and purchase that service from the city as part of the negotiation.

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I'd also like to speak to this bill. I think the member from Lanark–Carleton has raised a number of interesting points. With respect to the fact that this only relates to the city of Toronto, there are certainly many features that would be applicable to other municipalities, including Markham. The member from Beaches–East York mentioned London and, I thought, Owen Sound as well. Markham certainly would like to have some of those powers in

dealing with the problems that we need to deal with. As a former member of Markham council, I'm sure they would appreciate receiving the tools and certain flexibility. But the fact of the matter is that we will be looking at the Municipal Act. The fact that some of these features and powers are included in the Toronto act does not exclude the possibility that some of them might be considered when the Municipal Act is looked at.

With respect to the four-year term that the member from Lanark–Carleton talked about, I think there are certainly individuals who do not want to run for four-year terms. But again, as a former municipal councillor, in my opinion and from people I've spoken to, in the overwhelming majority, members of council and people who would like to run for council would like to have a much longer period so that they can plan things out and implement things in a better way. We are not looking for 100% consensus; it's not unanimous support in that regard. That is why we need to make sure that the people who would like to make the longer commitments will make that commitment.

With respect to responsibility, certainly as a 905-area member—and I can't speak for the city of Toronto—we need Toronto to have the flexibility and tools to deal with their own problems so that we can avoid and try not to deal with the pooling that requires—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Can I have as much time as him, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: You can have as much time as I allow you, yes.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to comment on the member from Lanark–Carleton's comments. He certainly has seen a lot of different changes in legislation around this place. I can tell you that, as a member from a fairly rural riding, I haven't had any of my constituents come forward supporting a city of Toronto act, particularly the taxing powers portion of it.

I do want to let you know, and I think it's safe to put it on the record, that I've had letters brought forth by my constituents who are members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The business community is very concerned that other municipalities will follow the city of Toronto act, and they will want to have additional taxing powers. That is something we've already heard in this room; just in a few minutes, we've heard Markham, Owen Sound, Toronto and Ottawa. So we already know that if there are any special privileges set in the legislation that the city of Toronto receives, every other municipality—it doesn't matter whether it's a little township or a great big city—will want the same privileges. That is one of the reasons the CFIB is very concerned, because they do think that some municipalities will take advantage of this.

On top of that, I also wanted to let you know that the Ontario Real Estate Association is very concerned about some of the licensing that may take place under this act. I look forward to the committee hearings and listening to

what these folks have to say at committee. I think it's safe to say that they are very concerned about municipalities taking advantage of additional taxing powers.

Mr. Kormos: I'm pleased to have listened carefully to the commentary by Mr. Sterling, the member from Lanark–Carleton. As I listened to the critique of the bill, whether it's from Michael Prue, from Norm Sterling or from others, I've learned very, very clearly what this bill does not do, and that is that it doesn't do anything to address the fiscal shortfall in the city of Toronto of \$500 million a year flowing to them as a result of provincially mandated responsibilities. Just as this Bill 53 doesn't address that fiscal shortfall in the city of Toronto, it doesn't do anything, it doesn't even contemplate, it doesn't even consider, the incredible difficulty that small- and smaller-town Ontario is having, dealing with a rapidly eroding industrial tax base and dealing with an aging population. When I speak to this bill in a few minutes' time, I want to ask folks to pay special heed to the impact that some of these policies have on an aging population where incomes become fixed or reduced. It does nothing to address the rotting infrastructure in older small-town Ontario. I say, then, that notwithstanding the government caucus cheerleaders who are going to call this bill the greatest thing since buttered popcorn—

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): We didn't say that.

Mr. Kormos: Okay. I withdraw. Nobody said it was the greatest thing since buttered popcorn, but the implication clearly was that it was the finest thing since sliced bread.

I say the bill does far less than any of its government advocates would have us believe and I say the bill does nothing to address a fundamental issue, and that is of the fiscal shortfall, never mind Toronto's, but the rest of Ontario's as well.

