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Jeudi 2 mars 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 2 March 2006

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*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

CONSUMER PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT (INTERNET
GAMING ADVERTISING), 2006
LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA
LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU
CONSOMMATEUR
(PUBLICITÉ DES JEUX SUR INTERNET)

Mr. Leal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 to regulate the promotion and advertising of Internet gaming in Ontario / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur afin de réglementer la promotion des jeux sur Internet en Ontario et la publicité qui en est faite.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker and fellow members, I rise in the House today to speak in support of my private member's bill entitled the Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Internet Gaming Advertising), 2006. This bill is intended to stop the advertising of Internet gaming websites, which are not licensed by the appropriate authority in Ontario or Canada and operated in accordance with the applicable laws in the province of Ontario.

First of all, I'd like to take a moment to mention Ms. Jane Holmes, vice-president of the Woodbine Entertainment Group, who has joined us in the gallery today, who has worked with me over the last year and has supported me on this issue during our deliberations to develop this bill. Ms. Holmes has been very determined to protect and see that Ontario's horse racing industry prospers, and we certainly welcome Ms. Holmes to our gallery today.

I'd also like to commend my special assistant, André Nicoletti, who has coordinated a lot of research in developing this bill as we move forward. He indeed needs to be commended for all his work.

Since the Internet has become a common medium, several of Ontario's—and Canada's, for that matter—legal gaming operations have been subject to fierce competition from illegal interests. The growth of illegal

Internet gaming sites, onshore and offshore, is a real and serious threat to the future viability and integrity of both the horse racing industry and government-operated gaming. Oftentimes, but not always, because these illegal operations are harboured offshore, it makes them difficult to legally confront. As I'm sure you're well aware, drafting related legislation regarding matters outside of Canada's borders is very complex.

Fifteen years ago, there were no gaming operations in Canada. Then the federal government gave the provinces a monopoly on commercial gaming, lotteries, casinos, slot machines, raceinos—which are tracks with slot machines—and video lottery terminals proliferated. The idea was that local gaming industries could provide much-needed funding for Ontarians.

Today, there are over 100,000 places to make a bet in Canada. Canadians and visitors can choose to gamble at thousands of VLTs, slot machines, lottery ticket centres, bingo halls with permits, 59 permanent casinos, 70 race-tracks—some with slot machines—and many tele-theatres. They are great revenue generators for the province today.

However, today there are also over 1,800 Internet gaming sites and counting. One estimate is that the global Internet gaming market will grow from—these are in United States dollars—\$10 billion in 2002 to \$14.5 billion in 2006. The growth has been absolutely explosive. In another recent media report, pokerroom.com indicated that they have 25,000 new players each week and that Canada is the second-largest market.

Not only has Canada's gaming industry been forced to deal with illegal competition, but similar action is taken in other countries, such as Great Britain and the United States. It is estimated, again in US dollars, that offshore gaming business generates more than \$1 billion US annually, even though online gambling is illegal in the United States. As in Canada, internationally based legal gambling operations find the solution to this issue difficult to control.

What exactly is the big lure of Internet gaming? Internet gaming offers the excitement of traditional gambling but has the added advantage of the convenience of gambling from home. All that is required is a personal computer and a connection to the Internet. Gambling sites are open for business 24 hours a day, attracting consumers with flashy websites. People are often lured to illegal sites by bait-and-switch tactics, and thus make purchases they hadn't originally intended.

As can many of my colleagues in my Legislature, I'd like to draw upon instances where Ontario's gaming in-

dustry is a positive and responsible local contributor. For example, the horse racing industry is a key economic contributor to the rural community. In fact, Kawartha Downs, which has gaming entertainment such as harness racing, stock car racing and slots, provides many jobs to the people of my riding of Peterborough, the riding of Victoria-Haliburton and the city of Kawartha Lakes.

Further to economic issues, I'm also deeply concerned that illegal Internet gaming poses gambling-related health problems to people in this province. Illegal gambling websites do not contribute tax revenues or support charitable organizations, as do provincial, arm's-length, regulated corporations, such as the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation. Illegal gaming websites reinforce the concept that there is an easy way to make money, which is a dangerous idea, especially when a complete stranger has access to your credit card.

The Canadian horse racing industry has been negatively impacted by the massive growth of online book-making operations, which have not been granted regulatory approval in Canada. This leads not only to an economic loss for Ontarians, but a social loss. These illegal Internet operators, otherwise known as bookies, who take bets on horse racing do not incur the cost of a racetrack to conduct and support live racing, nor do they contribute to the horse person's purse account. Licensed racetracks are unable to compete, with significant infrastructure and overhead costs.

The illegal Internet operators are taking consumers from the legal industry without any law enforcement response. The Woodbine Entertainment Group estimates that offshore Internet gaming has impacted its operation by over \$100 million annually. There are hundreds of Internet sites taking bets on Woodbine horse racing product without any commercial agreement to do so.

For the online gambler, the industry's lack of regulation should raise some bright red flags. Online gambling is a risky business, as the player has no real idea who is running the website and how to contact the company should the need arise. For example, how do gamblers know these companies will deliver their winnings should they actually beat the odds?

1010

There's also a great social concern, especially for Ontario's youth, as many of the online gambling sites do not restrict access of minors. Studies have shown conclusively that while various companies offer age verification systems specifically designed to block accounts from minors, many sites do not use them. This is similar to many pornographic websites.

There are also concerns about money laundering, involvement of organized crime and potential for fraud through offshore Internet gaming operators. In 2004, an online gaming operation, Sporting Options in the United Kingdom, declared bankruptcy and 5,300 account holders could not get their money. Approximately £3.6 million was owed to clients.

As Minister of Health and Long-Term Care George Smitherman said on September 16, 2005, when he re-

leased Stanley Sadinsky's report, Review of the Problem Gambling and Responsible Gaming Strategy of the Government of Ontario, "I am also in favour of addressing responsible gambling in terms of health promotion. It is my hope that Ontario's gaming industry can continue to deliver quality service to Ontarians in an efficient and socially responsible manner."

Let's be clear. Internet gaming is already illegal in Canada under the Criminal Code. I've attempted to draft related legislation that doesn't mirror federal law that exists within that code. It would seem that the problem lies in the area of the enforcement of existing law that already contains provisions relating to the advertising of gaming activities. These provisions appear insufficient to deal with the situation effectively, and of course it's hard to see what meaningful legislative steps might be taken.

I've therefore proposed to the Legislature a bill that would complement the Criminal Code and require marketers and advertisers not to enter into contracts for the provision of marketing advertising services to Internet gaming businesses that do not operate pursuant to applicable Canadian law.

I believe that the ideas and intentions of Bill 60 are important to the people of Ontario and Canada. Society will benefit on many levels, economically and socially, from the reduction of a growing problem. I hope that all members of this Legislature of all political stripes will look at this bill and think carefully as to what its intentions are. It is not intended that we intrude on Canadians' freedom of speech, but that we try to remedy a problem that already exists.

The financial lure of Internet gaming is enormous. However, legal gambling activity in Canada employs an estimated 47,500 persons as either regulators or operators of gambling for government or within gaming management companies.

One of the key strengths of gaming lies with the income-generating power of the industry, thus ensuring its continued support from local municipalities and provincial and federal governments. The fact that charities, hospitals, mental health and addiction projects and cultural projects benefit from money poured into the gaming industry gives the legal industry an added boost.

Bill 60 will benefit all Ontarians, and I look forward to the debate further on this matter this morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I am pleased to join the debate today on the bill brought forward by my colleague from Peterborough. We share a very close working relationship, having neighbouring ridings. Kawartha Downs, as he mentioned, is a key player in both our communities. It's right on the boundary of the Peterborough riding and my riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, and it employs people in both ridings. We've certainly benefited from that positive role that Kawartha Downs plays in our communities.

There are many communities that have seen similar direct economic benefits. Ontario's 16 slot machine facilities at racetracks have created more than 4,100 jobs,

with an estimated annual payroll of \$154 million. That is money that is spent in the smaller communities where these employees make their homes.

The provincial slots-at-racetracks program is also very important in terms of the continued viability of the horse racing industry. It has allowed for improved facilities and increased purses, which lead to horses of better quality and overall improved racing. The horse racing industry is very important in Ontario. Since the slots have come to Kawartha Downs to go with the track, the number of horses that you see on the farms in both my riding and the member for Peterborough's has increased. The interest is there, and the economic impact is very positive for our ridings.

As I've found out since the member introduced this bill, horse racing is the province's third-largest agricultural industry, spending more than \$1 billion annually. I don't think a lot of people really realize that.

The slot machine revenue is divided in a way that benefits the track owners and employees as well as the host municipalities. The host municipalities receive 5% of the gross revenues on the first 450 slot machines and 2% of the gross revenues from any additional machines. I can see first-hand in the municipality of Cavan-Millbrook-North Monaghan, in which Kawartha Downs is located, that they are able to contribute back to their community in very positive ways.

The purses at those racetracks with slot facilities have gone up, and that helps the horse racing industry in a very direct way. It's also worth nothing, though, that some of the gross slot revenue from charity casinos and slot facilities at racetracks in Ontario goes to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for problem gambling research, treatment, prevention and public awareness. In 2003-04, this accounted for \$21 million. You can be sure that the Internet gaming sites don't make any contribution of this type.

There has been a tremendous surge in popularity of the Web sites that operate in a grey area of the law. Anyone who uses a computer can see that they pop up quite frequently on your screen. They allow the use of play money, but these sites skirt the law by advising people by e-mail of where they can visit a site where gambling with real money takes place. There is concern among mental health professionals about the lack of support for problem gamblers on these sites. And there is very real concern because there is no way to ensure that people gambling online are of legal age to do so. That was certainly brought to our attention yesterday at the government agencies committee by a gentleman who is going to be appointed as a board member for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

These websites are businesses that operate outside Canadian law. They are competing directly with legal businesses in Ontario, businesses that create jobs in communities across the province and businesses that must operate in a socially responsible manner. It's not a level playing field, and it does threaten to take away local jobs.

Another issue that is important to recognize is that Internet gaming takes place essentially behind closed doors. We have no idea how widespread it is, and it's very difficult for us to track the level of gambling taking place. In Ontario, we're able to track whether there has been any increase in the number of people gambling and how much is being spent at our casinos and racetracks and how many lottery tickets are sold. We can tailor our efforts to problem gamblers by using that information.

The Criminal Code makes it illegal to advertise Internet gambling in Canada, but some have found a way around the rules, a loophole that allows them to do it anyway. If we can help to shut that loophole, I think we should try to do so.

The people who are trying to evade the rules are creative. We need to be equally creative in finding ways of stopping them from doing so.

Businesses that are here legitimately in Ontario should not have to compete against companies that would not meet the test to do business here. They hide in foreign jurisdictions, thumbing their noses at the protections we have put in place in Ontario for Ontario residents, and it's not right. I am not sure if this is the exact wording needed to shut the door, but I think we should move forward with this bill. I want to work closely with the member from Peterborough, not just because we share Kawartha Downs and the employment and economic benefits that occur there, but because I believe it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm probably going to be the odd person out on this particular debate. I want to lay out my reasons why I think this is probably not a good idea.

Is the goal a good idea? Of course it is. We need to do all we can in our society to protect people from themselves, quite frankly, when it comes to the avails of gambling. The problem is not the weekend gambler or the holiday gambler who goes into a casino and says, "Okay, honey, we're each going to take \$100 and go out to play blackjack or hold 'em poker or slot machines," or whatever it might be. You lose your hundred bucks and you leave. It's entertainment. I don't see anything wrong with that. I don't see anything wrong with people wanting to play a friendly game of cards on a Saturday night in their home. The big game now is hold 'em poker. Personally, I'm a poker player. I love to play dealer's choice poker. We do that probably five, six times a year during the winter. We get together with some friends, we buy \$10 worth of poker chips and play some poker. Oh, my God, I just broke the law, didn't I? But I can say that in this Legislature. Nobody gets hurt; the most you can lose is \$10 for a night. There's nothing wrong with gambling; I want people to understand.

1020

I like to bet on horses. I've not had much success lately, but again, it's a question of being responsible. I'll go to the track or to the off-track betting from time to time, and I'll say, "I'm going to spend \$50, \$60, \$100," depending on what I think I can lose, and then I go out

and do what I've got to do. Sometimes I win. My best story is that a guy by the name of Don Dewsbury, a good friend back in Timmins, a councillor, one day introduced me to off-track betting. He said, "Why don't you come?" I said, "Sure." So we walk into the off-track betting place and I say, "Don, what do I do?" He says, "You've got to make an exactor bet." And I said, "Exactor bet? What in the heck are you talking about?" So he said, "You pick two horses. Each horse has odds, and based on the outcome of the race, if they come in one and two, you're going to get the combined odds of those horses." I looked at it and said, "Well, I'm going to pick the two horses with the longest odds. I can make the most money." Well, wouldn't you know? It was my first bet and I won. On a \$2 bet, we won \$1,600. We split on that ticket, because I told him, "Give me a buck and I'll go and bet." Don, I want to thank you for introducing me to betting.

But I've got to tell you, it was also the worst thing I ever did, because all of a sudden I thought I was smart, so I started betting the horses—never in a serious way, but I started going more often than I should have. It didn't take long until I lost that \$800. I learned my lesson after the four or five weekends in a row that it took me to lose it. I said, "Well, now I understand. There is a bit of a luck factor to this and also a bit of skill." I always remember being at Woodbine one day when I met this guy who has been doing this for years, going around the world betting on horses. I was watching him and his methodology of placing his bet. I said, "Jeez, that's really interesting." He said, "Well, it's a sucker's game. At the end of the day, I probably win no more than anybody else."

My point is that there's nothing wrong with gambling, nothing wrong with betting. The issue is, to what extent can you afford to lose? I know it's a bit of a defeatist attitude, but I walk into a casino or a poker game or an off-track betting place in my mind saying, "How much can I afford to lose?" If I can afford to lose 50 bucks, that's all I'm going to play.

The issue is that there are people who go beyond that limit, and they're the ones, quite frankly, that we need to be worried about as a society. I'm going to lay out why I think this legislation may not do what we want in the end.

We have a habit here in this Legislature, as we do across this country—I want to say, first of all, that I'm a New Democrat. For people who are watching back home, they're going to think this is really odd coming from an NDP-er. But we have this reaction of, "Oh, there's a problem. Let's pass legislation and outlaw it. That's going to fix the problem." The problem is that far too often it makes us believe we've fixed the problem, but it actually does nothing or sometimes goes in quite the opposite direction.

I want to use this particular bill as an example. Should we find a way to curb people's problem betting habits? Yes. I agree with the member and I know why he is doing it, for all the honourable reasons. But what's the most effective way of doing that? Do we bring in a law

that says, as this bill does, that you can't advertise in Ontario websites that promote betting for money on the website, whether on horses, cards or whatever it might be? Let's say we pass the law; it gets third reading and becomes the law of the land. How the heck do you enforce that, first of all? Very difficult to do. It may have some effect. I won't say it won't have any effect—that would be unfair—but it's really not going to have the effect we want, because at the end of the day, those who want to gamble are going to gamble. It's not the law that's going to stop them from gambling.

When gambling was illegal, we all saw—a better example is that, when booze was illegal during the years of Prohibition, drinking went up because it was cool to do. You were breaking the law. It was kind of in the dark, in the shadows of our society, and it became kind of a neat thing to do. Gambling, I think, is in much the same vein as that. People are going to do it because they want to gamble. I think where you're better off spending your time is in trying to do some education through advertising and through programs to try to get people not to become problem gamblers in the first place, and, for those who do become problem gamblers, to help them deal with their addiction, because it is an addiction. If we were to come at it from the perspective of saying to people, "You need to be responsible when it comes to gambling" and deal with people's addictions, in the end we would probably get a much better effect in dealing with the problem gamblers, because that's who the member wants to get at.

Let me use an example: When I was a kid growing up, as everybody around here knows who is about the same age, drinking and driving was almost an accepted thing. I remember my father—I can tell you all kinds of stories where he would go out on a Saturday afternoon and we'd be in the car with him, and he'd go somewhere and have a couple of beers too many, and he would just jump in the car and he would drive us back and we'd sit on the tailgate of the truck or the station wagon. It was just the thing you did, going down a country road. Everybody would laugh, and all of a sudden the OPP guy would see that Dad was weaving around a little bit too much and he'd pull him over and say, "Hey, Mr. Bisson, be careful, eh? Make sure to go straight home," and he never got charged. It was accepted. People drank and drove, and people died.

At one point, society said, "Enough is enough." We passed some laws that penalize people for drinking and driving. No question it had an effect, but we spent enormous amounts of money provincially and nationally to educate people that drinking and driving leads to death. So eventually we changed the culture of our society to not accept that drinking and driving was a good thing.

So 20 years ago—well, more than 20 years ago. Jeez, I've been married for 30 years, so probably around 40 years ago, when I was a kid, basically it was an accepted thing to go out and drink and drive. Nowadays, it doesn't happen to anywhere near that extent. I'm not saying it doesn't happen at all, but it is really one of those taboos in our society.

I was at a reception here around Christmastime—I can't remember if it was the press party or what it was—and one of our colleagues here—I'm not going to say who it was—had a couple of drinks. It just hit me right away, and the person said, "Okay, let's jump in a cab." It was just automatic. Nobody said, "Where are the keys for my car?" It was just automatic: Leave the keys here, jump in a cab; let's go. Everybody went off; we took cabs and went home. It's what we do. It's natural now. Why? Because we've educated people. We've said to them, "Listen, you cannot drink and drive. You're going to run somebody over. You're going to kill yourself or you're going to kill somebody else, and it is the wrong thing to do." Organizations like MADD—Mothers Against Drunk Driving—played a huge, huge role, and still do, in trying to sensitize people in our society to the wrongs of drinking and driving.

My point is, that's the approach I think we need to take with gambling. We need to take that seriously, because there is much more gambling going on in our society. I, as a New Democrat, have no problem with gambling. I think gambling is all right, as long as it's done responsibly. It's like drinking: Drinking is okay as long as it's not done to excess and is done responsibly. I would argue what we need to do is put some emphasis on public education and on dealing with the addictions once they have them.

A really interesting thing occurred to me the other day. I was at home last weekend, not feeling too well on Friday night. So I said, "I'll go pick up a couple of movies." I picked up a movie, the one with Al Pacino about a sports betting guy. I forget the name of the movie. Somebody can help me out. It's *Two for the Money*. There is a fascinating scene in it that I think says everything. Al Pacino, who is a great actor—he's one of my favourites—walks into a Gamblers Anonymous meeting and all these ex-gamblers are sitting there going through the process of the meeting to deal with their gambling. He goes there and he has this big diatribe about why these people should all bet, and basically uses it as a way to give out his business card to get people to bet, because they are the big gamblers that he normally gets money from as a betting guy.

It was quite unbelievable: A guy walks into a Gamblers Anonymous thing, he does his dialogue, gives them all his card and walks out. The guy he's with says, "That's terrible." He says, "You need to understand what it is with the gambler. It's not winning that hooks them; it's losing. It's the rush of losing and putting on the line everything you've got and losing it that keeps you going back." All of a sudden, I said, "Boy, that makes a lot of sense." Maybe that's the thing: I hate to lose, so I'm not addicted to gambling. I hate the feeling, so I don't go there. I thought it was an interesting comment. It's kind of morbid and twisted, but the whole rush of putting it on the line and losing is a powerful one, and it keeps them going back. I thought it was kind of an interesting point. My point is that we need to be able to invest in those programs that deal with people individually.

Now Internet betting, Internet poker—listen, I go on pokerstars.com or whatever it is, and I play their funny money thing. It's a kind of diversion. I like going there. I picked up a ticket from the Ontario Lottery corporation, which sells these things by the hundreds. This one is the Texas Hold 'em poker. I like to play hold 'em poker. I think it's a lot of fun. I personally go to those websites and play not for money; I play for the play money. I think most people are responsible when they go to those things. They're not in there betting all kinds of money; they're doing it for play money. I don't think we should be banning that kind of thing. In my view, it's just a bit of entertainment, a little bit of diversion. When I have nothing to do, I go on pokerstars.com, or whatever it's called, and I play a couple of hands of poker, just try my luck against other players from across the world, and we do a bit of chatting at the same time. I certainly don't promote the idea of banning that kind of activity. I'd like to hear the member on that, because as I read his bill, he sees that as a link to getting people into the betting rooms, where they put the actual money. There are a whole bunch of people out there who don't do that, and I'm one of them. I say it quite clearly.

1030

If we're saying that we're going to ban the ability of people to go onto the Internet and play games such as backgammon, chess or hold 'em poker—whatever it might be—because somewhere out there there's backgammon for money, I don't think that's right. People have to be their own liquor control board, as I like to say, and be their own decision-makers when it comes to acting responsibly.