1730

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lanark–Carleton has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Sterling: I'd like to clarify one point with regard to the city of Ottawa. We do have an auditor general, who was just appointed last July, who has not reported yet. That did emanate out of the fiasco we had with regard to some city finances. I do feel that all large cities should have an auditor general with value-for-money auditing ability. So I look forward to the auditor general's first report on the city of Ottawa.

I appreciate the comments made by each and every member. I see some positives in the bill, but I think the overall emphasis of my remarks and the remarks that I'm hearing is that this is a minimalist bill. I think the people of the city of Toronto and the municipalities in general need a greater restructuring than is put forward in the city of Toronto act.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Kormos: I have but 20 minutes to speak to Bill 53. I want to thank people in advance for their patience with me and for their understanding that as a person who feels grateful to be a guest in the city of Toronto, I come

from, like so many others here, not only smaller-town Ontario but old, industrial, smaller-town Ontario. I come from communities like Welland, Thorold, Pelham, Port Colborne, Wainfleet, St. Catharines and Merritton, which have lost an incredible amount of industrial tax base. You've got to understand that one factory shutdown in a community the size of Port Colborne or Thorold puts a huge dent in the revenue of that municipality, and please, you've also got to understand—that's why I made reference to older, industrial, small-town Ontario—where factories, when they do shut down, whether it's old forges or old castings operations, leave behind brownfields, the most polite way to describe land that has been soaked with PCBs and so many other chemicals over the course of years of industrial manufacturing. You see, we don't have the luxury of high property values.

I remember reading an article in Maclean's—some of you did too—around a year, year and a half ago, that talked about brownfields recovery projects across Canada, in cities like Toronto, Winnipeg etc., where the value of the land inherently was sufficiently high that the private sector, the developers, could afford to remediate—is that the word?—this land so that it could be developed on.

But down where I come from, inner-city property values just aren't that high that cities can do this work by themselves. Certainly, the private sector isn't about to do it because the property value isn't there to make it profitable. So when I sit here and listen to the very skilled critique and analysis of this bill by people like Michael Prue and Norm Sterling, and when I understand increasingly, as I listen to them and refer back to the bill and listen more to them and refer back to the bill again, that the real issue here is what this bill doesn't do for Toronto, it then forces me, compels me, to reflect on the state in which this government has left most of Ontario, smaller-town, older, industrial Ontario. When I say "aging populations"—and we are—down where I come from in Niagara region, we've got one of the older populations in the province, in the country. It's those baby boomers, of which more than a few of us are members. These are people who are in the course of retiring and assuming fixed incomes. In the case of Atlas Steel and Slater Steel employees, they're people who are into forced retirement, who had little choice about whether or not they were going to keep working, and found pension plans that were less than adequately funded. I've got to tell you that the mayors and the city councils in those communities do outstanding jobs of juggling some pretty scarce resources and some pretty minimal revenues, trying to maintain basic and core services.

The pressure on communities that are increasingly getting older, with increasingly senior populations, increasingly with fixed and lower incomes, is even greater than it is, I suppose, in those areas in the 905 ring around the city of Toronto, where the huge growth is and where the huge development is.

One of the realities about Dalton McGuinty's province of Ontario is that as a consequence of the responsibility

for funding provincially mandated programs being down-loaded on to municipalities, Ontario has the highest municipal property taxes in the country. Do you remember Peter Finch in the movie, standing at the window: "I'm mad as hell and not going to take it anymore"? Well, taxpayers are saying that as we speak.

The folks I know want to pay their fair share. They know there's no such thing as a free lunch or free ride. They know you've got to pay for things. But what they're saying, and increasingly so, is that there is just no more to get. You can only squeeze that lemon so much. There's no more juice.

This winter, boy, we've been blessed with an extraordinarily warm winter, especially down here in southern Ontario. The increased electricity prices—yet to go up one more time after the OEB does its work next month—rocked households, and that's without the coldest of winters that would have forced those electricity and heating prices even higher. You throw in a good dose of the increased cost of natural gas and property tax increases that municipalities are working incredibly hard to avoid but that are inevitable, and you've got property taxpayers out there—good folks, hard-working people, people who have worked hard all their lives, people who care about their communities and about their neighbours, people who are prepared to pay their fair share—who simply say, "There's no more left. You can't squeeze any more out of me."

I know that other members of this assembly have had the same types of seniors coming into their offices as have been coming into mine, who talk to me, at the ages of 75, 80 and 85, about their fear that they can no longer afford to live in their own homes; homes that are paid for, as often as not, at least twice if they put kids through university. What a crime, Mr. Prue, for a senior couple in their 80s, who have worked so hard, done without so much, to then, at that point in their life, reflect on the fact—and we're not talking about folks who overbought when they bought houses. We're talking about people who live modestly, but who say they can't afford to live in their own homes.

The highest municipal property taxes in the country, right here in Ontario: Ontario is the only province in Canada where municipal property taxes are used to subsidize provincial health and social service programs like social assistance, employment services, disability benefits, drug benefits, social housing, child care, homes for the aged, public health and ambulance services. Ontario is the only province that forces municipal property taxpayers to subsidize these provincial programs.

1740

People have been rocked by the arbitrariness of property assessment since the privatization and de-staffing of property assessment offices. People have been rocked by that. I know many of these property assessors, and I know them to be good people who respond as promptly as they can to requests for reconsideration and appeals and so on. The fact is that not only are people being faced with higher and higher property taxes, but

they're being faced with more and more unfair property tax increases.

Let's take a look at some of the figures. In addition to the \$6.1 billion in education costs that the property taxpayer pays, municipalities, through property taxes, pay for a total of around \$3.2 billion in provincially mandated programs: social assistance, ODSP, Ontario Works, drug programs—I already talked about this—social housing, ambulance, public health, child care. In the city of Toronto—Toronto members, stand up on a point of order and correct me if you've got the data to the contrary—property taxpayers pay \$700 million a year to fund programs that are provincial responsibilities.

Mr. Murdoch: It's going to go up.

Mr. Kormos: As Mr. Murdoch says, it's going to go up.

Mr. Murdoch: Higher and higher.

Mr. Kormos: "Higher and higher," Mr. Murdoch says. Again, if anybody wants to stand up and dispute Bill Murdoch's observations that the property taxes are going to go higher and higher, stand up now on a point of order and say so.

My goodness. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals used to promise—they promised so many things—to upload downloaded provincially mandated programs. We here in the New Democratic Party believe there should be an aggressive approach to uploading these programs, starting, quite frankly, with ODSP, Ontario Works and related drug costs.

People across this province were shocked when they learned that the Dalton McGuinty Liberals were going to give the city of Toronto new taxing powers. You see, that's their solution. That's the Liberal solution: not only download the cost for provincially mandated programs onto municipalities, but download the grief in terms of having to respond to taxpayers who are fed up to here.

New taxes? During one of the brief, two-minute questions and comments, I've already made reference to the observation by restaurant manager Roberto Perrone, down on the King Street theatre and restaurant strip, who talked about how Toronto has been reeling, continues to reel, notwithstanding one Mr. Mills and some very aged Rolling Stones. As I told people at the time, hell, I could have got you Walter Ostanek for nothing, and he has won more Grammys than Mick Jagger and Keith Richards ever have.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Well, it's true. Walter Ostanek has won more Grammys than Keith Richards or Mick Jagger ever has, and he would have done it for nothing.

Toronto is still reeling. According to what I've been able to read, most recently in Toronto Life, that restaurant strip—the people just aren't there. The Americans used to come in busloads from Rochester, Buffalo, but now a whole variety of factors—look, I'm not casting blame; I'm simply saying, that's the nature of the beast. One commentator says, "We're lucky to get some Europeans in the summertime."