I say to the member that I'm going to support the bill in the sense that I think it needs to get to committee, but I really am leery about this, because it leads us to the false presumption that if we pass this bill, we've dealt with the issue of problem betting. I really don't believe it does. It lulls us into thinking that we've actually found a solution. I think what we need to do as legislators and in society in general is to try to educate people into being responsible when it comes to betting. We need to make sure that we deal with those people effectively, so that they can make some good, solid choices.

The other we've got to do is go to the OLC, the people who run our gaming, and they have to be a big part of the solution as well when it comes to making sure that there are proper ways of finding information when you need it, so that the person who walks into the casino that one day and has just lost another week's paycheque and is walking out can see predominantly that there is somewhere he or she can call for help. If I walk into a casino and lose a whole bunch of money, that's not evident. I don't find that information unless I go searching for it. It's like the alcoholic, right? The alcoholic only quits drinking when he or she decides that it's time to quit drinking. You've got to reinforce the person every now and then by making it very visible where that person can go get help, so that eventually they can make the choice to call and actually do what needs to be done.

Yes, I'm going to vote for your bill, but I want to be on the record and I want to be very clear that I have some deep concerns about what this is actually going to do at the end, because I don't know how you really can enforce this effectively. Second, I have some philosophical problems with where this leads in some cases, because I think people should be making their own choices in some of these matters. More importantly, I think we need to really do public education, in the sense of trying to get people to understand how to become responsible bettors, and also on the whole issue of being able to deal with addictions in a much more real way.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Scarborough—Etobicoke Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Scarborough—you had it right the first time—

The Deputy Speaker: Scarborough Southwest; I was right the first time,

Mr. Berardinetti: —although Etobicoke is a great place as well.

I'm pleased to be able to join the debate here and to have a few minutes to offer some comments. I want to start off by commending the member from Peterborough for bringing forward this bill, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002.

I just wanted to read, for those who are watching or listening to the debate, what he basically is proposing here. It reads here: "No person shall print, publish, distribute, broadcast or telecast an advertisement or representation that includes an Internet gaming business website address unless the person believes in good faith that the Internet gaming business has been licensed or otherwise granted permission to operate in Ontario or Canada by the appropriate authority and is operated in accordance with the applicable laws of Ontario and Canada."

I think what the member here is trying to do is simply to put some regulations in place that would stop people from outside of Canada from trying to influence people within Canada to gamble on the Internet. I think the focus here, more than anything else, is on young people. When you look at young people, they can be more influenced to do certain things, perhaps, than someone who is a little bit older.

I would just give a few examples, in my short time, to point that out. Several years ago, I remember in high school having several friends who smoked cigarettes, and there was nothing wrong with smoking cigarettes. Nowadays, I think the age to smoke is 19. They put that in just a few years ago. I know that the stores ask for photo ID to make sure that if someone is trying to buy cigarettes, they're at least 19 years old. That's new, and that's something good, because that at least keeps some of the younger kids from going into a variety store and just picking up a pack of cigarettes or smokes.

The same with alcohol: I was 18 the year they changed the law to 19. We still have the law on the books that says that you can't buy alcohol unless you're 19 years old, and there's a reason for that. You don't want young

people going into an LCBO or beer stores and buying alcohol.

I think that you need regulations at certain times. You don't want to have too many laws on the books but you need certain laws, especially those that will protect the young and the most vulnerable in our society.

I just wanted to also read into the record the fact that there was a study conducted recently by GamCare, CitizenCard and Children's Charities' Coalition from the UK. It did a study on Internet safety. It tested 37 online gaming sites to see if a minor could set up an account. It found that minors were able to open an account and access gambling systems on 30 of the 37 sites. So a minor can basically get on pretty well almost any gaming site. All you need is a credit card and a laptop computer and you're in business. You can start gambling and spending money.

We all have stories we could tell of siblings or high school friends who did stupid things when they were young, myself included. All of us had experiences in one way or another, whether it be smoking or alcohol or even with gambling, which has become profuse in our society nowadays: the lottery tickets that are available, the amount of gambling that you can do on the Internet, the number of casinos that have opened up in the last 10, 15 years, whether it be Casino Rama, Niagara Falls, Windsor and elsewhere. Those are legal, of course, but they just seem to be proliferating. The bottom line is that these casinos make a profit, and they make a good profit; otherwise they wouldn't be in existence. All one needs to do is look at Las Vegas and the casinos down there and the fact that they wouldn't have the fountains and the other types of buildings unless their casinos made a profit. The people who are running gambling operations know there's a profit to be made in doing this.

What we need to do, and what I commend the member for Peterborough for doing, is to protect those who are most vulnerable: the young, those who may not know better, those who may just want to experiment or who have sudden access to a computer one day, maybe their parents' computer, and there's a credit card lying around and they decide to go on there and just try it.

As a provincial body, as a regulatory body, we have the Ontario Lottery Corporation and other effective authorities—the police authorities—that can effect proper monitoring of these sites, and they need to do so. They need to continue to monitor and check these Internet sites, otherwise people, especially young people, will be able to gamble, potentially gamble and potentially cause hardships for their families and friends.

I support this and I ask that everyone in the House support second reading of this bill here today.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I'm delighted to speak on Bill 60, from my good friend Jeff Leal from Peterborough. I think it shows that he certainly has the interests not just of his community but of all Ontarians at heart.

When we talk about his private member's bill to try to prevent gambling activities on the Internet, we have no

jurisdiction in Ontario. It worries me that with the advent of the Internet, we have communications around the world in an instant second. I guess with good things—and it is a good thing when we're able to access information at a click of a button—there's always a negative, and gambling is certainly a problem that I believe is being aggravated more and more over the Internet.

I must tell you, I'm not a gambler. I think I've been inside a casino a couple of times. I made my donation and left. But what's aggravating is that sometimes when I too am searching for something through the Internet, when I click a button, something pops up, and normally it's two activities. One is for gambling and the other one is for—well, I won't mention what it is. It's something that we're not proud to talk about in this House. I am concerned about that because the more accessible we make something, we're going to use it. This is why, in Ontario, we're proud to have an LCBO that controls the drinking age and the sale of alcohol. By having those controls, someone couldn't just walk into their convenience store and reach into a counter and are able to buy, regardless of age.

1040

We need to do something. How we can do that with today's technology—I kind of question that. I'm not so sure we have all the tools, but I think we need to be ready with legislation in place so that, if those tools become available, we are able to act.

I was reading some reports. For example, one of the problems that arises, even though these people might be of age, is on university and college campuses. When my kids were going to college and university, I was worried about whether I could help them with their tuition and their living expenses. It worries me that today, over and over again, some of the money that either they worked for or that their parents helped them with might be going to gambling through websites on their campuses. As a matter of fact, it even goes a little bit beyond that. I've heard reports that some students at colleges and universities overstretched their credit limit on their credit cards and used all the money they were supposed to use for tuition or food and accommodations, and they then created some criminal activities to try to get some of that money and got themselves into even more trouble. So I guess it's not just the gambling piece itself, but the other things it could generate that might not be appropriate.

I'm not trying to deter legalized gambling, because we in Ontario have embarked on that scenario, and by all circumstances, I think it's working fairly well. There are always things we need to address, and we as a government, and previous governments, have addressed that. But gambling through the Internet is something we have very little control over. The other sad thing is that sometimes, when one of these sites pop up, it's some place in some Third World country, so if something were to go wrong, how would we ever find out? We would have no jurisdiction.

It is a concern, and I congratulate my good friend Jeff Leal from Peterborough for at least having the initiative

to bring this forward so we could have a healthy debate in this House.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): First of all, I also want to commend my good friend the MPP from Peterborough for bringing forth this piece of legislation. Many people don't know that, very early this morning, the member from Peterborough was in Timmins, representing the government yesterday, representing his minister. I think he was up at 4 taking a plane this morning to be here for this debate at 10 o'clock. That's how important it is to him. I commend him for doing that.

I also want to welcome Jane Holmes from the Woodbine Group. As the member said, it's wonderful to see you here today. I know the member from Etobicoke North is so proud of your announcement of a \$1-billion investment in our province from Woodbine. We think that's wonderful, and we wish you well on that and the contribution you're making.

I'm informed by two friends of mine who come from my riding, Catherine Hardeman, who is the executive director of Choices for Change, and Mr. Jeff Wilbee, who is the executive director of Addictions Ontario. They have been able to brief me over the last few years about the dangers of addiction and what is the appropriate government response to make sure that we, as a society, are supporting people who fall into the trap of addiction. One thing we can do is to do what we can in this House, with our limited jurisdiction, to deal with the issue of illegal gambling on the Internet. As the member from Peterborough said, it is, in a sense, from the Criminal Code, a federal matter. But that does not absolve us of our responsibility as legislators to protect our children and those who are prone to fall into that dark place of addiction and the tremendous family, financial and societal costs it inflicts.

What I particularly like about this bill are two things. First, it helps me show, in my own riding of Perth–Middlesex, where we have a vibrant horse racing industry, where we support the horse racing industry, where such a large and vital part of agriculture is centred, that we believe in their industry and don't believe that the money of the horse racing industry should go to anybody other than law-abiding corporate citizens and the individuals in that. It shouldn't be siphoned off to Third World countries.

I want to commend the member, because he was very simple in this bill about how we solve it. What he said is that if you live in this province, if you are going to post on your website any advertising of another website, then you have to know in good faith that that is a site, an operation, that falls within the laws of this country and of this province.

I want to say to those people in Ontario, in this country, who, without good faith, are not doing due diligence when they're posting something on their website, that they are actually in fact perpetrating illegal activity. I think the member is absolutely right that we have to say to those people, shame on you that you are participating

in an illegal activity, helping that forward, snubbing your nose at Canadian law, endangering our children, and robbing this province of the vital contribution that is made to the economy by industries like the horse racing industry, like the gaming industry, which is regulated, as the member for Northumberland said.

If we're going to have this, it needs to be regulated. The law should be supreme in this province. We should say to those people who are assisting those who are offshore and want to steal money out of this province that they should not do that. The test, I think, is a reasonable one: Can you, in good faith, know whether or not that website conforms to our laws in this country and in this province?

I want to say to the member from Peterborough that I think he has this right on, and I think that this is a bill that all members should support. I would be surprised if there are people in this House who would stand up and say that this is not a well-balanced, reasonable piece of legislation to protect our children.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to this bill. The member from Peterborough is a good fellow. Unfortunately, he supports the Peterborough Petes, who are going to get their butts kicked by the Barrie Colts when they come up for the Memorial Cup. I just want to put that on the record. I'm going to be at the game March 16, when the Petes come in to the Barrie Colts. I can tell you, the Petes will be leaving defeated. I digress. Where was I? I was speaking about online gambling. But that's not a friendly wager. We mean business on that one.

The bill doesn't do anything. The bottom line is that the Criminal Code does not allow Internet gaming in this country. It does not allow it under section 207 of the Criminal Code. But there is an exception, and the exception is that provincial governments can get into online gaming if they wish to, but they have chosen not to. The fact of the matter is that the law is that no online gaming is allowed in the country, because the provinces haven't gotten into it and the federal Criminal Code doesn't allow it.

The standard in this bill is good faith. The member's bill states, in terms of the standard, that if the bill is passed, it will "prohibit the advertising of website addresses of Internet gaming businesses unless the person doing the advertising believes in good faith that the Internet gaming business has been properly authorized to operate and is in fact being operated in accordance with Ontario and Canadian law." The fact of the matter is, you can't do it. So what is the standard? Good faith? Basically, "good faith" means you're ignorant of the law. How many times can you be ignorant of the law in terms of putting up an offshore online gaming address or whatever? The bottom line is that what we're trying to get at here is the offshore online gaming sites coming into Ontario. This isn't going to stop it. I can tell you that for a fact, if you're going to have a standard as low as good faith. What does "good faith" mean? It means, "I didn't know the law."

1050

I want to deal with the law a little bit here, because I think it's important that we understand this. The public should know, because if we bring this in we're going to start prosecuting people, innocent Ontarians, who don't know anything about what's going on here. If they give this to their friend and say, "Here's where you can do some online gaming," they're going to be prosecuted by this government.

Part VII of the Canadian Criminal Code makes all activities related to operating or acting in support of a commercial betting enterprise an offence unless it is an enterprise licensed by the provincial government. There is an exception right here: government-operated computer gaming. "Internet gaming which is a lottery scheme operated on or through a computer may only be conducted by a provincial government." That's under section 207 of the Criminal Code. Subsection 207(4) specifically provides that "a provincial government may conduct and manage a lottery scheme on or through a computer but may not license others to do so." Unless Mr. Leal is telling us that the provincial government is going to be getting into online gaming, what is the point of having this particular bill? The province is the only one that can do online gaming and they're not doing it, unless Mr. Cordiano has something up his sleeve in terms of getting into online gaming.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Maybe they're going to. They're using Jeff Leal, maybe.

Mr. Tascona: Your turn is coming up, Mr. O'Toole, with the cellphones, but I appreciate the comment.

I did some research on this. I'm not trying to be critical here; I just want to be fair, because I don't want people being prosecuted in this province who in good faith put something on a website not knowing that you can't do any online gambling in this province.

The code does not explicitly prohibit Internet gambling. However, it is the view of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario that Internet gambling is caught by the general prohibitions prescribed by section 206 of the Criminal Code. Moreover, for the purposes of section 207, an authorized lottery scheme, other than one run by the province, does not include a scheme that is operated on or through a computer. Whether the province could legally conduct and manage an Internet gaming scheme is, according to the commission, open to question. In any event, the commission says it has not issued any licences to operate an Internet lottery scheme in Ontario. It also believes that no other province has issued such a licence.

To date, no Internet gambling cases have been prosecuted under part VII of the Criminal Code, and I believe there's a good reason for that. From what I understand, the CFL was involved in this to some extent, and no action was taken against them with respect to the type of operation they were involved in.

"The expansion of online gambling in Canada poses new challenges to law enforcement. Many of organized crime's criminal activities such as drug trafficking, money laundering and enterprise crime offences are

financed by illegal gaming profits. Even if authorities decide to act, however, enforcing vague rules on the World Wide Web, which moves across borders faster than any roulette wheel can spin, may prove impossible. Canada's federal and provincial laws are inadequate to deal with the onslaught of virtual gaming. Provincial governments are limited in their ability to prosecute foreign-based casino operators operating in cyberspace. Since the existing legal framework is inadequate to deal with a global, intangible entity, new legal, technological, and political solutions will have to be crafted in order to protect Canadians from the substantial externalities posed by online gambling."

That was an article I found in this particular issue, *Internet Gaming: A Look at Online Gambling in Canada*, by Michael D. Lipton, QC. That was back in June 2002.

What has happened in terms of this particular type of industry—because online gaming is big business. I don't doubt for a minute that offshore gambling is affecting the provincial gaming in this province, but you're not going to stop it by putting a standard in the Consumer Protection Act saying, "If in good faith you put an address that will allow somebody to know where to do some gambling offshore, you're going to be prosecuted." How are you ever going to prosecute that? What are you trying to accomplish?

What they've done in the United Kingdom is they have said, "We recognize this is a problem. We also recognize that we're going to have to get involved because we're losing money." What they've done is legalized online gambling in the United Kingdom. They've set up a commission. They've set up regulatory officers to make sure that online gambling is done within the United Kingdom and done in accordance with their laws. They've made sure they're the ones that are doing this, because it obviously is big business—people are interested in doing this.

I'm not criticizing the member from Peterborough for bringing this forth. It's an issue he has to bring forth as a private member because the minister of government agencies, for whom I'm the critic, obviously doesn't think it's important enough to bring forth as a government bill, so he's got a private member's bill going through. There should be some discussion on this, because there can be fraud against people who get involved in this because it's being operated offshore.

What is the solution? This is an industry that I think is in excess of \$13 billion, from the last count in 2004, and it is growing exponentially because people are interested in it. My good friend from Timmins–James Bay has brought forth the type of gambling where you can go to your convenience store and do as much gambling as you want all day and blow your mind out. The other thing is that you can go up to the casino or you can go to the harness racing track and do that also. But there's another element out there that people find popular because of computers and the Internet, and it's out there.

I don't think this is the way to go about it, in terms of saying, "OK, we're going to deal with online gambling

by creating an offence," when the province has to make a decision whether they are or are not going to get into this business. They have to make that decision, and it's up to this provincial government to make that decision. If they're serious about dealing with fraud, if they're serious about dealing with losing revenue, they should make a decision whether they want to get into online gaming or not.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Leal, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Leal: I really want to thank the members from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, Timmins–James Bay, Scarborough Southwest, Northumberland, Perth–Middlesex, and the very fine lawyer who represents the riding of Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford.

The intent here is to lift the veil on this issue, an opportunity to commence some discussion. Indeed, I think it's relevant that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the Honourable David Caplan, has certainly expressed some concern about this particular issue, and I have had discussions with the Minister of Government Services, Gerry Phillips, about this matter.

One of the things that certainly concerns me is our youth, and I think a number of members touched on that today. As we broaden access, the temptation to move to these Internet sites becomes enormous, and we know the outcomes that could happen. There are a number of articles—I only have two minutes—and they certainly talk about the proliferation of problem gamblers in an age segment between 18 and 25.

By capturing these dollars that are now escaping the formal gaming system we have here in Ontario, those dollars, as the member for Timmins–James Bay quite correctly identified—the need for programs to address problem gamblers and the need to embark on an advertising program to make people more aware of the extreme consequences that can result from gambling. I think that's an important issue.

Perhaps, when we get approval, we can move this bill on to the justice committee and have representatives from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. and others start the debate on what I think is a very important issue.

1100

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CELLULAR PHONES), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Bill 68, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire l'utilisation de téléphones et d'autres équipements pendant qu'une personne conduit sur une voie publique. Mr. O'Toole.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think I'll stand up here and ad lib for a minute or two until we find Mr. O'Toole. Does anybody know any good stories we could tell?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: It will be recognized later—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I had to hold them off for you.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I apologize to the House. Thank you very much.

I move second reading of Bill 68, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. O'Toole has moved second reading of Bill 68. Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. O'Toole: I apologize to the House. I was actually on my cellphone, but I wasn't driving—not to make light of this.

It's an important opportunity to put on the record an issue of public policy discussion that I think has engaged people not just of my riding of Durham but across Ontario and indeed across Canada. I want to thank the media. I've done, I believe, about 30 interviews with the media—the press and radio, as well as television—in pretty well all the major centres in Ontario, on the CBC, as well as in BC, the Atlantic provinces and Newfoundland and Labrador in the past couple of weeks, since this bill has received so much attention.

I guess you'd have to ask yourself, why has it received a lot of attention? Bill 68 is a very small bill. It was first introduced in a different format in the year 2000. It was debated, voted on and passed. It was not unanimous; there were a couple of members at the time who didn't support it. It was then referred, I believe, to the estimates committee, and it died on the order paper of that committee. It never received stakeholder input or comments or amendments, but it did receive a lot of comment from the academic community as well as the policing or enforcement community and others.

I've had all kinds of discussions, most recently this week, with a professor from York University, Professor Wiesenthal, as well as Staff Sergeant Cam Woolley and Peter Barnes from the wireless association, looking at the whole issue of driver distraction and telematics in cars—GPS systems, on-board navigational systems and the emerging distracters in the driver's face, such as billboards that are really big televisions that are distracting drivers as they drive down the Gardiner or other major expressways. That's the future. If you want to look at where it's come from since I started five years ago to where it is today—there's satellite radio in the car, 300-plus channels. You'd almost have to step aside just to tune in the stations. There are not enough buttons on there—

Interruption.

Mr. O'Toole: That is a set-up; it's not a prop. It shows how disruptive it is. That was a set-up; I have to say that. That is a really good demonstration of when

you're driving and your cellphone rings. You know just exactly how captivating that ring is. You feel compelled to respond; you honestly do. That's a clear demonstration. You're not supposed to use props in the Legislature, but that's exactly what it does. When you're driving—

The Deputy Speaker: We don't allow planned demonstrations either.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you, Speaker, for that indulgence.

The timing was off there, but I did want to make the point that this is one of the major issues with the phone itself and the ringing device. It seems to command us to respond, and that's really important when you look at driver distraction. There are two parts to the issue of the cellphone. One part is the physical interruption of text messaging or dialling a number or all of those little physical distracters. That's one part.

The other one is the mental capturing or the distraction, that you are somehow enslaved by the phone, that you're listening, paying attention and your mind actually becomes divided. Your purpose when you're driving a car, of course, your first and most important responsibility, is to operate the motor vehicle safely.

What my bill tries to do is find the balance between being in the driver's face, so to speak, or in the citizen's face, by saying, "You can't do this and you can't do that," and to allow hands-free. That's really the point here. It isn't a ban on cellphones. I want to make that very clear; it's to allow hands-free.