As I say, it isn't just about the businesses; it's about the people who work in them—and work hard. Whether

it's in the restaurant business, whether it's in the hotel accommodations business—you know some of those workers. From time to time, they have occasion to drop by here at Queen's Park: a whole lot of new Canadians, a whole lot of women working incredibly hard, cleaning hotel rooms and making them ready for the next guest and hoping against hope that somebody might leave a toonie as a tip, because they're working for minimum wage or minimum wage plus 10 cents.

These are the people who are being hurt by policies that do nothing to promote tourism and, in fact, make it even harder for entrepreneurs in that hospitality/entertainment industry to draw customers. It's not just here in Toronto; it's tourism down in Niagara or tourism across the province. You will only have had to travel some of the roadways over the course of the summer—places where there would be traffic jams five years ago, it's smooth sailing now; places where you'd have to drive for mile after mile to get a motel or hotel room—again, in smaller-town Ontario, maybe places like where Mr. Murdoch comes from—

Mr. Murdoch: That's right. Meaford and Owen Sound.

Mr. Kormos: Meaford and Owen Sound, along with others—a beautiful part of the province, too. But getting motel rooms wasn't that hard this past summer—was it, Mr. Murdoch? It wasn't hard at all.

Mr. Murdoch: Nobody left. Nobody coming.

Mr. Kormos: I want to make it clear on behalf of New Democrats that this bill has got to be subjected to a thorough committee process. Mr. Prue is looking forward to extensive committee hearings, and I, for one, am looking forward to them too. For the life of me, I don't understand how restoring the checkerboarding around liquor licence hours or around the Retail Business Holidays Act—remember the last Liberal government that tried to download the Retail Business Holidays Act onto municipalities? Remember that wacky solution, or non-solution? Remember that, Mr. Prue? You remember it, Mr. Murdoch, when David Peterson didn't fare too well as a result of it: "Oh, we'll let municipalities determine on their own what shops will be able to stay open and won't be able to stay open."

Mr. Sterling already made reference to this. You can't have the city of Toronto with the power, let's say, to give extended opening hours and then the poor retailer across the road in Mississauga, Markham or Owen Sound—you can't punish those entrepreneurs, those retailers by delegating to the city of Toronto the ability to determine opening hours of licensed establishments, beer halls, taverns and so on. Either this province is going to accept its responsibility around access to alcohol or it's not. Again, I don't think that's safe or sound or well thought out. I'm prepared to listen to people who come to committee. It's going to be Mr. Prue who's going to be staffing that committee, but he'll be reporting back to the caucus.

This government has failed municipalities just incredibly.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Oh, come on.

Mr. Kormos: No, you come on. Infrastructure is rotting in small-town Ontario. You know that every year that it decays further, the cost of repairing it is compounded as small-town Ontario loses tax base, like the industrial tax base, which used to be key to its sustainability. Not inappropriately, newer and higher standards that are related to the health and safety of drinking water—again, gosh, New Democrats have advocated for those and sought those and welcomed those. But they imposed new, extraordinary costs on rural and recreational properties in Ontario. The province has been so remarkably silent on this.

1750

So Bill 53 doesn't appear to be solving the fundamental, pocketbook, dollar-and-cent problem: taxpayers have had it up to here. It's not that they don't want to, but they can't. You've grabbed them by the ankles, turned them upside down and shaken every last nickel and dime out of them. Any effort to get more from them at this point can be characterized as nothing other than extortion.

So I'm going to remain very, very interested to see what folks in Toronto have to say about Bill 53, to see what members of the Legislative Assembly who represent Toronto ridings have to say about Bill 53, to see what mayors have to say about Bill 53, because, heck, I can hear them now, "If it's good enough for Toronto, why isn't it good enough for us?" If it's no good for Toronto, the corresponding argument applies too. So let's have this debate. Let's have it all laid out here. Let's have it all up front and no more surprises.

New Democrats want and expect this to go to committee. The government House leader is well aware of that by now. He will send that message on, I'm sure, to the people who have more authoritative control over the course of Bill 53. But I suspect those committee hearings are, in and of themselves, going to supply a wealth of new information that hopefully this government might heed.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's always interesting to listen to the member for Niagara Centre comment on Bill 53, the changes to the City of Toronto Act. It's interesting for those members in the House who were at that famous AMO meeting in 1998, I believe.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It was 1998.

Mr. Leal: It was 1998. My friend the former mayor of Brighton, I believe, was in the room that day. The Premier of the day came in with his entourage; it was rather large that day. Former Premier Harris was going to deliver the state of the union to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I was at the back of the room. I think my friend the former mayor of Brighton was there. Mr. Harris got his usual standing ovation to start off with; it's something you do as a courtesy to the Premier of Ontario when he speaks. I didn't stand up that day. He announced that downloading was about to commence. It

was going to be a wonderful day for municipalities in Ontario. He went through all the steps: land ambulance, social housing, ODSP, Ontario Works—the whole kit and caboodle. At the end of the meeting everybody stood up, gave a standing ovation and said, "Alleluia. Happy days are here again. We're buying into this and we're moving forward."

There were some of us at the back of the room who didn't stand that day—my friend the mayor of Brighton and a number of us from the city of Peterborough—because we knew—we didn't have to have sophisticated computers that day; we just did a quick counting on our hands—that was going to be a bad day for municipalities, that downloading was going to erode our base and the municipal taxpayer was about to pony up big time.

Next, it was assessment. We were told by the Harris government that he would have an army of assessors to go out and look at reassessment. Well, that didn't happen either.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Leal: Oh, I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Murdoch: I'm sure the last speaker could go on and on because, you know, he's in the government and they haven't figured out who is running Ontario yet. Two and a half years and he's still blaming the past government. He doesn't understand what has happened in the government, that they are the government. Again, I don't know how many times we have to remind you guys you are the government. For two and a half years you haven't figured it out, but maybe some day you will.

Now we'll talk about the bill that we're actually discussing, Mr. Speaker, which you might want to remind some of the Liberals of. Anyway, this bill is going to give Toronto more taxing powers. I guess this will help to save one of those promises, "I will not raise your taxes," because you'll tell Toronto, "You can go ahead and raise the taxes. I'm not going to do it anymore. I've already done it enough. I don't want to do it anymore." Then what happens? Do other municipalities get this offer? We're not sure, but I think they're going to look at this.

Surely it will go out for comment. I never would have thought this bill would not have done that. I see that my good friend Mr. Kormos is a bit concerned, but I also know that the House leader of the Liberals, the member from St. Catharines, is an honourable person and he will make sure that this does go out. I wouldn't even have to think about it, if you look at who that person is. Mr. Bradley is fair and honourable. He will see this bill does get out for comment. I'm quite sure he will. He's been around and he's figured out that they're in the government. It's too bad some of the rest of them in the party haven't figured that out. Every time they get a chance to talk, they talk about the old days. Well, they're gone, boys and girls. You're in the government; you've got to start to take control.

I can understand when you say, "We've raised the taxes enough. We'll let Toronto raise its own taxes."

That's all this is about, that they are done raising taxes; they're going to let Toronto raise its own.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently to the member from Niagara Centre, as I always do, because not only does he always bring new facts to the table but he can be humorous at the same time.

He talked, though, about three very important economic arguments. They're all important, not only to the city of Toronto but to virtually every town and municipality in Ontario. The first was the loss of the industrial base. You cannot underestimate how much that means to a small town in Niagara Centre: Welland, Thorold, Pelham or any of them. That means an awful lot. It as well means a lot to every single municipality, even a large one like Toronto. The industrial and commercial base in Toronto has been declining for a number of years due to the brownfields, due in part to the older buildings and the congestion, and due to the fact that the land is cheaper in the 905 areas. Much of the industrial base that used to sustain the city of Toronto is gone. Quite frankly, there are more people but there are fewer large taxpayers.