I've spoken with the industry people, the manufacturers of the wireless devices, and they can quite easily adapt these things; in fact, the new hands-free devices are little ear buds. With the new ones, there's no wire. It's a wireless attachment that allows you to hear and have the other end plugged into your phone, but there's no wire. It's a wireless earpiece that allows you to hear without the potential of the little extension wire getting in the way.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's called Bluetooth technology.

Mr. O'Toole: It's called Bluetooth technology, exactly. That's being used by the high-end vehicles, this Bluetooth technology, which is wireless. The other one is OnStar, where it's interconnected with the radio so that your speakers actually become a receiver-transmitter.

When you look even further in this whole telematics thing, there are the GPS systems of today which can track the car. They're quite engaging technologies. It will actually tell you verbally, "Turn left," "Turn right," "You've got five miles to go to the hotel." It will tell you everything. It will talk you through a trip from here to whatever your destination is.

It is even more profound than that. If you wind the clock ahead a couple of years, that car could be driven, or stolen in fact, and if you had a car anti-theft system, they could disable the car. If it was in Florida and it was stolen from you, they could disable the car through satellite technology and GPS. They could actually send you

messages on the warranty on the vehicle or that the pressure is low on one of your tires. This is what's coming in the future.

It can provide all sorts of customized radio, not just satellite radio. Say you like classical music in the morning and western music in the evening. You can buy non-commercial radio, and it's provided as a service. So the technology of the future isn't just the cellphone debate.

The bill does four things. First of all, it modifies driver education so that all new drivers would be informed that these technologies, cellphones included, can provide a serious distraction, and educate them and test them on their knowledge of what are their primary responsibilities when operating a motor vehicle safely.

The second thing, on any vehicle accident there would be a requirement by the police to complete whether or not technology was a contributing factor to the incident—as they would with whether alcohol was involved or seat belts were involved. Now they would comment, so we would gather reliable statistics.

The third thing it would do is permit, by regulation, the Minister of Transportation, or the government for that matter, to add or delete items that could be exempted or included. It could regulate the fines or points that could be set as a punitive measure to discourage people from using technologies. That can be done in regulation.

The fourth thing is that G1, or new, inexperienced drivers, would be prohibited for a period of time from actually using technologies while driving—as they do today. There are so many passengers, they're not allowed to travel at night and travel on certain types of roads.

So it's pretty unintrusive, to the extent that all it does, really, is say that if you're going to use technology, it must be hands-free, and with that, I would also encourage that it should be voice-activated, because the phone that I actually have in my vehicle has all of the features I've described. I can just say, "Call home," and it dials my home, or "Call office," and it dials my office automatically. You can voice-program it to do lots of different things.

It's important to recognize that driver distraction was the subject of a conference just held in Toronto last year. I want to put on the record that our current Minister of Transportation, Mr. Takhar—he's still the minister, as I know; we won't vote on that until this afternoon—said:

"In 2002, 7.9% of all drivers involved in collisions in Ontario were not paying proper attention to the road. In 2003, that rose to 8.1%.

"Those numbers are gathered from police data. But they may not tell the whole story.

"In the United States, it's estimated that driver distraction may be a contributing cause in between 20% and 30% of all collisions. It may cause as many as 10,000 deaths in the US each year—and cost nearly \$40 billion."

1110

That was a quote from Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation, on Monday, October 3, 2005, in his remarks to the international conference on driver distraction. So the minister realizes it. What I am dis-

appointed in is the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, who trivialized it. When asked by the media, he said it's just not on. I'm asking the government to have a full and comprehensive debate on the research that has been done to date.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): It's a pleasure for me to speak on the bill that the member from Durham has introduced. I want to say that I certainly thank him for bringing a major and important discussion to the table on such an important issue. Road safety is a very important issue to all members of the House. I do have some major reservations, but at the same time I would like to urge everyone who drives to pay attention to the road and to the task of driving. There are hands-free devices available for use in our vehicles, and people should use them.

There are many distractions out there. The University of North Carolina Highway Research Center recently conducted a study showing that cellphones are not at the top of the list of distractions to drivers. In fact, their study ranked cellphones number eight on the list of distractions to drivers. Eating, drinking, billboards, adjusting the radio, and even other occupants in the vehicle all run higher on the list than cellphones. Some 45 countries worldwide have now implemented restrictions or bans on cellphone use while driving. The evidence shows no significant long-lasting effects in jurisdictions where such restrictions have been imposed. Reductions in cellphone use while driving following legislation being imposed have only had short-term effects. It has been reported that in New York state, merely three months after the implementation of a cellphone ban, the usage rate had returned to pre-ban levels—no change.

Not only will this bill be ineffective, but it also could potentially put the people of Ontario at risk. There are over six million 911 calls made from mobile phones annually. I myself use a hands-free device in my car. When I'm stuck somewhere in traffic, it is important for me to have the ability to call my wife and my children to let them know. What about when you are running late for a meeting? You have a meeting to attend and you're worried about it. Certainly, one cannot argue that if you have the opportunity to call and let the person know that you're running late, you are certainly driving more responsibly than if you are not able to make that call. In such an instance, not having a cellphone to notify the affected party could impair your driving and put other drivers on the road at higher risk.

Like I said before, road safety is a very important issue, and our government is focused on it. The Minister of Transportation took part in the first-ever International Conference on Distracted Driving last October. Our government and the industry are working towards greater public awareness and education. I trust the police to enforce existing laws against careless driving. I trust the Legislature, such as ourselves, to continue to be open to any and all suggestions which may enhance our quality of life and increase the safety of our streets. I trust the people of Ontario to use their judgment and engage in lawful and mindful behaviour both on and off the road.

There is no question that we must discuss this very important topic, but in making changes, we have to make sure that the changes are for the better. I still say that it's important that we are able to communicate when possible, and using telephones that we don't have to hold certainly will not cause any major distraction to the driver. Therefore, I have a major concern.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): From what I can see, documented need for this legislation and support certainly appears to be widespread. We've been hearing about this issue for a number of years. I would like to cut to the chase and encourage members to support this legislation and vote for it.

We're debating Bill 68 with respect to cellphones. I see it as yet another opportunity to make highways safer for all of us. If this Highway Traffic Act amendment helps out, then I advocate that we move forward.

For example—and this was alluded to previously—I am constantly in my truck or in my car—or on my tractor, for that matter—doing business. I am fully aware of the trials and tribulations of literally living in one's vehicle. Obviously, handheld cellphones and driving are not a very good mix. You throw in radio, having breakfast in your vehicle, having your tea or your tea biscuit, having dinner or supper—depending on whether you're rural or urban, you would have different terms for “dinner” and “supper,” I suppose—you add in all of these other issues, and it really gives new meaning to that expression “driven to distraction.”

I would like to read a quote. “In 2002, 7.9% of all drivers involved in collisions in Ontario were not paying proper attention to the road.” Who said that? Harinder Takhar, as of today still Minister of Transportation. I understand he is still at his post. These were remarks made last October to the International Conference on Distracted Driving.

So documentation on the dangers of distraction is widespread.

The member for Durham alluded to the work of Dr. Redelmeier. It's titled—I say it's titled, not “entitled”; I'm opposed to the culture of entitlement, so when I see a title in a document, I refer to it as being “titled,” not “entitled”—the Association Between Cellular-Telephone Calls and Motor Vehicle Collisions. The member may have referred to this. It was a report based on a study of close to 7,000 drivers—actually, 6,999 drivers—who had cellphones and were involved in motor vehicle collisions. These were collisions that resulted in substantial property damage but no personal injury. The report came to the conclusion that “The use of cellular telephones in motor vehicles is associated with a quadrupling of the risk of a collision during the brief period of the call. Decisions about regulation of such telephones, however, need to take into account the benefits of the technology and the role of individual responsibility,” which is something we believe in very strongly on this side of the House.

How about this one, from the Canadian Medical Association? This was in their journal in 2001: “Drivers who

fail to exercise good judgment must be regulated to do so, for cellphones are just the beginning. Computers, fax machines and DVD screens are also starting to clamour for dashboard space. We need to regulate the use of cellphones and other driver-distracting devices. This is a no-brainer.” That's from the CMA Journal 2001.

In my previous employment, I did a great deal of work against drinking and driving, commencing back in 1984. I think we all fully realize the value of programs like the RIDE program, the roadside RIDE stop checks. RIDE stands for Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere. It's based on law and it combines not only enforcement but also information and education. Oftentimes you get a keychain, a button or a brochure when you're pulled over. We have to augment this kind of legislation with appropriate enforcement, obviously—and that will be difficult—but also information and education programs, the health promotion programs, if you will.

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So we have before us a bill that amends the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of a cellphone, car phone, pager, personal data assistant, portable computer, fax machine or other equipment prescribed by regulations made under the act while a person is driving a motor vehicle. The legislation includes exceptions for emergencies—for example, cases where a driver who is not a novice driver as defined in the regulation on drivers' licences uses the equipment entirely through a hands-free feature—the member opposite made mention of the value of hands-free technology—and other cases prescribed by regulation under the act.

If this legislation does receive the support that it deserves, I am hopeful that with a better-informed and more fully educated public, combined with just that modicum of enforcement, we would go a long way to eliminating some future tragedies.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I swear to God, the member from Durham must have been conspiring with my staff or my wife in drafting this bill, because I've got to admit I've had problems over the years with that particular issue. It's something that I work hard not to do, because I do realize that it's dangerous. I've got to say, there's been—

Mr. O'Toole: That's when you're flying—

Mr. Bisson: Well, no. Flying is a much different thing, as you well know. When you're up at altitude and you're cruising, you're often reading maps, you're looking at your GPS, because you don't necessarily have to keep your eye out the dash as long as you're watching your instruments. You can't do that in a car.

I've got to say, it is an issue in our society, and I know a number of my staff who might be watching right now are probably yelling at the TV saying, “Go, John, go. Ban this guy; he's dangerous.” There is actually an issue with that, because I think a number of us are guilty. I'm going to try to be up front about it. I'm not going to pretend that I'm a perfect human being. I'm like everybody else. I do have my foibles. Staff, it's hard for you guys to understand that I would have anything wrong in my character.

Dear, I know you're watching and you do think I'm perfect, but I want to admit I will humble myself today and say that certainly I am not.

It is an issue, and I've got to say it's an interesting thing that we go through as human beings when it comes to realizing sometimes that we're doing something wrong. I think most people don't recognize it's wrong. I guess that's the first thing that I want to say. We think that we're invincible, that we're perfect drivers, that we're always paying attention, that we can multi-task. We pride ourselves in this society on being able to multi-task a number of things at the same time. A lot of us, I think, are in a situation where we may not be as good at multi-tasking as we think we are. I just want to talk about a couple of things that have happened to me, and I think I've raised them in this House before.

One of the reasons that I really have tried to curb this habit of being on a cellphone while driving is that, really, the act of talking, not just the act of holding onto the phone, is very distracting. That's where I have a bit of an issue with, well, it's okay to use the phone that's in the car if it's a speakerphone. It's the act of that conversation that makes you not think about what you're doing when you're driving.

I don't know what it is, and I never did understand it because I can be sitting in the vehicle—for example, on Saturday or Sunday, Sylvain Lacroix, one of our staff people, and I drove up to Smooth Rock to the carnival; we yakked along the way, talked about things from work and whatever—and there's something about having somebody in the car when you talk; it doesn't distract you. I don't understand that. If I've got a speakerphone and I'm talking to somebody on the cellphone—if I had one, because sometimes I use my ear phone—you're really not paying attention in the same way that you do if you're talking to a person. I don't know why that is. I really don't understand it, because I've caught myself, I don't know how many times, putting the ear phone on, driving down Highway 11 from Hearst or Kap or wherever it might be, and all of a sudden, I'm past the point on the highway that I thought I'd be at. All of a sudden, I go, "Well, how did I get here?" I didn't pass where I was going because, obviously, I think I would have paid enough attention to figure out, but I'm a lot further along down the road. There's something about talking on a cellphone, either by way of a speakerphone or by way of holding it to your ear that, for some reason, disconnects you from the task of driving your vehicle.

I want to say to the member: I take a little bit of a different point of view that speakerphones are all right. I think it is the act of talking on the phone. Maybe because the person's not in the car with you, subconsciously your mind drifts to whatever issue you're talking about and you're not paying as much attention.

I remember one particular occasion, what really, to me, was the moment where I went like this on the issue. I was the worst culprit when it comes to speaking on cellphones while holding them up to my ear. My staff would yell and scream at me, as my wife would, when I'd be

driving my Ford F-150 responding to my BlackBerry messages. It really is a dangerous thing. You shouldn't do that. I'm really trying to do a better job of it, staff. It's still safe. You can still drive with me. I admit I've got a problem, and I'm trying to overcome it. Dale, it's okay; you can get back in the car. You don't have to get out the door just yet.

I remember one particular incident. I left my home and my cellphone went off. I live on Middleton Avenue. It's a matter of backing up my truck, going halfway down the block. As I turned the corner to get onto Cameron—there's a stop sign two streets down on Commercial, I grabbed my cellphone because somebody called, right? You take it out of the holster and grab it up. I was stopped at the stop sign, and somebody walked out in front of the car and I didn't even see them. For whatever reason, I hung up my phone, and I was just about to get going and almost ran the person over. Literally, if I had not hung up that phone, I probably would have stepped on the gas. The only thing that saved that poor individual was that the phone conversation was a short one and I hung up. All of a sudden, I realized where I was in my driving. My point is, for me, it was a very scary experience because it told me I can't do this safely. I can't be concentrating on a phone call on my cellphone and, at the same time, driving my vehicle in a way that's safe.

I recognize there's a problem. I think we all need to have some self-responsibility. Staff, that means you can yell at me when I do it next time. I'll try to be much better next time.

But the point is that we need to internalize the responsibility. We need to be responsible ourselves. We shouldn't have a law to tell us to do this. It's the same as anything else you are doing: Whatever it is, you should do it in a safe manner.

In regard to the whole issue of distraction while driving, the problem I've got with this bill is the following: It only deals with one of the distractions. There are a whole host of other issues that distract drivers. For example, the other day I was watching America's Funniest Home Videos or something. Like one of those shows—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): You're not admitting this?

Mr. Bisson: Well, yes. When you've got nothing to do sometimes, that's what you do.

I was watching the show a couple of weeks ago. They had set up a camera along the side of a road somewhere to show the problem with people doing things when they're driving. There was a guy driving down the street—not shaving with an electric shaver—who had shaving cream on his face and he was going through with his Bic shaver, and you're going to tell me that's not dangerous? Or how many times have you seen this: You're driving down the highway and you've got somebody in the mirror adjusting their lipstick or doing whatever it is they do. You're going to tell me that's not dangerous? It's probably more dangerous than talking on a cellphone.

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: Aha, we have some people who have done it. I see them in this Legislature. We're not going to name names or point fingers, but that is an issue as well.

People eating in the car: How many times have I seen people pull out of McDonald's, A&W, or whatever it might be, all of a sudden and not realize they're moving into some quick traffic? The guy's holding onto his quarter-pounder or Big Mac trying to drive out on to the road. I've seen that a number of times. Quite frankly, I'm a bit cautious going by Tim Hortons or one of those things. I always pay attention because there have been a couple of times where people were still trying to put their coffee away after they'd gone through the drive-through window and they were not really paying attention to what they're doing.

Spilling your coffee—how many times has that happened? I don't drink coffee in my vehicle. When I do now, I get half a cup, because when you go into Timmy's, they fill up your cup with boiling hot coffee. You grab your coffee, you're finally on the highway and, bang, you get yourself and you're all over the place.

There are all kinds of distractions while we drive, and this bill doesn't deal with them. Now, does it mean we should vote against this bill? Some of us are thinking, well, maybe we should because it doesn't deal with everything. I want to ask the member a question, and I think the answer is what will make up my mind. Is he prepared to amend his bill in such a way that it doesn't become just a ban on cellphones? We need to think about legislation that deals with the issue of being distracted while driving.

There are two things. First of all, the police already have the authority to deal with this by way of what's already in the Highway Traffic Act. If you are driving dangerously, there are parts of the Highway Traffic Act that give police officers the opportunity to not only charge you but charge you six demerit points on your licence, and then your insurance company's going to come back after you with higher premiums, which is a big discouragement from doing it. If you're driving down the highway and drinking a cup of coffee or talking on your cellphone, you can be charged by the police already by way of existing infractions within the Highway Traffic Act.

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I understand why the member brings this forward—it's a real issue—but I don't think it deals with the issue. The real issue is people being distracted while they drive. I say we need to deal with that particular issue, and the question I want answered by the member is, is he prepared, if the bill should pass second reading and ever get time in committee, which is very difficult in this place—it's true. It's very hard for members to get their bills into committee. It's a real issue, and we need to deal with it one day.

My point is to look at the issue and amend the bill so that it isn't concentrated just around cellphones, so that it deals with the issue of people being distracted while

driving a vehicle. We need, I would argue—it's probably not a bad thing—to give police the powers they need to charge somebody if they're distracted while driving in some way that's very specific to being distracted—not necessarily dangerous driving, because the issue can be that I'm drinking my coffee, I'm on my cellphone, I'm doing my hair and looking in the mirror, and I still have control of my vehicle. The police officer can't charge me in that case. I haven't broken a law because I've still got my car under control. I'm not speeding or weaving down the road or driving recklessly, but I'm doing something that potentially could bring me there.

So I think we want to look at an amendment to the bill to say, let's deal with all of those issues so that, in the end, the police officer is able to charge somebody if they see that, and give them some discretion, because I don't think you can write a bill that is black and white. You've got to give police officers the ability to make judgment calls, because there's a bit of difference between somebody drinking a cup of coffee and somebody doing their hair in the rear-view mirror. You know what I mean? We need a little bit of common sense in this whole approach.

I would ask the member to respond to that, and I would be prepared to vote for this bill and allow it to get second reading if we can look at that general issue.

The other thing I want to get into quickly is the issue I touched on for a second: How do we get the bills out of committee here? This gives me an opportunity to say this. It's really too bad. Some of the best legislation that comes out of this Legislature actually comes by way of private members' hour. I think this is a really useful time that this Legislature uses to give members, individually, the opportunity to bring bills forward—members of the government, like members of the opposition. We all understand who's in control of the legislative agenda here: the cabinet. They're the ones who control it. Even government backbenchers can't control the outcome of their private member's bill any better than a member of the opposition. We know. We've been on both sides of the House, so we know what we talk about.

We really need to have a discussion about how we're able to more effectively deal with private members' bills so that members, first of all, have an opportunity to do that more frequently, because part of the problem is—and this is for people watching at home—it's a lottery. At the beginning of every Parliament or when everybody's had a chance to introduce a private member's bill, we do a lottery of 103 members, less cabinet and the Speaker, to decide who's going to have their private member's bill when. If you're unlucky and you're always number 73, 74 or 75, which happened to me in one of the Harris Parliaments—I forget which one it was—I virtually went the whole Parliament without a private member's bill because I was always number 70-something.

It's a real downer because the member who happens to be unlucky—by the way, I got lucky this day. I got 25 bucks on this one. I bought it as a prop and I won 25 bucks. Maybe this is my lucky day.

My point is that I was unlucky, and that happens to other members. They don't get their bills forward. I think

there are a couple of issues we need to look at. One is giving members the ability not only to introduce bills but to get time for debate. Maybe we need to expand the amount of time the House uses for debate of private members' bills. The other thing is that we need to look at our committee structure, so that if a bill is passed, the member has an opportunity to get their bill into committee and at least do the tertiary work at committee, of having at least a day where a member can have people come before the committee to speak to his or her bill so that we can go to the next step.

There needs to be some process to allow increased ability to introduce the bill, and a process to allow the bill to at least get into committee and have some meaningful discussion and work at the committee level. We need some non-partisan mechanism to allow those bills to move forward in some way, because too often—and I know; I'm the whip of the New Democrats, so I understand how this works—we end up at the end of the spring or fall session of the Parliament and it's the big trade-off. If, for example, your government disagrees with a bill that we've identified as the one we want to put forward as a private member's bill to be passed and dealt with at the end of the session, and you're not willing to give it to us, we'll block everybody else's, and you guys do the same to us. We end up with these big horse trades in regard to private members' bills. I think that's rather unfortunate.

The other thing—and I want to end on this point—is that if we allowed more opportunity for members to introduce private members' bills and actually saw those bills become law, I think we would end up with probably much more substantive and much more well-thought-through bills, because then it becomes not an exercise of trying to figure out, "Which bill is going to get me all the media attention I can get for the next little while in my local media?" but you can actually start dealing with some issues, because all of us come here with passion about whatever it might be.

We're here because we come out of the not-for-profit sector, or we were in education, or we were in municipal politics or the labour movement, whatever it might be. We have issues that we want to deal with. I think it would give members an opportunity to say, "Let's seek each other out, across the floor, those who are interested in particular issues, so that we can work together to advance some of these issues." For example, if there are people who are interested in aviation—there may be three or four of us in here interested in aviation—we can collaborate in some way across the floor to help each other get an issue forward. I think it would be a way of doing not only us but the population some good.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm happy to join this debate this morning. I think the private member's bill has raised many issues that are important to us all, and road safety certainly has to be one of them. There was another fatality on Highway 7 this morning in Ottawa. We had five fatalities east of the city of Ottawa at Vars two weeks ago during that snowstorm. We know

how important road safety is. Anything we can do to improve that situation is very important. The roads in Ontario are the safest in North America—that's by independent evaluation—so we just want to make them safer. We have a lot of work to do yet.

The first lessons drivers learn, of course, are in driver's ed. For this reason, banning cellphones on Ontario highways—I think, if we just look at that issue, we would not be addressing the overall issue of distractions and safety while driving. Driving while distracted, whether it's from interruptions from inside or outside the car, is extremely dangerous and can result in severe consequences, as we all know.

Under the Highway Traffic Act, as has been mentioned by other speakers this morning, there is a \$1,000 fine and six demerit points, possible jail time and a driver's licence suspension for careless driving. Under the Criminal Code, anyone convicted of dangerous driving faces up to a \$2,000 fine and jail terms up to five years. So there certainly is legislation that is out there and is used from time to time.

Under the act, careless or distracted driving can mean anything from distractions like eating or drinking or talking to passengers in your car to operating a cellphone or similar device. There are many distractions we all have. Creating legislation to officially ban cellphones will not take care of the wider issues of distracted driving. More than that has to be done. Jurisdictions that have banned the use of cellphones while driving have found that initially you do get a reduction, but after time, the use comes back to pre-ban levels, so the whole enforcement is probably a problem.

Bill 68 does not adequately address the problem. In clause 78.1(4)(b) the bill states: "Nothing in subsection (2) prevents a person who is not a novice driver from... (b) using equipment listed in that subsection, if the person uses a hands-free feature to operate the equipment..." According to nine separate research studies, hands-free phones can also have an adverse effect on driver performance.

As my colleague from Timmins-James Bay, Gilles Bisson, said earlier—he made a confession that he's not perfect. I think we all look at ourselves when this debate is going on, at all the instances where we have put ourselves in dangerous situations because we weren't paying attention.

Mr. Bisson: Not you, too?

Mr. McNeely: And he included me, that I wasn't perfect as well. Thank you.

This brings us back to distracted driving. If one can become distracted by a mere conversation, then banning a cellphone will not deal with the issue. The Ministry of Transportation has been working on this issue and has put provisions in place that will allow all young drivers to learn the rules of the road and to become accustomed to operating a vehicle without distractions. That was shown to us: that the likelihood of a new driver having an accident was four times as bad when he had three or four passengers in the car with him. Under the new rules,

starting in September 2005, all teenage G2 drivers must limit the number of passengers under age 20 that they carry. That's just for the late night. It could have been a wider ban; it was discussed that way. But certainly, the more kids in the car with the young driver, the higher the accidents. This was showing up in the insurance rates; this was showing up in the statistics. It was up to four times as high. So those distractions, whether they're from the people in your car, cellphones that are manual, or other conversations in the car, all contribute to this.

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According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Crashworthiness data system, 29.4% of accidents are caused by distractions from a person outside the vehicle. I'm not going to get into that, that rubbernecking and the other distractions that you start staring at when going by, but that's 29.4% of the accidents. That's the distraction outside of the vehicle.

Some 11.4% of the distractions leading to accidents are caused by adjusting the radio or changing the CD, and 10.9% of the distractions are caused by another passenger in the vehicle. Only a small percentage—one report says 1.5%—of accidents are caused by using or dialling a cellphone. So we have to look at those other distractions.

What do these numbers tell us, then? That this legislation does not address the wider problem. It's part of the problem; it doesn't address the major part of the problem. We need to work at educating the public, and that includes ourselves. I have taken a lot of direction from my wife on that as well, because we do allow ourselves to be distracted too easily. She's a focused driver, and I think that's what we have to be. We have one job to do when we're behind the wheel: to focus on driving safely and following the rules. We have to make sure that's the direction we're going in.

The Ottawa Police Service agrees—and we've spoken to them—that a holistic look at traffic safety is required instead of a mere piecemeal approach. Banning cellphones does not address the deeper problem. What is required is public education. Ontario introduced the first comprehensive graduated licensing system in North America in 1994. This system encourages novice drivers to enrol in an approved driver education course to ensure that they learn the rules of the road through formal instruction. In the five years after graduated licences were implemented, the average fatal and injury collision rate for drivers aged 16 to 19 dropped by 37%, so that was very successful.

We're proud of what Ontario has done. We're proud of the direction that we're going. More education is needed. So I will not be supporting this bill, although it has raised a great discussion.

Mr. Yakabuski: It is indeed my pleasure as well to join the discussion this morning on my colleague's bill, Bill 68.

I had a meeting with the CAA people this morning, and to no surprise, they indicated that one of the prime concerns they have is driver distraction. It's not just

cellphones; it is driver distraction, and there are a multitude of things that cause driver distraction. Cellphones are one of the causes.

I recall a few months ago where this person was charged for driving while watching a movie on a laptop computer in the car. Now, that's driver distraction to the nth degree, but those are the kinds of possibilities that exist out there with technology today with regard to distraction. You've seen these vehicles now today—and I think it's a real problem, quite frankly—with these GPS monitor systems built into the dashboard that light up as bright as a big fluorescent fixture. It cannot but help distract the attention of the driver. When people are driving, they're punching in coordinates or trying to find where they are going. I have always thought it was a pretty good idea to figure out where you were going before you got into the vehicle, and if you have a problem, you pull over and you try to ascertain where you are relative to your destination.

One thing that was raised by the member from Ottawa-Orléans is that police already have the ability to lay charges if someone is unduly distracted—they can charge you with careless driving—but it is a very subjective thing. The police would have to make a call: One person having a cellphone in their hand might constitute to them a careless driving situation, and for another person it might not. I'm sure the police would be more comfortable if they knew that if someone has a cellphone in their hand, they are in violation of a statute.

Having something in your hand is an issue, because when we're taught to drive, we're taught to drive 10 and two. You're supposed to have two hands on the wheel. I know that most of us don't. I don't—I don't even pretend to—but I have the option and the ability to put that second hand on the wheel immediately or very quickly if necessary. When you're holding a cellphone or any kind of hand-held technological device, the tendency is to not let go of that device to free up your hand to get on to the wheel as quickly as possible. So there is a specific distraction that comes with hanging onto a cellphone. I do have a hands-free ability with my cellphone, which I use. There's some concern that people whose cars are their offices—

Interjections.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm being heckled by my own members. It is touching.

Salespeople and people like that tend to use their cars as their offices, but do you know what? They have the technology now, and I'm sure everyone out there who uses a cellphone a lot is taking advantage of the opportunity to use that hands-free technology, which would put them outside of the scope of this legislation.

There is no question—and I don't have all of the time; I'm sharing this with others. I know people personally who have indicated to me that they have had accidents, albeit minor ones—fender-benders and rear-enders—particularly in the urban areas, when they have been engaged in conversation on the cellphone. So there is no question that that does distract them differently. The

member for Timmins–James Bay is absolutely correct that a conversation with another human being in the car does not have the same effect on you that a cellphone conversation does.

Mr. Bisson: I don't know why.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm not sure why it is either, but there must be something in the way the brain focuses on an object, that you can't make contact with your eyes or body language or some other way. So there is no question that having that conversation with a person on the other side of a technological instrument does change the dynamics somewhat.

I want to see where this is going. I want to see where a committee takes it. But in general, we have a responsibility to take the necessary steps where we can to improve highway safety in this province. There is much to be gained. There is money to be saved. There are lives to be saved. There is money to be saved in our health care system and lives to be saved if we take the necessary steps in all ways to make our highways safer.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): I have to say that I'm pleased that this debate allows us to have a broader discussion, and that discussion is about distraction. Having said that, I want to point out that just looking at cellphones in isolation is for me an issue. The Canadian Automobile Association believes that we have to have greater public awareness about the overall issue of driver distraction. The Canada Safety Council doesn't believe there is enough evidence there, and also that more public awareness, education and strict enforcement of the existing laws that we have in Ontario are what we should be doing.

Right now, collision report form improvements are being looked at. The police have indicated a desire to see collision reporting forms modified to include information about driver distraction, and that information includes cellphone use. I think that brings into this whole discussion the fact that cellphone use, under a number of studies that have been done, is listed eighth on the list of causes of driver distraction. The current measures we have for careless driving, by the way—Ontario has one of the toughest rules of the road with regard to careless driving. Police can charge drivers with careless driving if they're not paying full attention to the driving task. A driver convicted of careless driving will receive six demerit points and fines up to \$1,000 or a jail term of six months. So we have the laws on the books that deal with distraction, and if we can get the collision report forms to include the different aspects of distraction—and I know that the member from Timmins–James Bay certainly discussed a number of other distractions. All of us here have been part and parcel of—let's put it this way: being guilty of being distracted.

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The other issue I have with this is that the results have shown that the distraction, whether it's caused by handling a cellphone or having a hands-free, is still there; you're still being distracted. So I think what we have to do is take a look at the notion of distraction and come up

with an approach that makes us all more cognitive of what we're doing behind the wheel. That's what better safety is, I think, at the end of the day.

I know that Mr. O'Toole has brought this bill forward a number of times and I applaud him, because it provides us this opportunity to have a frank discussion. But I want to just reiterate that there are current measures that exist to punish drivers for careless driving. If we add to that collision report form improvements, which is what the police are looking to do, then we can monitor all of those different areas of distraction that are creating or causing accidents, because the forms don't specifically have all of these different aspects of distraction.

The laws are there on the books. We have really tough rules. The one thing about being specific to just cellphones is that that's also very hard to enforce. But if we change our forms and use the laws that are on our books, I believe we'll have safer roads.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to be able to make a few comments this morning on my colleague from Durham's private member's bill. I know this bill has come forward in the past and we've had some debate on it here in the House on a number of occasions. Certainly it is a controversial bill; I don't think there's any question about it. We've all seen people driving down the highways in our province, and we've all seen cases where they were probably not very attentive to the road conditions because of conversations going on on their cellphones. I don't think there's any question about that. What the member here is trying to say is that maybe we should be drawing some special attention to that.

That's one of the reasons we hear a lot of people today. I had people in this morning from the CAA who talked about the distractions in driving. They are doing a major study, and I believe that later on in the year there will be a report coming back from the Canadian Automobile Association on major distractions in driving. In the end, it costs all of us more money on our insurance, and in some cases costs people their lives as well.

What I'd like to see happen here—and I hope that all members of the House would take this opportunity to support the bill—is that it actually go to a committee, like I think a lot of private members' bills in this House need to go to committee and be discussed. It will bring an opportunity for a lot of different stakeholders, not just politicians but police services, people who maybe have lost loved ones in accidents, maybe the Canadian Trucking Association. All of these kinds of folks may want to come in and make comment. Maybe they're completely opposed to the bill; maybe they're in favour of the bill. I think it would be an opportunity for something which is fairly controversial, and I think it would be important to bring it forward.

I would compliment the member for bringing the bill forward again. But I'm going to tell you, to be honest with everyone in this House, I use a cellphone a lot, and I'm someone who would be impacted by that if many laws were changed to eliminate cellphones. But of

course, if we're allowed to have the hands-free stay, that's not a problem, in my opinion, at all. I know the Premier has been on record saying that you can't legislate everything. However, this could be a public safety bill. It could be something that affects lives. I think we owe Mr. O'Toole—he spent a lot of time in this House in the last six or seven years debating and trying to promote this piece of legislation, and I would be very, very supportive of seeing it go to the next stage, having committee hearings and having a lot of our stakeholders come in to debate it.

As well, I just want to say at this time that I think a lot of private members' bills in this House are good bills. There are many times that, yes, we vote for them but they never get called forward. I think of Michael Gravelle's bill on the insulin pump, for one. I think of the PSA testing bill. That's another one I'd like to see brought forward in this House. Quite often people overlook the fact that during private members' hours on Thursday mornings a lot of neat and important legislation is actually introduced here and passed on, but in a lot of cases we don't see that legislation being brought forward by the government.

So I'd encourage the government to bring forward this bill. I would encourage all members of the House to support Mr. O'Toole on second reading of this bill. I look forward to committee hearings at some point where we can actually have the stakeholders in to debate it as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. O'Toole, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. O'Toole: I do want to go on the record as thanking the members for Thornhill, Ottawa–Orléans, Timmins–James Bay, Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Simcoe North and Sarnia–Lambton for their comments.

I'm quite aware that the Liberals have basically whipped the vote on private members. This is what I'm hearing. I understand that, because Dalton's first response was that he didn't think we needed the bill. But I listened to all the experts as well as the people of Ontario, and I can tell you, without being solicited in the political sense, 75% of the people are opposed to not moving forward with this, 75% of the people say we've got to do something on the issue of driver distraction.

By passing this bill, I'm asking the Minister of Transportation and, indeed, the Premier to move forward, to have consultations on the broad issue of driver distraction. Yes, there are other distracters, and there are emerging new distracters all the time. This is a more precise tool to help the police intervene and disrupt the person's chronic behaviour, perhaps, and perhaps save a life by saying, "Hey, you shouldn't be driving on icy roads holding a cellphone." Careless driving today is pretty onerous. It's six points and it could cost as much as \$1,000 by the time you get out of court, and your insurance for your family.

I'm going to refer to the Redelmeier study. This is from the Canadian Medical Association Journal. It's not political. This is from back in 2001, where I started here.

Donald Redelmeier and Robert Tibshirani reported that, "The risk of having a collision when using a cellphone was four times higher than when the cellphone was not being used." There's the medical evidence. "Drivers who fail to exercise good judgment must be regulated to do so, for cellphones are just the beginning. Computers, fax machines and DVD," and onboard navigation "screens are also starting to clamour for dashboard space. We need to regulate the use of" technology and "cellphones and other distracting devices. This is a no-brainer."

I'd say that this is the right thing. I'm calling on you for your support.

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

CONSUMER PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT (INTERNET
GAMING ADVERTISING), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA
LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU
CONSOMMATEUR

(PUBLICITÉ DES JEUX SUR INTERNET)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall first deal with ballot item number 21, standing in the name of Mr. Leal.

Mr. Leal has moved second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 to regulate the promotion and advertising of Internet gaming in Ontario.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Leal, this bill is referred to the committee of the whole, unless—

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker, could I ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy?

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Leal has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy. Agreed? Agreed.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(CELLULAR PHONES), 2006

LOI DE 2006
MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 22, standing in the name of Mr. O'Toole.

Mr. O'Toole has moved second reading of Bill 68, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All opposed, 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 1200 to 1205.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Barrett, Toby
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Brownell, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted
Craitor, Kim

Dunlop, Garfield
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hoy, Pat
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
O'Toole, John
Ruprecht, Tony

Scott, Laurie
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand.

Nays

Broten, Laurel C.
Bryant, Michael
Delaney, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duguid, Brad

Kwinter, Monte
Levac, Dave
McNeely, Phil
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Qaadri, Shafiq

Racco, Mario G.
Smitherman, George
Wong, Tony C.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 19; the nays are 13.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer this to the standing committee on estimates.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. O'Toole has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on estimates. Agreed? Agreed.

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

The House recessed from 1208 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Today, I again draw the attention of the Minister of Health to the issue of age-related macular degeneration.

A constituent of mine, Agnes Lorbetskie of Renfrew, has been diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration and has received one treatment for it. For this treatment, she was forced to pay \$2,000 out of her own pocket. The treatment for her condition is Visudyne laser therapy, which is not covered under the provincial health insurance plan. Mrs. Lorbetskie will require several more treatments over the next few years. I ask the Minister of Health why this treatment is covered under the plans of British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick and the Yukon, but not in Ontario.

The minister waxed on the other day in debate about how he was determined to make the best health care system in Canada even better. What the McGuinty

government has done is instituted a health care tax while reducing services to the people.

Age-related macular degeneration is a growing concern among seniors in this province. The loss of one's independence as a result of blindness will place a much greater burden on our health care system than the cost of this treatment. Low-income seniors like Mrs. Lorbetskie simply cannot absorb these costs on their own.

I have written the minister on this subject in the past and call on him today to stand in support of seniors all across this province who are suffering under the financial stress of treating this debilitating disease on their own. I will also be presenting a petition on this subject. Minister of Health, I hope that you're listening, and ask that you stand up for seniors now.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): On Tuesday of this week, the Friends of Four Counties Hospital held their second annual town hall meeting to discuss their commitment to their local hospital and their dedication to maintaining essential health care services in their rural community of Newbury. As a result of this meeting, five recommendations were brought forward, including the implementation of a rural hospital funding formula, the provision of sufficient funding to keep in-patient beds in rural hospitals, and the recognition in provincial health care strategies of the value of accessible health care to a rural community's economic viability.

I am happy to have such a dedicated group within Lambton–Kent–Middlesex that is willing to work with our government to provide the best access to quality health care for our citizens, and I am pleased that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care publicly stated his commitment to the future of Four Counties Hospital when I originally brought this situation to his attention in December 2003. Minister Smitherman has long said that the small hospitals of this province enjoy a bright future in the McGuinty government, and I know that Four Counties hospital will remain an important partner in the delivery of health care services in Newbury and in the Middlesex Hospital Alliance.

CARDIAC CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): The residents in my community are very concerned that the future of Dr. Schaman's cardiac rehabilitation clinic in Breslau is in doubt. Provincial funding for this clinic was first provided in 2001, but they have now been told by Ministry of Health staff that funding is only guaranteed until June 30 of this year.

This popular clinic was originally funded to improve access to cardiac rehabilitation services and prevent heart disease, and to do so in an innovative community-based setting. Since 1978, the clinic has seen 35,000 patients who attribute their good health to their participation in this program.

Barb White of Cambridge has been going to the clinic since 2002 and says in her letter to Minister Smitherman, "Dr. Schaman is keeping people healthy and fit, and we desperately need his services."

Evelyn Playford, who has been going to the clinic since 2001, has written to Minister Smitherman to say, "It is incomprehensible to me that the ministry charged with protecting and improving the health of Ontarians would withdraw support from a health promotion program with a proven track record of success." She states that she has been able to control her heart condition without surgery and other costly procedures.

Today I am joined by my colleague from Waterloo-Wellington, Ted Arnott, in urging Health Minister Smitherman to listen to the pleas of these patients and to continue to provide public funding to this very accessible and popular clinic.

HATE CRIMES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm proud to say that my city of Hamilton is contributing \$10,000 toward the reconstruction of the Hindu Samaj Temple. In the words of Hamilton city councillor Tom Jackson, we are "trying to right a wrong."

It is with great regret that I must report that the Premier of Ontario has refused my request that he do his part to right a serious wrong. The Hindu Samaj Temple was destroyed by arson in a racially motivated destruction spawned by the events of September 11, 2001. Ontario was not immune to the racist backlash, and I hoped that the McGuinty Liberals would do their utmost to help the community.

A place of worship and a community centre representing the investment and hard work of Hamilton's sizable South Asian community was torched. The community had to again raise money, secure loans and start over for a second time. History will record this event as Ontario's worst hate crime. It was an attack on South Asians on Ontario soil, and the McGuinty government has been largely silent.

On October 24, I wrote to the Premier and urged his government to answer the community's calls for financial assistance to restore the temple. In a letter to me dated December 6, the Premier came up empty. He offered a lot of talk about violence and racism, about taking it seriously, but the bottom line is that it was just talk. Frankly, I find this response insulting. The role of the provincial government is to respond to crises, to show leadership in helping to erase the stain of that terrible event.

Hindu Samaj is more than a temple. It's a hub. It's a cultural attraction and a center for the elimination of racism.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Two weeks ago, when a devastating mudslide buried a village in the Philippines, our government immediately offered their

assistance. The Honourable Mike Colle, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, announced that the Ontario government will donate \$200,000 on behalf of the people of Ontario to help the victims. We will continue to work closely with the Consul General of the Philippines, Alejandro Mosquera, to continue to assist the victims, their families and their community, and to ensure that the funding we have provided will be used in the most appropriate manner.

Thornhill has a very active and vibrant Filipino community. In fact, when I was a councillor in the city of Vaughan, we signed a friendship agreement with Baguio City in the Philippines to encourage cultural, social and educational exchanges and to promote new business opportunities. Vaughan's sister city program was the first international partnership agreement ever signed between cities in the Philippines and Canada.