He talked about the highest municipal taxes in Canada. It is true: Toronto has the highest municipal taxes in Ontario. But what people don't realize is that, with the exception of Great Britain, we also have the second-highest municipal taxes, that I've been able to find, in the world. The reason is in large part because of the downloading, because we are not paying for municipal services. Places like the United States have state and federal grants that flow to their cities—if you see the genius of what is happening in places like Boston, where they're rediscovering their past and remaking the city; or Cleveland, which was once a city that no one wanted to go to and is now starting to look pretty nice; even New York; even New Orleans after Katrina. They're spending the money on their municipalities; we are not.

He rightly talked about the \$700 million that Toronto would be free of if the downloads were removed. That's what we need to see in conjunction with this bill. This bill standing alone does not do it. We have to see the money as well.

Mr. Balkissoon: I sat here and heard the member from Lanark–Carleton talk about the three-year term and the four-year term of councillors. He was saying it's good to have new blood once in a while.

I just wanted to comment on that, because in the first year in the term of a council, the new members are just getting their feet wet in a big city like Toronto. The second year is when they start planning. In the third year they start campaigning. Think about running a big city like Toronto and having to plan for it, and all you have is one year in your term.

So I would tell you, as a former member of the city of Toronto council—I know many of my colleagues will accept a four-year term. You need it to run a better government; you need it to run a bigger government.

Let me clear up something about this bill that I think is important to the public. Land use planning decisions,

now committee of adjustment decisions, will be made locally and appealed locally. That has been a big headache for neighbourhoods over time, and I think they're going to welcome this change that this bill brings about.

Also, as a former member of the MTHA board—I was appointed by the previous Conservative government to serve on that board. We wanted to demolish Regent Park and we couldn't do it because the province wouldn't agree. Now the city of Toronto is doing it because this government agreed. In the future, when they want to do other housing projects, the city can do them on its own. It's not going to be held to ransom by the province. I think what this government is doing is giving the city what it needs: the tools to do its job. It's recognizing the city as a mature government and allowing it to represent the people who live within that city.

Change always comes with a little bit of people hesitant to accept change. Change always comes with a little bit of pain, but through evolution you make it perfect. I think what this bill will eventually do for the city of Toronto is allow it to do a good job.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kormos: I express my gratitude towards the people in this chamber and their patience this afternoon.

I'm so pleased that Donna-Lynn McCallum is here in the members' gallery again. She brought some photographs she had taken at an event I was recently at. She's a frequent guest here. She knows Toronto. She knows what it means to work hard, she knows what it means to want to be able to pay your fair share and, indeed, to make sacrifices to make sure that you do it. She also knows what it means to have had it up to here, to have been squeezed so thoroughly that there's no juice left.

Mr. Prue's observation about Canada's ranking internationally in terms of municipal property taxes is shocking and should be a veritable call to arms. Property taxes are an extremely regressive form of taxation. They have no consideration for what the income of a person is, what their ability to pay is. You should not be funding provincially mandated programs like ODSP and social assistance and ambulance with property tax revenues. It's as simple as that. Ms. McCallum knows that.

As a matter of fact, I took a look at the photos. They were from Peter Tabuns's nomination meeting the other night in Toronto–Danforth. I'm not going to tell the voters of Toronto–Danforth how to vote; they'll figure that out for themselves. But let me tell you that I was one proud person to be at that nomination meeting. Peter Tabuns is a very experienced municipal politician who will be advocating for the right things of the folks of Toronto, for fairness for taxpayers. I was proud to be with Peter Tabuns in Toronto–Danforth the other night and was so happy that Donna-Lynn McCallum was able to document it.

Thank you kindly.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1803.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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