Ontario is a richly diverse province, defined by the contributions made by all members of our communities from all over the world. On behalf of myself and the people of Ontario, our deepest sympathies go out to the victims of this tragedy and, as promised, we will continue to assist in any way we can. This is a tragedy that has affected many people who live not only in Thornhill but in Ontario. I certainly think the minister has done the right thing by giving some assistance to this community.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Let me say this: It is a sad and telling sign when your friends don't come to your rescue. The Integrity Commissioner has described Minister Takhar as having displayed "negligence," as being "egregiously reckless." For the first time, a minister found in violation of the act is staying on in cabinet.

Friends coming to the rescue: Only six members of the entire Liberal caucus spoke in favour of the minister or the Premier's decision to keep him in cabinet. Only one out of 10 members of the Liberal caucus are behind the Premier's decision and that of the Minister of Transportation. Two members, the House leader and Brampton Centre, rose in debate and spoke about other issues, but made no mention of the Minister of Transportation or the Premier's decision. Cabinet ministers: Of those who work with him around the table at cabinet, one single cabinet minister rose to his defence. That cabinet minister too, Ms. Pupatello, got him in more trouble by saying that he practically lived at the Chalmers Group, while the minister said he never worked there. And those who are putting their toes in federal leadership waters—Minister Kennedy, Minister Duncan—put the pedal to the metal to get as far away from the transportation minister as possible.

It's a sad thing when there are no friends behind the minister. It's time to dump that guy from cabinet.

1340

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I rise in the House today because we need to talk about the importance of

passing Bill 210. There is no doubt that children in need of protection in this province will be much better off if Bill 210 becomes law.

It is especially important for Ontario's aboriginal communities. The fact is that aboriginal children and youth are disproportionately represented in our child care protection system. Under the current system, aboriginal children who come into the care of a children's aid society are often placed in non-aboriginal foster care, which can lead to these children losing important ties with their culture and community.

The minister, ministry staff and myself met with representatives of the community and listened to their concerns. Our government worked with the community to develop specific amendments to the bill that would address the concerns of the aboriginal community. The end result was 20 amendments to Bill 210 that address aboriginal concerns; amendments that will help more vulnerable aboriginal children stay on reserve and in their communities, maintaining important cultural and community connections.

I am deeply disappointed that John Tory and the Conservatives have tried to thwart the passage of this bill for political reasons. Their antics are not hurting the government; they are hurting Ontario's aboriginal children, who need our support.

Chief Keith Knott of Curve Lake and Chief Greg Cowie of Hiawatha in my riding will certainly take note of where this Reform Party—no, Progressive Conservative Party—stands on this bill.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): This government introduced Bill 210 because it is committed to making the child protection system more responsive to the needs of children. We are also committed to doing everything possible to avoid imposing unnecessary trauma and hardship on families with children in the system.

In Ontario today, there is no province-wide standard as to how complaints against children's aid societies are handled. We must bring greater consistency, expediency and fairness to the review of children's aid society decisions. We need a process that responds to the urgent and sensitive nature of child protection. We need a process that is timely and results in binding decisions.

Bill 210 will give families access to just such a process. Under the proposed changes, families could bring complaints forward to a neutral third party, the Child and Family Services Review Board. Ontario's Ombudsman will play a key role in this new process by holding the system to the highest standards of objectivity and integrity.

I am proud of this government's commitment to increasing accountability in the child protection system. I urge the official opposition to make the interests of Ontario's children and families a priority. Show your support for Bill 210 and help us to create a stronger protection system that will be of certain benefit to future generations of children and families in this province.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I rise today to share the progress being made through the Child

and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act. I was one of the members of the standing committee on social policy who heard the delegations on this legislation. I'm really proud to have helped with this legislation and guided it through committee. It's a strong bill that has been made stronger by amendments made since second reading, five of which came from the third party.

The ultimate aim of Bill 210 is to help Ontario's crown wards find permanent, loving homes. All too often, these children have spent their early years being bounced between foster homes. We know that children are more likely to thrive as part of a constant, nurturing family.

The current system is too rigid. This legislation will make adoption more flexible for children and less complex for adoptive parents. We must make rules that fit the children rather than making the children fit the rules.

I know that no one in this House wants to see Ontario's crown wards kept from nurturing, permanent homes, but that is exactly the effect of the political games that John Tory and the Conservative Party are playing with Bill 210. By playing politics and delaying this bill, they are holding hostage some of the most vulnerable children in Ontario.

I'd like to ask all members to think about that as third reading of Bill 210 continues. The children most in need of our protection will undoubtedly be better off if this bill becomes law in Ontario. I think we can all agree on that, and the members can stop playing politics.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUSINESS CORPORATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (VETERINARY PROFESSIONAL CORPORATIONS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SOCIÉTÉS PAR ACTIONS (SOCIÉTÉS PROFESSIONNELLES DE VÉTÉRINAIRES)

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act with respect to veterinary professional corporations / Projet de loi 76, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés par actions en ce qui concerne les sociétés professionnelles de vétérinaires.

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.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Members will remember that government Bill 197, introduced by then Finance Minister Greg Sorbara, extended a tax benefit to health care professionals. There has been a government commitment to extend that to doctors and dentists to encourage them to stay in the province. Other regulated

health professionals are eligible. I encourage the government to extend that benefit to those health professionals.

This bill, if passed, will level the playing field so that whether it's a doctor, a dentist, a massage therapist, a radiation technologist or a veterinarian, all would be eligible for that tax benefit.

SAFEGUARD OUR SENIORS ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Ms. Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to protect persons in care from abuse /
Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à protéger les personnes
recevant des soins contre les mauvais traitements.

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 bill places a duty on operators of health facilities to protect patients from abuse, and a duty on persons aware of senior abuse, or the likelihood of it, to report this to the Minister of Health.

The minister is authorized to appoint an investigator to enter a health facility to undertake a full investigation of the reported abuse. The minister can issue any direction necessary to the operator to protect seniors from abuse. Criminal wrongdoing can be referred to the police, and proof of professional misconduct can be referred to the body or person who authorizes, certifies or licenses that person to carry on his or her work.

The bill provides for whistle-blower protection for employees, protection for seniors and their families when a report of abuse is made, and fines for those who fail to report or obstruct investigations.

The bill is modelled after Manitoba's Protection for Persons in Care Act. This is the second time it has been introduced by New Democrats.

EDUCATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (STUDENT PERFORMANCE), 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ÉDUCATION (RENDEMENT DES ÉLÈVES)

Mr. Kennedy moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 78, An Act to amend the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 and certain other statutes relating to education /
Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation, la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario et certaines autres lois se rapportant à l'éducation.

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

Minister, do you have a brief statement?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I will make a statement during ministerial statements.

1350

TRILLIUM GIFT OF LIFE NETWORK STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE RÉSEAU TRILLIUM POUR LE DON DE VIE

Mr. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend the Trillium Gift of Life Network Act, the Health Insurance Act and the Highway Traffic Act /
Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Réseau Trillium pour le don de vie, la Loi sur l'assurance-santé et le Code de la route.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): The purpose of this bill is to amend the Trillium Gift of Life Network Act to require that a consent form be distributed with every application for or renewal of a person's health card and driver's licence. This form permits a person to consent to the use of his or her organs after death for the purpose of an organ transplant. If the person provides consent, the information will be included on the person's health card or driver's licence. Furthermore, the Trillium Gift of Life Network would then start and maintain a registry of information and consent.

Simply increasing the number of people who agree to organ donation and sign donor cards for their wallets does not go far enough. The key to this bill is the registry. It will connect patients who need a transplant with the consenting donors through a registry run by the Trillium Gift of Life Network.

We know that every three days a person dies waiting for an organ. This bill will ensure that the registry is available to all hospitals and doctors in the province to ensure organ donors can be quickly and easily identified.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION ÉDUCATION

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I rise in the House today to introduce some very important legislation for the direction of education in Ontario. If passed, this legislation would be a tremendous boost for improved student performance in this province. Today, the McGuinty government is for the first time setting provincial outcomes to maximize our education initiatives and remove barriers to greater student achievement.

Pour la première fois aujourd'hui, le gouvernement McGuinty établit des résultats provinciaux afin d'optimiser nos initiatives en matière d'éducation et de supprimer les obstacles à la réussite scolaire.

The previous one-size-fits-all approach to education adopted by the previous government has proven ineffective. This bill is a significant tune-up that will modernize Ontario education as a condition for the success of students.

The student performance bill contains several measures, limited in themselves, but substantive in terms of the Education Act and the Ontario College of Teachers Act. They provide the legal support necessary to enable the three most important objectives that we have in terms of education in this province: improving student performance, establishing a partnership within education based on respect, and openness to the public.

To support the government's ability to build confidence in public education, the ministry has identified areas of key provincial interests, such as lower class size, fiscal responsibility, improvements in literacy and numeracy, and the safety of schools, just to name some examples. The legislation, if passed, would clarify ministry and board responsibility related to those goals, particularly those concerning student performance.

The new authority would enable the ministry to set provincial outcomes and require boards to meet those outcomes. And very importantly, because we believe that we must work as partners in education, specific outcomes would be set in regulation only after significant consultation between the ministry, school boards and our other partners in education.

This legislation would help to define ministry expectations clearly. This would, in turn, allow school boards to have the flexibility they need in order to successfully implement provincial initiatives.

Le gouvernement sait que pour améliorer le rendement des élèves, il doit épauler les personnes qui assurent l'enseignement chaque jour, y compris le personnel enseignant.

Subject to the approval of the Legislature, the requirement for new teacher candidates to pass the qualifying test as a condition of certification would be revoked. In its place, we are introducing a positive second step for professional development for beginning teachers, giving them instead valuable in-class support during their challenging first year of practice. What it means for parents and for students is that there would be a complement to their formal one year of pre-service university training of a second year of support.

The new teacher induction program would address new teacher retention issues—we lost as many as one in three new teachers under the previous government—and their development by giving them valuable mentoring from experienced teachers, together with on-the-job training and professional development. The teacher performance appraisal system for new teachers would also be modified. If passed, the successful completion of the teacher induction program would require two satisfactory performance appraisals. The result will be better-prepared and more confident teachers.

The previous government didn't support teacher training because it reduced the number of professional

activity days from nine to four. Across the country, the amount of time available for those purposes is nine days. If we are to support our students, we must provide professional development for our teachers. We need to provide them with more opportunities for shared problem-solving and give them access to new, cutting-edge teaching techniques in order to improve student achievement.

Legislation currently allows for up to four professional activity days. Those provisions will be repealed, and we will instead have the authority to add additional ministry-directed professional development days to support the government's education initiatives. It is our intention to have two additional days should the legislation pass, because better-trained teachers mean better-prepared teachers. Part of the students' ability to focus is the establishment of an era of peace and stability.

After years of labour strife under the previous government, the McGuinty government is proud to have played a role in a provincial dialogue that helped teacher federations and school boards reach first-ever four-year agreements. If passed, this bill would allow the extension of existing labour agreements from two to four years.

Et, en partie, la capacité des élèves à se concentrer sur leur éducation crée un climat de paix et de stabilité.

Après des années de conflits de travail sous le précédent gouvernement, le gouvernement McGuinty est fier d'avoir joué un rôle dans un dialogue provincial qui a aidé les fédérations d'enseignantes et d'enseignants et les conseils scolaires à conclure les premières conventions collectives de quatre ans.

Two more initiatives that are key to improve student performance are our primary class size initiative and access to education. If passed, this bill would repeal sections of the Education Act, establishing minimum class sizes and establishing the regulations that support the phasing in and implementation of the government's primary class size initiative.

This legislation, if passed, would also give more students access to the Ontario education advantage by enabling students to be taught for the first time by e-learning instructional methods.

All of the amendments being proposed hinge on our ability to create and sustain lasting partnerships in education based on respect.

Toutes les modifications proposées s'articulent autour de notre capacité de nouer et de maintenir des partenariats durables fondés sur le respect.

This legislation, if passed, would respect school board trustees for the important work they do on behalf of students by giving them realistic support, removing penalties in the act related to trustee compliance, and strengthening and clarifying their role in stewarding education. It would respect student trustees by empowering and recognizing student trustees through new scholarships, recorded votes, procedural rights and increased resources. It would respect teachers through a revitalized Ontario College of Teachers as a true professional body which has the confidence of its members and public, and

is depoliticized by having a majority of classroom teachers on its council to carry out its mandate.

Finally, if passed, this legislation would open up education to the public. By giving the minister the ability to direct school boards to offer school facilities for community use at a nominal fee, this would offset costs associated with the community use of schools initiative. It would also ensure a greater public reporting of board and provincial initiatives so that there is greater accountability and public transparency, because access to education, opening up our schools, will foster better community relations for the future success of our students.

This government, the McGuinty government, is taking responsibility for education in Ontario and giving our partners in education the respect they deserve. I hope this bill will find the support of this Legislature because, ultimately, it represents what we all desire to accomplish in education: openness, partnership based on respect, and improved student performance.

Monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement assume pleinement la responsabilité de l'éducation en Ontario et accorde à ses partenaires éducatifs le respect qu'ils méritent.

1400

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I rise to tell you about the next step in our government's plan to transform and strengthen community-based services for adults with a developmental disability.

Our plan is guided by three principles: fairness, accessibility and sustainability. First, Ontario needs a system of supports that is fair, so that each person receives supports based on his or her needs. Second, families need to know where and how to find services, and those services need to be accessible more consistently and closer to home. Finally, our plan centres around building for the future, creating a sustainable system that is not only strong and innovative, but also affordable.

A key part of our transformation plan is a new specialized services strategy, a comprehensive \$41-million strategy to strengthen community-based supports for adults who need more than just assistance with daily living; they also need the support of behaviour therapists, social workers, nurses and psychologists to help deal with mental health issues or challenging behaviours.

This is a long-term investment in supporting adults with a developmental disability who have some of the highest care needs.

A key part of our strategy is the new community networks of specialized care, community partnerships that will coordinate services for individuals who have very high support needs. Ontario has a wealth of expertise with specialized services, but what was needed was better coordination, helping health care profes-

sionals, case managers, specialized treatment providers and community organizations to work together better and connect families to specialized services in the communities in which they live.

The networks will bring together professionals from a wide range of disciplines to provide clinical care, comprehensive assessments and case management for their clients—real wraparound service. They will strengthen the entire specialized care community by leading research and teaching in our developmental services sector, sharing their knowledge with professionals and families alike.

I'm proud to say that the community networks of specialized care are the first of their kind in this sector, and we're proud of that. They'll be collaborative systems, professionals working together to put Ontario at the leading edge of services, leadership and expertise that will give families better access to specialized service closer to home.

The four community networks of specialized care will reach out to serve the entire province and will be led by proven leaders in Ontario's community-based developmental services sector, leaders that have been selected by their peers to help Ontario stay at the cutting edge of developmental services.

This morning, at Surrey Place, I was pleased to announce the leadership of Ontario's community networks of specialized care. The southern Ontario network, including Hamilton, Niagara and southwestern Ontario, will be co-led by Bethesda and Regional Support Associates; in central Ontario, network leadership will come from Surrey Place, Community Living Huronia's Pineview site and Guelph's Community Mental Health Clinic; in eastern Ontario, Ongwanada and Prescott-Russell Services to Children and Adults will be the network co-leads; and in northern Ontario, Algonquin Child and Family Services will be the lead agency.

Congratulations to all of these fine community agencies for being selected by their peers to undertake this important and exciting initiative.

We know there's tremendous demand for such services right now in communities across the province. Almost every day families tell us they want to give input into the transformation of Ontario's developmental services sector. Well, let me tell you, they want the same things I spoke about earlier: fairness, so that every family member can get the support they need, when they need it; easy access to services, a system that isn't hard to understand and services that aren't hard to find; and services that will grow along with their family member. We know needs change over time.

These are some of the themes that my parliamentary assistant, Ernie Parsons, heard in meetings with families and caregivers last year. He has prepared an excellent summary of the strengths and needs that should be considered as we transform services in this sector, and I'm pleased to table his report today. In fact, this report, which we've dubbed the Parsons report, is now available online with our ministry. I congratulate my parliamentary

assistant, Ernie Parsons, for tremendous work on behalf of families right across the province. Thank you, Ernie.

In talking with families about the future, he also heard about the great work that continues to grow in our communities, great work on the part of strong, community-based agencies that have caring, dedicated staff who are more committed than ever to helping individuals maximize their opportunities in communities across the province. In fact, through the hard work of ministry staff, families and community-based service providers, we've already helped 80 people successfully move out of our facilities and into new homes in the community. Families of those former residents continue to tell us how happy they are with the increased opportunities and excellent supports available to their family members.

In the coming years, we're going to have hundreds more people returning to our communities, and we will have the services in place to support them. For those who have specialized care needs, our new community networks of specialized care will be there to support them and their families, not in an institution far away, but close to home in their communities. The networks will help us to build a strong foundation of community-based services that will help make Ontario's communities stronger and more inclusive for generations to come.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES ATHLÈTES OLYMPIQUES

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to take a moment to commend the efforts of the 196 Canadian athletes who represented us so proudly at the winter Olympics in Torino, Italy. They are excellent role models for our children and an inspiration for us all. Canada finished third overall, winning an incredible 24 medals.

I'm proud to note that several of the medals were awarded to the 39 athletes from Ontario, including members of the women's hockey team, who faced every other team to capture the gold medal undefeated. Our Canadian team included 10 athletes from Ontario: Meghan Agosta of Ruthven, Gillian Apps of Unionville, Cassie Campbell of Brampton, Gillian Ferrari of Thornhill, Jayna Hefford of Kingston, Becky Kellar of Hagersville, Cherie Piper of Scarborough, Cheryl Pounder of Mississauga, Vicky Sunohara of Scarborough, and Katie Weatherston of Thunder Bay. I want to personally congratulate the amazing efforts of team captain Cassie Campbell and the nine other women of her team who are from Ontario, and I want to highlight the talent of Katie Weatherston from Thunder Bay. Katie represented Ontario on the women's soccer team at the Canada Games in 2001, where she helped to win the team gold.

Ses efforts soutenus et sa motivation ont bien servi notre équipe nationale de hockey. Katie nous a, encore une fois, bien représentés en aidant Équipe Canada à remporter l'or.

I want to congratulate Kristina Groves of Ottawa and Christine Nesbitt of London. Together they won silver in the pursuit long track speed skating. Kristina Groves also won silver in the 1,500-metre speed skating long track, and Amanda Overland of Kitchener won silver in the 3,000-metre relay speed skating short track. Jeffrey Buttle of Sudbury was ranked in sixth place after his short program in men's figure skating but then dazzled the judges with his freestyle program, capturing the bronze medal.

Le niveau d'excellence des athlètes ontariens aux Jeux d'hiver est vraiment inégalé. Ils comptent parmi les meilleurs athlètes du monde.

One of the priorities of our ministry is to increase support to our high-performance athletes. In fact, this is one of the important components of the McGuinty government's Active 2010 strategy for sport and physical activity in Ontario. We want to build a healthier, stronger Ontario to give all Ontarians a chance to become more active and to achieve excellence, whether recreationally or competitively. In the early and mid-1990s, provincial government support for Ontario high-performance athletes was cut dramatically. This resulted in a dramatic decline in the number of athletes from Ontario representing Team Canada.

Avec les Jeux Olympiques de 2010 à Vancouver-Whistler, qui se profilent à l'horizon, nous devons redonner la priorité à l'aide aux athlètes amateurs. C'est avec fierté que je peux affirmer que depuis notre arrivée au pouvoir il y a deux ans, nous avons réalisé de grands progrès en ce sens.

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My ministry is working to strengthen and increase the pool of high-performance athletes in Ontario. We're supporting amateur sport through a number of funding programs and services. This year, we allocated \$15.2 million for amateur sport, an increase of almost \$5 million over last year and an 83% increase in funding since 2002-03.

After years of neglect, this investment sends a clear signal to athletes that we are back in the business of supporting them. The new investments include a \$6.1-million bilateral Sport for More program, signed by our government and the federal government, to increase participation in sports among under-represented groups. That includes children and youth from low-income families, ethnic minorities and aboriginals.

Additionally, the Quest for Gold lottery will provide an estimated \$2.5 million towards our high-performance athletes by the end of this fiscal year, March 31, with additional funding being provided in 2006-07. Seventy per cent of Quest for Gold funding will go directly to athletes, 20% to enhance coaching, and 10% to increase competitive opportunities, all of which will help our athletes to achieve their highest potential at national and international competitions.

Je me réjouis à l'idée d'assister aux Jeux d'hiver de l'Ontario la semaine prochaine, et je suis convaincu que ceux-ci seront couronnés de succès.

I look forward to going to Collingwood for the opening ceremonies of the Ontario Winter Games. I'll have the privilege of addressing a group of more than 3,000 of our amateur athletes, their coaches and parents, and numerous volunteers.

As part of the Ministry of Health Promotion's support for the Ontario Winter Games, the town of Collingwood has received \$400,000 to be the host city. I want to thank the volunteers, coaches, officials, parents and family members for all of their support.

The summer and winter games are the province's largest multi-sport events and they are a launching pad for future Olympians. Recent Olympic silver medallist Amanda Overland competed in the Ontario Winter Games in Peterborough in 1998. Her success will be an inspiration to this year's young athletes and is proof that these events, like the Ontario games, allow athletes to hone their skills for the national and international level. Our high-performance athletes play a critical role in our pursuit of a healthier Ontario.

I wish our Paralympians the very best as they begin competing next Friday, and our—

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

EDUCATION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): In response to the Minister of Education's bill, I believe this minister has forgotten what it means to be accountable to parents. He clearly does not understand the concept of self-regulation in the public interest.

Here is the legacy of a soon-to-depart education minister: Make promises to retool the rural and northern school funding formula, but don't deliver on it for almost a year and a half. Say you won't allow schools to close, but stand by while schools such as Ross Mineview, Laurentian and others in places like Thunder Bay, Port Hope, Horton, Deep River and Oxford county close. Say you're going to make class sizes smaller, but until today the Education Act remains the same as it was almost three years ago in that regard. Get rid of calculus from the curriculum, but tell parents you're preparing their children for the high-tech jobs of the future, then backload the review until after the next election. Dumb down the curriculum even more. In three years, this minister has brought forward the lightest legislative load of any education minister in recent history, while he travels the province on the taxpayers' dime, drumming up support for his federal leadership.

School boards are telling him they can't make ends meet because he hasn't given them the money to pay for the new teachers' contracts that he foisted upon them. And what about the stability commission you said was in place in November of last year and that you've been promising school boards weekly? It still is not in place, leaving school boards and principals in confusion. School boards have been telling him for two years now that the busing costs are killing them, and he has done nothing about that either.

Here he is, back from his leadership tour, and he looks back on his legislative legacy. He doesn't have one. So what does he do? What's his solution? He brings in an omnibus bill and lets the next minister carry the can.

Here's what you said about omnibus legislation in the past. On November 21, 2002, you said: "We have a group of people over there afraid to govern, afraid to talk about their initiatives. They want to bundle them in a big pile in an omnibus bill like this, and they are afraid to have open debate and discuss."

So which is it, Minister? Are you in such a rush to leave this place that you have to leave behind an omnibus bill for all of us to try to sort through because you are afraid to have open debate and discuss this bill properly? Are you trying to hide the fact that this bill is going to cost millions of dollars, or billions of dollars, as you have said they cost in the past?

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I want to comment on the minister's announcement on developmental services. It's very clear that the minister didn't bring the kind of news that Community Living Ontario has been seeking from this government. Let's put in context the fact that her government found enough money to pay LCBO workers a four-year deal at 12%, and yet the very people, the front-line staff members in this province who are providing developmental services directly at a community level are getting, at best, a 1% increase and the abandonment by this government of pay equity supports. That is shameful for a minister who stood in this House yesterday talking about women's rights days and so on and so forth, and yet this sector is disproportionately staffed by young women.

You promised to increase the number of community placements to correspond with your accelerated plan for deinstitutionalization. What you have done is ghettoize a whole group of Ontarians with disabilities who do not have access to those placements in their community because of the acceleration of deinstitutionalization.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): That's not true.

Mr. Jackson: The minister knows it to be true. She's not even funding at the same level that the previous government provided under the leadership of John Baird, and she knows it. This is why today's announcement doesn't even enclose a third-party endorsement from the Ontario association for community living. They know this is money that will roll out over the next six years; this is not something that will occur immediately in Ontario. Quite frankly, Minister, the association expected you to provide more direct services for these individuals and the dollars they need now.

Finally, you're still silent on your broken promise on an increase for Ontarians with disabilities and their benefits package. When are you going to pony up the money you promised in the last election?

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of New Democrats, I want to congratulate all the athletes from Ontario who participated in the recent Winter Olympics in Italy. They are fabulous athletes, they made us all very proud and they deserve all of our thanks for their dedication, their commitment and their training.

We were thrilled with all of their achievements, but I have to say that in our household we were particularly thrilled with the achievement of the women's hockey team and of Jeff Buttle of Sudbury. All the best to all the athletes in their future endeavours.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This is in response to the Minister of Community and Social Services' announcement. This is not the announcement that Ontario's persons with disabilities have been waiting for. What would really be fair to them? What have they really been waiting for? What could this minister really be doing to help Ontarians with disabilities? She could be increasing disability support rates for people, which she promised she was going to do. She could be implementing the cost-of-living allowance increase on an annual basis, which she said she was going to do. She should keep her promise on getting rid of the national child benefit clawback for people and families receiving ODSP. She can stop throwing people, who don't want to go, out of the last remaining regional centres, like Huronia Regional Centre.

She could increase the employment earnings exemption threshold that is now put on people who have jobs and are also on Ontario disability support. In fact, people are sending petitions to this Legislature calling for the government to do that very thing. People with disabilities are entitled to the full support of their government with respect to income security and the dignity of a job, they say. They are also saying that the pride in making meaningful contributions to their community is extremely important, because it enables them to augment Ontario's inadequate disability cheque to keep up with the ever-increasing cost of living. They want an immediate increase in the employment earnings exemption threshold for ODSP recipients so they are able to keep more of what they earn without the government clawing back their disability support; they have a double clawback, Minister.

There are some ideas you can implement to help them out.

EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's a pleasure to speak to the Minister of Education's omnibus bill, the very type of bill that he and many other Liberals

used to loathe when introduced by the Conservative Party.

I want to briefly comment on the teacher induction program and say that, as useful as the idea is, we are looking for the details, because we want to know who is going to be running the program and who is going to be paying for the program, because we know there are going to be extra costs. We hope the boards are not going to be subsidizing or having to find another line to subsidize yet something else that the minister obviously says is good to do. So we're looking forward to the details in that regard.

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With respect to the trustee salary increase, I want to say that what the Tories used to do was a terrible, terrible thing. They minimized the trustees. They trivialized them. They beat them up on a regular basis. Yes, this government with this measure is making progress in terms of respecting the work that the trustees do, and that is a very useful thing to do indeed.

However, I point out that, on the one hand where Monsieur Kennedy says that we need to respect the trustees, where he finds himself at odds with the trustees who disagree with him we have a different sort of relationship that appears. This is where the disrespect of the Liberal government comes in.

Monsieur Ferreira is the chairman of the Peel board. When he and the other trustees refused to submit to this minister and his minions, he decided that he was going to humiliate them. What did he do when he and his minions were not able to persuade the trustees to submit to his authority? He said, "I'm going to call in an investigator and do exactly what Ms. Witmer did when she was in government, when she had three boards investigated by an auditor." Monsieur Kennedy, who says that things are going to be different, decided that he was going to go in and humiliate them, because he says, "In spite of all the things that we've done for you, if you're not willing to make cuts to balance your budgets, we're going to send in an investigator."

Monsieur Kennedy says, "We want to be able to have a partnership." Well, in this omnibus bill, the partnership that he talks about with trustees who disagree with him is the following:

"Personal liability of members of the board

"If a board that is subject to an order made under subsection 257.31(2) or (3) applies any of its funds otherwise than as the minister orders or authorizes, the members of the board who voted for the application are jointly and severally liable for the amount so applied, which may be recovered in a court of competent jurisdiction." So much for respect and partnership with trustees. So when they disagree with you—"We humiliate you and we're going to make you pay."

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would ask members if they'd like to join me in thanking this par-

tical group of pages, which has done such a fine job for us during this session of the Legislature.

Applause.

VISITORS

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): From the members' east gallery, I'd like to introduce to the members of the Ontario Legislature Dick and Susan Farrow from the great village of Thornloe in the equally great riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, on April 29, 2005, you had a meeting at the Chalmers Group offices with your wife on what was to be a meeting to do with your daughter's education choices. My question is to do with the minutes. Is it your usual practice to take minutes at a meeting that has to do with personal family matters?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): If I recall correctly, the Leader of the Opposition made some accusations and made a complaint to the Integrity Commissioner. He has delivered his report. I accept that report entirely. They complained, but they are not prepared to accept that report.

Mr. Miller: Minister, I have three children attending post-secondary education. We held many family meetings to do with their education choices. Our meetings were held at the kitchen table, and no minutes were taken.

I'd like to come back to your minutes. Why would you record, in the minutes of the meeting about your daughter's education, the fact that Mrs. Takhar went out to make lunch arrangements, or why would you record that you went out to make phone calls? Why would these details be recorded in the minutes of the meeting?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: As I have said already, all these issues have been dealt with by the Integrity Commissioner, and I accept his report.

Mr. Miller: Even the Integrity Commissioner is sceptical about your minutes. In his report he states, "I am sceptical as to the legitimacy of these notes. Perhaps my scepticism is in part caused by my concern as to why this meeting at Chalmers was held in the first place and why Mr. Jeyanayangam was invited to participate." Minister, when did Mr. Jeyanayangam record the minutes of this meeting? Did you witness him writing the minutes or did he create the minutes at a later date after the meeting?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I thought that was what the Integrity Commissioner was supposed to do, and that's exactly

what he did. They asked for the report; they should accept that report.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, can you tell us whether or not all 152 hospitals in Ontario will have their budgets approved and balanced by the end of this fiscal year; in other words, the end of this month?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I had the opportunity in a media scrum earlier in the week to indicate that while we have made considerable progress on the file of having all hospitals suitably in balance by the end of this fiscal year, we're projecting that 139 of 152 hospitals in the province of Ontario will have completed their process. We think this is an accomplishment. I acknowledge that in these limited instances there is more work to do. We're pouring on the steam with a view toward getting all those hospitals into a circumstance of a stable, financial footing, so they can work within the long-term funding we have provided. I remind the honourable member that our party was the first in the history of Ontario to deliver stable, multi-year funding to our hospitals. This year's allocation: about \$600 million.

Mrs. Witmer: Minister, the hospital budget process, according to the hospitals, is in shambles. The deadlines that have been set are yours, and let's review them. The agreements were supposed to be signed on November 30—deadline missed. Then it was January 31, 2006—deadline missed. Then you said that 139 of 152 would be signed by the middle of February—deadline missed. Now you've set this new deadline of March 31. However, you did say this week that that deadline would result in only about 139 being signed.

We are talking about funding for last year, 2005-06, the year that is ending March 31. These are your deadlines. You continue to miss them. How much longer are you going to create uncertainty for hospitals?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It's always a bit galling to hear the honourable member, who was the longest-serving Minister of Health in a government that closed 28 hospitals and shut down 7,000 hospital beds, talk about shambles.

The circumstances are clear. We fundamentally believe that it's appropriate, that it's a reasonable expectation to place on our hospitals, the largest single line item in the government's budget at more than \$12 billion, that we work with them to develop their capacities to operate in budget and live within those means, which are Ontarians' means and which are available. We think there's been a lot of progress made. I'm the first to acknowledge that, as always in the health portfolio, there is more work to do. The good news on that point is that we're not out of energy like the honourable member and her party; rather, we have all the energy in the world to deliver benefits to the patients of Ontario. That's what we're in

the midst of doing, and we're making awfully good progress on that point.

Mrs. Witmer: The minister should get his facts right on hospitals. We were the ones who made sure they had new emergency rooms, cardiac centres, cancer centres and dialysis centres. Minister, you were the ones who made the promise—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Order. I'm hearing way too much from the ministry benches.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

1430

Mrs. Witmer: Mr. Speaker, I don't think they like to be reminded of the truth.

Anyway, you made a promise that hospital budgets were going to be balanced. You said there would be no hospital bailouts. But we now hear that the Ministry of Health staff are under the gun, running around the province pleading with hospitals to sign agreements, asking people, "What's it going to take?"

But, as I say, it's only rumour, because for all your talk of transparency and accountability, that's all it is. You have forced the hospitals to sign confidential accountability agreements. Again I ask you, how long are you going to create this atmosphere of uncertainty for hospitals in this province?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Speaking of uncertainty, those of us in the Legislature are operating with some today about the change in position of the Conservative Party as relates to the children of the province of Ontario. It's interesting that the honourable member hasn't been on her feet today to tell us why the word that her party gave just two days ago to Ontario's children, related to Bill 210, has been eviscerated—kind of like hospital budgets over two years when that party was in office.

The honourable member stands in her place and talks about the word "shambles," but the reality is that there are two parties in this Legislature that have cut funding for Ontario's hospitals. They sit on that side of the House. The unseemly record of that honourable member's party included a \$557-million cut, closing 28 hospitals and 7,000 hospital beds. That's the legacy that the honourable member claims we are jealous of. Nothing could be further from the truth.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, the McGuinty government says that helping children is a top priority. If that's true, why is one in six Ontario children living in poverty under the McGuinty government?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate that comment, and I will tell you that today I listened very carefully while Campaign 2000 gave another report talking about children across the

country and the poverty issues that they face. All of us, all levels of government, are compelled to come to the table to make life better for children.

Maybe I can share with the leader some of the good things that have happened since Dalton McGuinty became the Premier. One of those was an immediate increase of 3% for those who are on social assistance—something that they had not seen in absolutely years. Let me share with you that today we have fewer children on welfare in this province since the day we took office and certainly since the days that both you and your Conservative colleagues were in government. We have fewer here in Ontario on welfare than we had, and we have more work to do. We are rolling up our sleeves and getting to that work.

Mr. Hampton: The fact remains that under the McGuinty government, which continues to give speeches that children are a priority, there are 443,000 children in Ontario living in poverty. A third of those children have parents who work full-time all year round, and yet even though they work full-time all year round, they still do not have enough money to pay for the necessities of life: food, clothing and shelter for the children. You continue to say that children are a priority. Well, why do we have this sorry situation, 443,000 children still living in poverty, in the third year of the McGuinty government?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: We understand that when we have children living in poverty, it's likely that their parents are living in poverty as well. And for the first time in more than a decade, it was this government that raised the minimum wage for the first time in almost 15 years. For those same working families, we know that for those who are on social assistance, we've made the system better. We know we have more work to do, but we have consistently moved the ball forward when it comes to children in this province. One of the best things we did was launch Best Start.

I might tell this leader opposite that you need to get on the telephone with your friend Jack Layton in Ottawa to find out what part you might play in having ruined the best child care program that Ontario has ever seen. That's your responsibility when it comes to children in this province.

Mr. Hampton: It's astounding that the McGuinty government thinks that playing the blame game, that blaming somebody else is going to provide food, clothing and shelter—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. We have to remember that one member has the floor. That member may either ask or, in some cases, respond to the question, but only one member at a time.

Mr. Hampton: I think it's astounding that the McGuinty government thinks that playing the blame game is going to make a difference for poor kids. I think Ontario's poorest children would be better off if the McGuinty government simply kept your promises.

For example, the national child benefit is \$1,500 a year that the federal government makes available to the

poorest children in this province, and what does the McGuinty government do? You claw back that \$1,500 a year from those poorest children in the province.

Dalton McGuinty said, "The clawback is wrong, and we will end it." Well, Minister, in the third year of the McGuinty government, when are you going to stop clawing back \$1,500 a year from the poorest kids in Ontario?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I appreciate that you keep throwing numbers about, but I will tell you that since we became the government, we immediately stopped that increase of that child care clawback. What that has meant to families in Ontario is almost an additional \$40 million in their hands. That's what Dalton McGuinty did upon becoming the Premier of this province, and we are doing more. We do have a list as long as your arm, because that's how many things we have brought forward to make life better for families in this province, including children.

This is not about blame; this is an opportunity that you have right at your ready: to call that leader of your national party. Best Start is well known across the nation as the best program to give kids the lift they need in life, and yet that program is at risk because your friends in Ottawa can't see that Best Start will be funded by the federal government, as long as you and that party are over there not picking up the phone. You have a responsibility to get in the game for children in this province. You need to take responsibility for what's going on, and I expect you to make that phone call.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of Community and Social Services: Minister, 443,000 children in Ontario didn't just fall into poverty on January 23, federal election day. They've been in poverty for three years under your government.

But if you want to talk about child care, I want to ask you about this. Dalton McGuinty promised \$300 million of new provincial funding to create 330,000 new child care spaces. Now, three years into the McGuinty government, no one has seen the \$300 million of new provincial funding; no one has been able to find it. I understand that you're very good at blaming someone else, but you're in your third year of government now. My question is simply this: When are we going to see the \$300 million in new provincial child care funding from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: This is not about the blame; we're prepared to take responsibility. For the first time ever, a housing program that benefits low-income Ontarians for better housing; you failed to do that when you were the government. In addition to that, a labour market agreement that helps people who lose employment that affects their children finally has funding for proper training programs. For the first time, a 3% increase in homeless shelters. For the first time, we finally saw funding go directly to kids and children's breakfast programs, something that you just talked about, even when you were in government. And I will remind you that when you were in government and you hit 1993—we remember it well—

you didn't, not for one moment, stop to see what you were cutting. You cut across the board in your social contract, including every single program for children that Ontario had. That's your record. I'll stack this record up against yours any day of the week.

1440

Mr. Hampton: It is astounding that virtually every day we hear the McGuinty government stand up and boast about how well Ontario's economy is doing, about how much money there is, and yet, what do we see? We see the McGuinty government clawing back \$1,500 a year from the poorest kids in the province. We see the McGuinty government that's failed to put the \$300 million into child care that you promised. We see the McGuinty government fail to increase social assistance benefits and ODSP benefits to match the rise in the cost of living—again, something that you promised.

I simply say, stop playing the blame game. One day you're blaming the federal government; one day you're blaming a former government; one day you're blaming something that may have happened in the 1980s or 1990s. You say the economy is good. Well, then, where's the money for the poorest children? Where's the child care money that you promised?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I am amazed that this leader wants to talk about child care. Your federal cousins brought down the government that had funded the best program for children the nation has ever seen. That program is called Best Start. Your friends, supposedly the ones who care about children, did that. That's your kind of record for the NDP.

I know that it means that when families are working, families are doing better. It's hard to square. The fact is, over 200,000 people are working in Ontario today that weren't before we became the government. That means more support for families when families are working. That's the kind of economic plan we've brought to the table.

It is true, there are fewer children on welfare today than before we became the government, but we have more work to do. We work every day to do more for children. We will continue to do more for children. Along with my colleague in the ministry for children, we are doing work through children's aid—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: I think the members of the McGuinty government would be wise to recognize that it was the voters of Canada who gave Paul Martin the boot.

Again, the issue is poor children in Ontario. The issue is the lowest-income children in Ontario and your failure to keep your promises to do anything to help them. So I wonder what the priority of the McGuinty government is. But I see what the priority is. Tonight, the Premier is hosting an \$8,000-a-table fundraiser for the Ontario Liberal Party. I say to the minister, \$8,000 would put a lot of clothes on a lot of poor children. It would help pay the rent. It would put food on the table. It would do a lot of good things. Poor children need help now. They don't need more broken promises—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Let me say again that your federal cousins of the NDP are the ones who took that government down and forced that election. The result of that is a Conservative bunch up in Ottawa who think it's okay to rip up child care agreements that this province made with our colleague government in Ottawa. We didn't make that deal with a political party; we made that deal with the government, and I say they stand by their word in that agreement.

We need that money because it is linked to our Best Start. That Best Start program is the best program in the nation to get kids off to a great start, and it means over \$1 billion lost to Ontario. Can that party really stand up and be proud of their record in what they've brought forward to Parliament?

Here's our record: an immediate increase to welfare and ODSP; an immediate increase to homeless shelters, which do affect families; 200,000 more people who are working who weren't working before we started. That means real wealth—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Finance: The minister may very well know that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce president, Len Crispino, said in a statement this week, “It is time to eliminate the provincial deficit and to improve our economic growth.” He went on to say, “Urgent action is needed in the 2006 provincial budget to restore Ontario to firm economic footing.”

We looked at the books that you have produced and see that you had a record 13% increase in revenue last year, and we suspect that you're going to be clawing in a lot of revenue just like that with your budget this year from hard-pressed working families and businesses. Minister, please tell me that you're going to take Mr. Crispino's advice and, with these big increases in Liberal revenue, you're going to produce a balanced budget come the end of March.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Upon assuming office, the Provincial Auditor confirmed that the previous government not only didn't balance their budget, they left a \$5.5-billion deficit. Spending year over year in the last four years of their government: 6%, 7%, 8% and 8%. A rapid rise in expenditure, but was it for health care? No. Was it for education? No. It was for tax cuts for the rich.

The people of Ontario rejected that party. They rejected their legacy of an increased debt to this province, the largest increase in the province's debt since our friends in the little red rump over there; a very large increase in the debt.

We laid out a plan in our first budget. Minister Sorbara laid out a plan that we are achieving. The deficit has gone from \$5.5 billion to \$2.4 billion, and if we don't need the reserve this year it will be—

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

Mr. Hudak: I'm as likely to believe what he just said as I am to believe the Minister of Transportation in a sworn affidavit.

The minister full well knows, your own books show, that your revenue grab last year was a massive 13% increase. The minister very well knows that the average programming spending increase under this government has been 8% a year.

The minister likes to say that what's up is up; what's down is down. I'll tell you what's up. Out-migration, people leaving the province of Ontario, is up. Taxes on working families are up. Taxes on businesses are up. Hydro rates are way up. Bankruptcies in Ontario are up. Personal bankruptcies in Ontario are up. Hydro costs I've mentioned. Manufacturing job losses are way up there. The only things getting down are working families and small businesses trying to make ends meet. Minister, surely you're going to balance the books and start giving a break to hard-pressed taxpayers with your upcoming budget.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I am proud to say that revenues are up. Revenues are up because more people are working. Revenues are up because profits in our businesses are up. Revenues are up because unemployment is down. And to answer the member very clearly and unequivocally, we are investing in health care, we are investing in education. What that means is better hospitals. It means better schools. We reject your tax cut. We reject your taking your \$2.5 billion out of health care.

Yes, revenues are up because the economy has performed well. Profits are up and employment is up. Everything that should be up is up; everything that should be down is down. And we're going to keep them down and out for as long as we can.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I can wait. There are members who wish to ask questions.

New question?

1450

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Before your election, you promised to tie ODSP rates to the real cost of living, but you broke that promise. Tiny changes have been made, definitely, for the small percentage of recipients who can work—if they're lucky enough to beat the odds and actually find a job—but the vast majority of people who depend on ODSP for income cannot work. They have been forced to live well below the poverty line for far too many years. You promised to change that. When will you increase rates by 3% each and every year like you promised, and when will you

include a shelter allowance that reflects real rental charges?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): What we did do, I'll say to this member, is that we said we would increase social assistance by the cost of living. In 2003, that would have been an increase of 1.9%. What we did instead in our first budget was increase social assistance by 3%.

What we have also done is look at the system itself. I will tell you that there are significant barriers in our welfare system that need to be torn down, and we have spent the lion's share of our time working on the actual barriers to employment. I hope that this member opposite understands that items like increasing the employment start-up benefit to \$500 when people find a job, because of the kinds of incidental costs there always are, is a good thing. I hope she'll also see that extending the health benefit card for people that need to make that leap into the workforce—that she could admit today that that's a good thing. We have far exceeded what we said we were going to do, but we have far more work to do.

Ms. Horwath: I was speaking about the basic rate that ODSP recipients get in the province of Ontario. It would be interesting for this minister to realize that they've barely had a raise at all in the last 11 years. In fact, they have less money today in real terms than they did in 1995. Since 2003, in real terms, people living with disabilities have seen their support decrease by nearly 3% since you came into office. Single people on ODSP still get about \$950 a month, not to mention your clawback of the baby bonus for families. That's what they got in 1995. Minister, when are you going to keep your promise and increase the basic rates for ODSP for people with disabilities in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I hope the member opposite is always prepared to acknowledge when the government is doing very good things to improve the system. We had an announcement about a month ago now that talked about significant changes to the Ontario disability support program. There are many, many people on our rolls who want to be working and need support in order to work. It is the largest change that we have made since we took office, which is, for example, having people who are on disability maintain their drug card if they're able to find work. Currently, we only have 9% of the people on Ontario disability who are having any earnings at all. That's not enough, because we know there are people who can work, but our system is one that sets up barriers. So thanks to the excellent work of our parliamentary assistant Deb Matthews, and now our parliamentary assistant Ernie Parsons, we rolled up our sleeves and said, "We've got to look at the nuts and bolts of our program and get rid of barriers." That's what we're doing, and the people are telling us that we are doing well. We are taking down barriers, because if people—

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

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, there's a very important bill before the House that's going to help children who need help the most. If Bill 210 becomes law in this province, thousands of children who need protection will be better off than they are now. They would have a much better chance of finding permanent, stable and loving homes.

Shamefully, John Tory and his caucus are holding this bill hostage, even though they agree with the bill and have committed to passing it. By doing so, they're holding our children hostage, our most vulnerable children, who need our help the most. Minister, can you explain how Bill 210 would help our children who need protection to find a permanent, stable and loving home?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The member for Leeds–Grenville and the member for Erie–Lincoln will come to order. The member for Erie–Lincoln will come to order. I am going to need to name the member for Erie–Lincoln. I will name Mr. Hudak, the member for Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: Response.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm happy to have the opportunity to respond to my colleague the member from Mississauga East, who very obviously puts the interests of our vulnerable children way ahead of the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Erie–Lincoln. Shame on you. Shame on you. You should be ashamed of yourselves. You are in this House chasing ghosts when there are vulnerable children out there who need your support. You would prefer to chase ghosts, chasing the Minister of Transportation when there are vulnerable children out there who need permanent, caring homes.

Let me tell you what the member from Leeds–Grenville said just two evenings ago. He said, "When it comes to a vote the Progressive Conservative opposition will be"—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Order. Supplementary.

Mr. Fonseca: It's clear that this bill works for children who need our help most. John Tory and his Conservative caucus are turning their backs, as we saw, on our children yet again—

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Keep the clock—sorry. Yes, with a point of order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's traditional in this place that a member be referred to by their riding, not their name. I'd ask you to remind this member.

The Speaker: That is a point of order. We do not use proper names in the House. I will remind all members to

use the riding or title of the member who is being referred to.

The member for Mississauga East.

1500

Mr. Fonseca: Yes, it is true. The member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey has turned his back on the children yet again. It's clear that Bill 210 is legislation that works in the best interests of our most vulnerable children, but I know that helping our vulnerable children find permanent homes is not the only way that Bill 210 achieves this. Minister, can you give us another example of how Bill 210 will help to achieve working in the best interests of our children?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: As the member said, Bill 210 is about providing permanent care in supportive homes for children, our most vulnerable children who have experienced very traumatic beginnings to their lives. In addition to that, Bill 210 will provide better supports for parents who are experiencing temporary challenges. It will provide for mediation in problem situations and avoid lengthy, expensive, traumatic court battles.

This bill is about protecting our kids, 9,000 of whom right now are basically children of this province, where we are in fact the parents. I plead, I call for unanimous consent for third reading without further debate so that we can go ahead with looking after the children of this province.

MUNICIPAL JURISDICTION

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In November, Ottawa held a rural summit to improve relations between the rural residents and the urban residents in the city of Ottawa. Many of the recommendations of the rural summit have been adopted by the city of Ottawa in their 2006 budget, and I want to congratulate the city of Ottawa on their efforts.

Your officials were there, Minister, and there were several recommendations dealing with changes that would be necessary to provincial legislation and provincial regulations. Can you report to the Legislature what response you have to those recommendations?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would like to thank the member for the question. We're always looking at ways in which we can improve the relationship between municipalities and the province of Ontario. We're looking at the City of Ottawa Act. I've had a number of conversations with the mayor of Ottawa over the years as to how that can be done, both through the Municipal Act and the City of Ottawa Act. I have not spoken to him specifically with respect to the recommendations that may have come out of the particular meeting that he's talking about, but I would be more than pleased to review that with my officials and get back to the member as to what the government intends to do with respect to those recommendations.

Mr. Sterling: Let me help the minister. One of the recommendations was to allow the municipality of the city of Ottawa to have different licensing structures for the urban and rural areas. Another recommendation was for the province to bring forward legislation and regulation to allow, as necessary, the wetland evaluation system and to provide an appeal process for the method of classification to a wetland.

Mr. Minister, can you promise that you will at least look at these two very important issues for the rural residents of the city of Ottawa?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I can certainly state to the member that we will be looking at that. There was a meeting, I should say, about two or three weeks ago, when a significant number of members of the cabinet met with the leadership from the city of Ottawa. I was not at that meeting at the time; I was out of the country. But I know from talking to my colleagues that it was a very successful meeting. A number of recommendations that came out of that meeting are currently being reviewed by a number of different ministries. Action will accordingly be taken at some time in the future. We will advise the member of that at that time.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday, Michigan moved a step closer to banning the import of foreign garbage. With only 90 days' notice from Michigan and limited local storage capacity for garbage, Toronto and the GTA communities could quickly find themselves in a garbage crisis. The McGuinty government promised a 60% diversion rate of garbage by 2008, yet the current waste diversion rate is only 30%. Can you tell us, Minister, will you table your plan detailing how you intend to get the garbage diversion rate up to 60% by 2008?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I think that in circumstances like this it's often easier to play politics with an issue than to deal with the real facts. It is true that on March 1, the Michigan Senate and the House agreed to pass identical bills. What that means is they harmonized bills. That procedure was not at all unexpected by our government. There is still an important legislative hurdle that needs to be cleared in Washington, and that's enabling legislation.

We have known for quite some time that it is not a long-term solution for this province that municipalities continue to send waste to Michigan. The ministry is monitoring the situation very closely. We're dealing with the progress of the bills in the federal government, we're working closely with our federal counterparts to look at the implications of the US legislation, and we're working very closely with municipalities that currently send their waste to Michigan to determine what their plans are, and to give them the tools they need to manage their waste here in the province.

Mr. Hampton: It was a simple question: Where is the McGuinty government's waste diversion plan? You promised to divert 60% of waste by 2008. Where's that plan? Obviously, nowhere. Where is the McGuinty government on its promise to ban organics in landfills? Nowhere. You promised a program for used tire recycling. Now you burn them at a cement kiln, despite the negative impacts on human health and the environment. Your only waste diversion strategy is to amend the Environmental Assessment Act so you can force new waste dumps on rural Ontario communities.

I'm going to ask the question again. This is a very specific promise Dalton McGuinty made. Where is the McGuinty government on its plan to divert 60% of waste away from dumps? Where is the detailed plan?

Hon. Ms. Broten: We have worked and continue to work very closely with municipalities and industry to increase waste diversion and to facilitate the establishment of disposal capacity within the province for Ontario's residual waste. We continue to work with specific municipalities and municipal organizations such as ROMA and AMO to develop the tools the municipalities need to manage their waste within the province. Key areas that we currently are focusing on and working with those municipalities on are to increase waste diversion, to improve the EA process, to facilitate new technologies and better management of residual waste, and the development of long-term waste plans in this province. Those are the active steps we're taking. We are working shoulder to shoulder with municipalities, which have the primary responsibility to manage waste. We will manage waste within this province, but we won't play politics with this issue.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing Mr. Richard Brennan and saying *au revoir*, good luck, goodbye, and we wish you well.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The time for making statements like that is not during oral questions. It helps to maintain order if we do not do such things as introductions or other comments during oral questions. I have stopped the clock, as you will notice, but I would prefer that not happen in the future.

1510

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I was on the standing committee on social policy that just last week made Bill 210 an even stronger bill that better protects our most vulnerable children. I am shocked that the opposition leader and his Conservative caucus have decided to hold these wonderful children hostage by not passing Bill 210. During the committee hearing, it was clear that the Conservatives support Bill 210. When it's about our children, it is not a bill to play games with.

Our government brought forward amendments to address the concerns of the aboriginal community. I have heard from members of the aboriginal community who tell me that currently vulnerable aboriginal children are often moved off reserve when taken into the care of a children's aid society. They lose the connection to their culture and their community. Minister, our government made 20 amendments to Bill 210 that specifically help to address the needs of aboriginal children and the aboriginal community. Can you explain how these amendments came about?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I want to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for all of his work, and the work of all committee members from all the parties in this House who came to the table in the interests of vulnerable kids.

Specifically, for aboriginal kids, we have spent many, many days and many long hours meeting with leaders on the ground, service delivery partners off reserve and on reserve. Yes, 20 of the 35 amendments that came forward to Bill 210 represent the interests specifically of the aboriginal community. It is so important that this bill move forward. In fact, aboriginal kids are disproportionately represented in Ontario's child protection system, thereby preventing them from enjoying their traditions. So I do not understand why the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party—

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

Mr. Ramal: This is just more of the same: the Tories turning their backs on the children, failing once again to meet their pressing needs.

Our government always talks about the importance of being accountable to the people of Ontario. Through the amendments you made to Bill 210, we also strengthened the accountability of children's aid societies to the children and the families they serve. Minister, can you explain in greater detail how we strengthened our accountability with Bill 210, which is currently before the House, one more thing that the opposition leader and his caucus are saying no to by not passing this bill today?

Interjections.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I hear members of the opposition saying that they're not saying no to passage of this bill. So I move unanimous consent for third reading of Bill 210, without further debate.

The Speaker: That cannot happen during question period. New question?

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. The Michigan state Senate has just unanimously passed legislation that would ban imports of foreign trash. It is yet another step closer to a possible border closure, and yet your government has no plan to deal with this crisis. From October 2004 to September 2005, Ontario's waste

shipment to Michigan increased by 100,000 tonnes. You know that there is only limited capacity for dealing with the garbage we produce, and yet you have done nothing. Your predecessor promised almost three years ago that she was going to fix the EA process in the province. It was supposed to be done in 90 days. We still haven't seen anything. Your amazing plan for dealing with this is non-existent. You cannot rely on the tired old excuse that this is a municipal matter. If the border closes, it's a provincial matter. Where is your plan?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): It is important for Ontarians to understand that our government takes this issue very seriously. We are in constant contact with the legislators in Michigan. My colleague the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs recently met with Governor Grandholm of Michigan, and we work very closely. I've spoken to Ambassador McKenna about this issue. I look forward to speaking to Ambassador Wilson about it.

Dealing with the issues of waste in this province is something that we are currently rolling up our sleeves and working on. We have sited landfills in this province to deal in Ontario with a made-in-Ontario waste solution, which I have to say was something that was very much lacking under the former government. The former government put its head in the sand and did not want to deal with the issues.

We dealt with funding for blue box programs. We've dealt with the composition of organics. We've sited landfills. We're fixing the EA process. The list goes on, and I look forward to talking to you more about it.

Ms. Scott: There is a garbage crisis in Ontario, and just before Christmas John Tory challenged your government to deal with Ontario's garbage crisis and to bring forward a plan before the end of March. He challenged you to—

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: A member of the opposition just momentarily said you shouldn't use a person's first name; you should use the riding. So if we're going to impose that upon the opposition and the government equally, I think that would be fair.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I agree, and it is a point of order. I'm sure the member will take note of that.

Ms. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just before Christmas, our leader from Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey challenged your government to deal with Ontario's garbage crisis and to bring forward a plan before the end of March. He challenged you to bring together municipal leaders, environmentalists, experts and other affected parties on waste management issues to take action and to come up with a solution. Some of these groups, like the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, have already been working to find a solution to this province-wide problem, but they need your help.

Minister, we have seen no evidence of any effort on your part to respond to our leader's challenge and to do

the responsible thing. Will you commit here today to bringing forward a plan to deal with Ontario's garbage by the end of March 2006?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Unlike the member opposite, I believe in finding solutions by rolling up my sleeves and working with those groups—not having a show, not having a summit, not having an extraordinary affair. This is about sitting down with municipalities and working with them to ensure they have the tools that they need to manage waste. We have sat down with municipalities across this province. We're talking to them: "What tools do you need to manage your waste? How do you want to manage waste in your community?"

We've taken a look at AMO's waste strategy. We welcome their ideas and discussion. I've met with Roger Anderson. I've met with NGOs. We are working across this province to develop a made-in-Ontario waste solution so we can have a sustainable solution for our province—increased waste diversion, new technological solutions. All of those issues need to be examined, but we need at the same time to ensure that they're clean, they protect the environment and they don't take away from the 3Rs.

I know what kind of future I want to leave my kids, and it's a clean, green, healthy future in this province. That's what we're working on.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): A question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: On March 7, some 9,100 teachers, counsellors and librarians at Ontario's 24 community colleges could be on strike. The number one issue for these educators is updating the workload formula. They need smaller class sizes, more teachers and more faculty time for students. Negotiations are resuming today, and they continue to March 6. Will you commit to working with college presidents to negotiate a fair deal that improves quality at these colleges?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): As the member will know, it's essential that we encourage the parties who are directly at the table from both management and labour to work this issue through and to negotiate a settlement. They've been speaking for a long time. We encourage them to speak some more.

The government of Ontario has supported students in our college system by investing very heavily through the Reaching Higher plan. That investment, as we've already seen through the interim accountability agreements, has resulted in more faculty in our colleges—and many of these colleges hadn't hired a new full-time faculty member in more than a decade—updated classrooms and additional educational resources; in other words, the very thing we said in the budget we were going to achieve, which was a better student experience, value for every dollar invested. That's our commitment. But I will con-

tinue to encourage the parties to work through a resolution. It is essential to the success of the college system that the parties work out a resolution.

1520

Mr. Marchese: Students, educators and you yourself have emphasized the importance of improving quality. That means, among other things, more faculty and more faculty time for students and with students. We already know that more and more college students get their instruction from overworked part-time instructors. It's time to reverse the trend. College teachers are pleading with you to update the workload formula, to commit to smaller class sizes and more faculty time for students. How will you help them achieve that?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Unlike the legacy left by the member's party or the party that now sits in official opposition, who both took money away from student education, we have invested in students. That investment allows for precisely what the member outlines: more faculty—if you have more faculty, it means you have more contact time between students and faculty—updated classrooms and additional resources. In other words, you invest and you get more. That's what we've been doing. It's precisely what we've been doing. We have been able, through these investments, to achieve the very issues the member outlines.

As far as the labour relations issue is concerned, as the member would know, it is important that the parties at the table be encouraged to recognize how important this issue is and to continue to work hard and obtain a settlement, so that the system can continue long past March 7.

ONTARIO MEDAL FOR GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. During the last couple of weeks, you have done a superb job of recognizing outstanding Ontarians. From my riding of Mississauga West, among our many outstanding citizens you have honoured Marilyn Cochrane with an Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship for her initiative, leadership and determination in finding a cure for cystic fibrosis. Marilyn has dedicated the last 17 years to raising funds for research into this deadly disease. Can you tell the House a little bit more about your plans in the future with regard to recognizing outstanding Ontarians?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I want to thank the member for Mississauga West. The real people who have done the superb job are people like Marilyn Cochrane from your riding. In fact, there are unsung heroes in all of our ridings across Ontario. If you have been fortunate enough to see them in action, they are amazing Ontario heroes.

The following people won the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship: Luigi Battochio from Schumacher, Gordon Buck of Ohsweken, Norman L. Clements from Uxbridge, Marilyn Cochrane, Linda Cupido from Bur-

lington, Hosain Danishwar from Toronto—these are people who are quietly raising money or helping raise awareness for a disease like cystic fibrosis, and we give them this medal to say thank you on behalf of the people of Ontario. They are very grateful and most appreciative. This, hopefully, will encourage them to do more good work in the future.

Mr. Delaney: Minister, would you clarify comments made by the member from Burlington last week? He suggested that his office was not advised in advance that the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship ceremony was taking place and that you may have put the blame on the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. Could you please clarify that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: These award ceremonies are put together by the Ontario honours and awards secretariat. They do an excellent job. Those of you who were at the tsunami awards witnessed that. They really go out of their way to help recognize these people.

It's unfortunate that the member from Burlington said he didn't receive notification, but we've checked and he did. Anyway, that's not the point. The point is that if a member doesn't get notified or there is some miscommunication, I'll take responsibility. The main thing is, please participate in these events. There's going to be a new series of events coming up in April. The calendar has been changed. They used to have the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards in the fall. This year they'll be coming into your communities in April. They will recognize, I think, 8,000 great Ontarians, so please attend. Be part of this great event that says thank you to these unsung heroes in all of our communities.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. I want to question you about your involvement with the Chalmers company. You've continually been saying that you had no involvement with the company. The Integrity Commissioner's report says:

“Q: Before you were elected, what involvement on a day-to-day operational basis did you have with the Chalmers companies?”

“A: No day-to-day involvement at all. I've never had day-to-day involvement.”

Yet we now learn that you were receiving \$2,000 per month based on five days' work from minutes of a board meeting. But the minutes reveal that you say you're putting in much more time than that. You say that \$2,000 works out to \$25 per hour.

Minister, this means, in a company that you had no involvement with, that you were actually putting in more than 80 hours a month and, according to the minutes, you wanted to be paid more.

In a letter of May 20, 1994, from the company, a Mr. Boaden writes, “It has been of great concern to me that you are still involved in the day-to-day operation of the company.” Minister, this letter comes from a sworn

affidavit from you. What is the true story? Did you work for the company or not?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): All these issues have been dealt with by the Integrity Commissioner and he has issued a report. I accept that report. The Leader of the Opposition said yesterday that the Integrity Commissioner took seven months to do the report. Now it appears to me that they're not prepared to accept that report.

Mr. Miller: Minister, you keep changing your story. You say you didn't work for the company, yet there's a parking spot with "HT" on it. The company had an Ernst and Young opinion about how much to pay you, whether it be \$250 or \$300 an hour. Your political website brags about your involvement with the company.

I'll go back to the Integrity Commissioner, where he says:

"Q: The material that's on your website refers to the Chalmers Group of Companies and, to put it bluntly, you seem to be claiming credit for awards that you received consequent upon Chalmers being listed as among Canada's top 100 best-management private companies. There is significant reference on both the Liberal website and your website to that effect. There is a bit of a disconnect with that and somebody who had nothing whatever to do with the management of those companies."

What's the truth? Did you work for the company or not?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me repeat—this is the fifth time today—that I agree with the Integrity Commissioner's report. He has dealt with this issue. I know this member has an obsession with this issue, but he should not hold the children of this province hostage because of this issue. They should deal with that issue first; they should deal with Bill 210. That is way more important than this issue is. They should stop this obsession and move on with Bill 210.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the Speaker to put the question on the motion for third reading of Bill 210 immediately, without further debate.

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I haven't even asked yet.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services has asked for unanimous consent for third reading of Bill 210. Agreed? I heard a no.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent of this House to continue the debate with respect to the Integrity Commissioner's recommendations dealing with the Minister of Transportation.

The Speaker: Agreed? I heard a no.

1530

PETITIONS

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition signed by many, many people from my riding and elsewhere. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas senior citizens in the province of Ontario should have full health coverage during their golden years;

"Many seniors are required to pay out of pocket to gain Visudyne treatment for the occult and minimally classic form of AMD in the province of Ontario;

"Others that do not have the financial means are forced to idly sit by until they become legally blind, losing all of their independence, dignity and ability to care for themselves;

"Age-related macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness, making the condition more common than glaucoma;

"Visudyne treatment is fully covered in British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, and the Yukon Territory, regardless of the form of AMD;

"There should be no discrimination between the types of AMD treatment coverage as there is no cure for AMD of any form: classic, occult or minimally classic;

"Many people treated with the occult form with Visudyne therapy are able to lead independent and fulfilling lives;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the senior citizens of Ontario full OHIP coverage for Visudyne treatment of the occult and minimally classic forms of age-related macular degeneration."

I support this petition. I affix my name to it and send it to the table through Amelia.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"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.”

This petition has been signed by many residents of the town of Fort Frances, and I have affixed my signature as well.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to introduce this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

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

“We are requesting that all diabetic supplies, including insulin infusion pumps and the supplies required to maintain them, blood glucose test strips, insulin and syringes, as prescribed by” the medical professions “be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

“Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing diabetes. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have ... disastrous health consequences.

“Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes.

“Every diabetic deserves an equal opportunity in caring for their disease. We think it is in all Ontarians and the government’s best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control.”

COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas in the riding of Etobicoke North, the community of neighbourhoods which include the adjacent subdivisions known locally as Jamestown, Mount Olive, Silverstone and the Kipling Corridor, which correspond closely to Canadian 2001 census tract subdivisions designated as 248.02 and 249.05, and which is bounded by Martin Grove, Mount Olive, Kipling Avenue and the Humber River, has experienced five fatal shootings in the four-month period between August 3 and November 18, 2005; and

“Whereas this same community of neighbourhoods is designated as ‘highly distressed,’ since more than 40% of its residents live below the poverty line (page 33, Poverty by Postal Code, United Way, 2004); and

“Whereas a high proportion of the residents of this community experience many other additive risk factors, which include belonging to a visible minority, speaking a first language other than English, being a new immigrant, possessing poor education, belonging to single-parent families, being unemployed or underemployed, and being susceptible to gang involvement; and

“Whereas this is a disinvested community with very inadequate recreational facilities and with very few existing services for child care and where the status quo offers very little chance of escape from the cycle of poverty and fear and crime; and

“Whereas strong, healthy neighbourhoods are the building blocks of sustainable, competitive cities; and

“Whereas this community is a microcosm of the Canadian mosaic and has the potential to showcase the benefits of Ontario’s diversity and multiculturalism; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has pledged itself to the task of reducing the incidence of violent crime by attacking the underlying causes that erode the social structure of Ontario cities;

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

“To take the lead and work together with the federal government of Canada and the municipality of Toronto to invest in the infrastructure of this high-needs community, by building a community centre with a large swimming pool, with tennis courts, with a large double gymnasium, with adequate space to house daycare facilities for children, with meeting rooms for seniors—a community centre which would be a model of excellence, a centre-piece of renewal for the Jamestown, Mount Olive, Silverstone and Kipling Corridor neighbourhoods; and

“To ensure that funding for suitable programming related to the centre is in place.”

I agree with this petition wholeheartedly and send it via page Matthew from Etobicoke North.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition. It says:

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the \$700,000 cut in funding to the Ontario Library Service (OLS) budget will have a significant impact on the delivery of public library service across the province in areas such as:

“—reductions in the frequency of inter-library loan deliveries;

“—reductions in the SOLS’ consultation services and the elimination of a number of staff positions;

“—the elimination of province-wide research on library and socio-demographic trends that all libraries need for their own planning;

“—the reduction of consortia/charitable purchasing, a service that provides economies-of-scale discounts to libraries on a variety of goods and services;

“—a reduction in the amount of material that is translated for OLS French-language clients;

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

“To restore funding to the Ontario Library Service (OLS) in order to signal support for the Ontario public library system.”

I will sign this petition in support.

DISABILITY BENEFITS

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

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

“People with disabilities are entitled to the full support of their government with respect to income security and the dignity of a job; and

“The Ontario disability support plan does not provide an adequate income to cover the ever-increasing costs of living that people with disabilities face, and those who receive ODSP and find employment are punished with an earnings exemption that is far too low and needs to be increased; and

“An ODSP recipient will have their earnings clawed back by the McGuinty Liberal government if they earn more than just \$160 a month as an individual or only \$235 a month as a family; and

“Employment not only gives people on ODSP the dignity of a job and the pride in making meaningful contributions to their community, it also enables them to augment Ontario’s inadequate disability cheque and keep up with the ever-rising cost of living.

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for an immediate increase to the employment earnings exemption threshold for ODSP recipients so they are able to keep more of what they earn without the government clawing back their disability support.”

I agree with this petition. I’m signing it and sending it down, by way of Yasmeen, to the Clerk’s table.

1540

CHILD CARE

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today 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 will affix my signature to it.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): “Whereas the Minister of Culture recently announced that there would be funding cuts totalling more than \$1.2 million from Ontario public library services; and

“Whereas over 69 million people visited public libraries in Ontario in 2003 with more than 100 million items circulating; and

“Whereas these cuts will impact us as library users, resulting in delays in how libraries receive new books;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Culture to restore the funding for Ontario public library services so that libraries can continue to promote literacy in our communities.”

I have affixed my signature to this.

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): “To the Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas 2,000 people attended a meeting on March 1, 2006, to protest the proposal to expand the Carp landfill site in Ottawa; and

“Whereas there is a high residential development and density near the landfill site; and

“Whereas all the citizens of Stittsville, Goulbourn, Kanata and West Carleton are against this proposal;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows: Do not permit the expansion of the Carp landfill site to take place.”

I sign that with great pleasure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the member from Niagara Falls.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to be recognized; I appreciate it.

My petition reads as follows: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario." It's from my riding of Niagara Falls and also from a number of residents from the riding of St. Catharines, so I'm pleased to introduce this.

"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'm pleased to sign my signature to this petition and have page Michael deliver it.

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

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

"Whereas quality supports are dependent 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."

As I am in complete agreement, I have affixed my signature here.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): I'd like to announce that, pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Waterloo-Wellington has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning the hospital development at Groves Memorial Community Hospital. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 20, 2006, on the amendment to the motion that the Legislative Assembly adopt the report of the Integrity Commissioner dated January 4, 2006, and approve the recommendation contained therein.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm referring to the Votes and Proceedings from March 1, 2006, and of course the Votes and Proceedings confirm the passage of a purported time allocation motion. You are, by virtue of that motion, required to put the question; however, I'm putting to you, sir, that the order recorded in the Orders and Notices paper is out of order, and let me tell you why.

It says, "That, in the case of any division, the members shall be called in once, all divisions taken in succession, and the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes." As you know, sir, you are going to be called upon, as Speaker, by virtue of the purported order, to put an amendment to a vote and to then put the substantive motion, the main motion, to a vote. I put to you that an order which does not permit members to leave this chamber in between those two votes is very much out of order. We know that one cannot simply retire to the area behind the seats. I know that very personally and intimately. I'm not going to use today to test whether I can go up into the visitors' gallery and do that. But I say to you, sir, that this requires either that you not call this order, because it's out of order, or that you modify it appropriately to put it in order.

I would suggest to you that the procedure that might be adopted—the Speaker has control of this—would be the same procedure we use in votes on private members' public business, and that is to have a brief hiatus when the doors are opened so that members can leave or come in. There may be some members who don't want to vote or abstain, because although the rules don't call it "abstention," we are permitted to abstain, remain in our seats. That's an abstention. Others may duly note that. There may be some members who do not wish to vote on the amendment. There may be some members who do not wish to vote on the main motion. I submit to you, they have that right, and that if the Speaker doesn't amend this by his own authority, accordingly we are being denied that right. It's a point of order and, I put to you as well, it's a matter of privilege.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you, member from Niagara Centre. Your point of order is untimely, because the motion was passed yesterday and the time for raising the objection would have been yesterday. However, if there is unanimous consent of the members of this House, we could have a 30-second hiatus between votes so that members could leave if they so wish.

Is there unanimous consent? It's agreed. There is unanimous consent with respect to modifying the order.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 1, 2006, I'm now required to put the question.

On February 5, 2006, Mr. Bradley moved:

"That the Legislative Assembly adopt the report of the Integrity Commissioner dated January 4, 2006, and approve the recommendation contained therein."

On February 20, 2006, Mr. Klees moved that the motion be amended by adding the following thereto: "and that the subject matter of the penalties available under section 34 of the Members' Integrity Act be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly."

We will deal first with the amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr. Klees's amendment carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1551 to 1601.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment to the motion, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.	Yakabuski, John

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Broten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Cordiano, Joseph	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Craiton, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 15; the nays are 60.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion to amend lost.

The doors will now be opened for 30 seconds before taking the vote on the main motion.

We will now deal with the main motion by Mr. Bradley: "That the Legislative Assembly adopt the report of the Integrity Commissioner dated January 4, 2006, and approve the recommendation contained therein."

All those in favour will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 61; the nays are 15.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the main motion carried.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 1, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 210, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to put a few comments on the record this afternoon.

We saw earlier the government contend that this bill is perfect and that it should be just whistled through the

House without any further debate. I am here to tell the government in no uncertain terms, your bill is not perfect. It has been an insult to First Nations across this province in its process. It was an insult to First Nations across this province in terms of your refusal to recognize the legitimate interests, the legitimate concerns, of aboriginal people with respect to their children.

This government's attempt today to whistle this legislation through the House without any further debate shows further contempt by the McGuinty government for the aboriginal people of Ontario and for the seriousness with which aboriginal people came to this Legislature to tell the McGuinty government over and over again that you are not respecting aboriginal legal rights, you are not respecting aboriginal treaty rights, you are not respecting aboriginal constitutional rights—further contempt shown by the McGuinty government today.

I want to be absolutely clear about what transpired over the last year. A year ago, with much fanfare, with much self-congratulation, the McGuinty government said, "The McGuinty government announces a new approach to aboriginal relationships to build stronger aboriginal communities." My, the press releases flew everywhere, and there were photo ops. The McGuinty government couldn't say enough about how they were going to consult with First Nations, how they were going to work with First Nations, how the McGuinty government really cared about aboriginal people, how the McGuinty government was going to pay attention to the issues raised by aboriginal people. That was a year ago, with much fanfare, much self-congratulation, many photo ops.

1610

Then the McGuinty government introduced Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act, and do you know what? The McGuinty government hadn't even talked to aboriginal people, hadn't even talked to the chiefs, hadn't even talked to the leadership of aboriginal organizations in the province. That in itself was bad enough, but when you read some of the things the McGuinty government was proposing in Bill 210—extremely prejudicial to aboriginal families, extremely prejudicial to aboriginal children and extremely destructive of what aboriginal people have been able to do over the last 30 years in terms of actually getting something positive done, in terms of the care and the welfare of aboriginal children—it would have given itself the unilateral authority to in effect either terminate customary care or unilaterally make very radical changes to customary care. What is customary care? Customary care is a kind of child protection, child welfare, that has been designed by aboriginal people with their social and cultural realities in mind. Yet the McGuinty government, after promising to consult and work with aboriginal families, aboriginal leadership, would have given itself the unilateral power to literally say, "Customary care is gone," or "The McGuinty government says that customary care shall mean thus and so, here and now." The arrogance of the McGuinty government, and the contempt the

McGuinty government showed for aboriginal people, and which they tried again here today, earlier this afternoon, to whistle this legislation through without giving anyone the opportunity to speak again, and how contemptuous this legislation has been in respect of aboriginal people; how contemptuous the McGuinty government has been in respect of aboriginal people. I want to put that on the record. I want to be very clear about the contempt this government has shown for aboriginal people in the way it originally proceeded and in the way it tried to proceed here this afternoon.

After the McGuinty government introduced the legislation and after again, with much self-congratulation, photo ops and the flourish of trumpets, pronouncing that it was going to do wonderful things—perhaps for some, but not for aboriginal people—the leadership of aboriginal communities came here to Queen's Park to raise their issues.

Once again, to talk about process, just before Christmas the McGuinty government tried to limit public hearings so that aboriginal communities, aboriginal leadership, would not be able to address this legislation. They tried literally to shut down debate, tried to shut down the committee process so that once again aboriginal people would be shut out. It was only through the protest of aboriginal organizations and, frankly, through the protest of New Democrats here at Queen's Park that aboriginal communities and the aboriginal leadership even got a hearing, even got to attend the public hearings and make their case, but when they finally got that—and I want to read the list, because this reflects the anger, the frustration and the concern of aboriginal communities across the province:

The Anishinaabe Abinoojii Family Services came, Aroland First Nation, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, the Anishinaabeg of Naongashiing, the Anishinabek Nation, the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario, the Aundeck-Omni-Kaning First Nation, Beausoleil First Nation, Chiefs Committee on Child Welfare, Chippewas of Georgina Island, Curve Lake First Nation, Chippewas of Nawas First Nation, Chiefs of Ontario, Children in Limbo Taskforce of the Sparrow Lake Alliance, Chippewas of Nawash, Chiefs of Ontario, Council of Three Fires, Delaware Nation Council, Dokis First Nation, Eabametoong First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River Child and Family Services, Garden River First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Iskatewizaagegan No. 39 Independent First Nation, Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services, London District Chiefs Council, Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Michipicoten First Nation, Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Mnjikaning First Nation, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Nog-da-win-da-min Child and Family Services, Naotamegwaning First Nation, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, Oneida Nation of the Thames, Red Rock Band, Scugog First Nation, Sandpoint First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, Tikinagan Child and Family Services, Temagami First Nation,

Wahgogshig First Nation, Wahnapiatae First Nation, Webequie First Nation, Weech-it-te-win Family Services, Whitefish Lake First Nation, Wabigoon Lake First Nation, Whitefish River First Nation, Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, Zhiibaahaasing First Nation.

All of these aboriginal organizations came forward to condemn the McGuinty government for not living up to their own promise, to work with First Nations, to respect aboriginal treaty and aboriginal rights, to respect aboriginal constitutional rights. They condemn this government for failing to live up to the recent Supreme Court of Canada decisions which establish that provincial governments must consult.

So we're here today not because the McGuinty government came up with great legislation. We're here today because First Nations came here like I've never seen them come here before, to tell the McGuinty government how outrageous their behaviour was, how contemptuous their behaviour was. So the McGuinty government was forced to listen.

The McGuinty government would once again have us believe that everything is wonderful now. Well, I want to read a recent resolution on First Nation child welfare. This is a resolution recently passed by the Association of Chiefs of Ontario:

"Whereas the inherent right to self-government includes jurisdiction in relation to the protection of First Nations children;

"Whereas Bill 210, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act, abrogates the responsibilities of both the federal and provincial governments;

"Whereas the chiefs in assembly, through AOCC resolutions 05/22 and 05/27, opposed and rejected Bill 210 in its entirety and, in particular, a provision that would permit the Ontario government to arbitrarily redefine First Nation customary care practices in the vital area of child welfare;

"Whereas AOCC resolution 05/22 mandated the creation of a Chiefs Committee on Child Welfare to address and advance First Nations authority and jurisdiction in child welfare;

"Whereas AOCC resolution 05/27 directed the development of a separate consultation process to review and provide recommendations on the proposed legislative amendments to the Child and Family Services Act;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the chiefs in assembly, acknowledge the progress made to date by the Chiefs Committee on Child Welfare, the social services coordination unit and the Association of Native Child and Family Service Agencies...;

"Further be it resolved that we acknowledge the minimal amendments to Bill 210 as an interim measure...."

What the chiefs are saying is, while the McGuinty Liberals want to force this legislation through this afternoon, while the McGuinty Liberals want to pretend that everything has been fixed, the chiefs are saying that no, it hasn't been fixed. All the McGuinty government has done is put in minimal amendments.

1620

I'm here today to say this: The whole process around this bill was disgraceful. The whole process by the McGuinty government around this bill was disgraceful in terms of aboriginal people, and the only thing that has been done so far is to put forward minimal changes. The onus is on the McGuinty government now to actually live up to the promises you made in terms of working with aboriginal people and respecting the rights of aboriginal people instead of showing the contempt that you showed earlier and that you showed again here today in your attempt to whistle this bill through the House without further debate.

My colleague the member for Niagara, I believe, has some comments that he would like to make, and I think there is an agreement that he and I are sharing the time.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's pretty outrageous that the minister would stand in this House today and somehow suggest that anybody's been delaying anything around here when it's been the intransigence of the Minister of Transportation, Harinder Takhar, that has delayed the passage of a whole lot of bills: Bill 14, Bill 53, Bill 56, just for starters. If there are people out there, if there are folks out there concerned about legislation that didn't weave its way through the legislative process, call the Premier and call Mr. Takhar and find out why his personal interests were put ahead of the public interest, his interest in covering his butt when he got caught with his hands in the cookie jar. He let those interests override broader public interest.

To speak to Bill 210, look, Mr. Hampton has put it very clearly. The bill has been tinkered with, but only marginally so, and there are a whole lot of gaping holes left in this legislation—a whole lot. I find it offensive, and so should folks out there, that somehow the minister would want a bill to be passed without thorough consideration. I'm the last speaker for the New Democrats on this matter, so I'm going to be here for the balance of the day participating in 10 minutes of questions and comments on other speakers.

You heard me before when I applauded the incredibly diligent work of Sheila Volchert from down in Pelham. Ms. Volchert is one of those grandparents raising grandchildren here in the province of Ontario, and Ms. Volchert and others like her have been lobbying successive governments for a number of changes. One of them has been the open adoption regime which is proposed in this bill. Let's not kid ourselves. The open adoption proposal, at the end of the day, is designed to get natural parents to collaborate in the adoption of grandchildren by their grandparents when those natural parents have demonstrated an inability to adequately care for their children. The real issue isn't open adoption. The real issue is the need for clear legislation, critical legislation that directs courts, family courts, family judges in this province to pull parental rights when a parent has put a child in danger over a period of time, when a parent, as a result of drunkenness or drug addiction or other misconduct, inability, misbehaviour—because you know darned well

what happens, Speaker, and other folks here have had the experience too. Kids get put into foster care with good foster homes and then the parent comes back and says, "I'm ready now to take care of my kid again." The kids get pulled out of the foster homes. The parent screws up again, falls off the wagon, gets back on the booze, gets back on the crack cocaine, gets back on to the streets. Children's aid moves and puts the kids in another foster home, with good foster parents, foster parents who develop a bond with those children—or with grandparents, and grandparents have been frustrated for far too long in getting fast-tracked in terms of having custody of their grandchildren, when those are loving, caring grandparents, the natural family of that child, who should be the first choice as custodial parents.

So while we support open adoption, let's call it what it is and see it for what it is. It's a mere surrogate for the implementation of effective legislation that will give judges the authority, the power, to pull parental rights promptly when you've got a drug-addicted or alcoholic or abusive parent who is going to cause that kid to ping-pong back and forth.

I also told you that I have serious concerns about the manner in which the government incorporates mediation into disputes around child protection. You've heard me say before, and I'm going to say it again, that it was Professor Fiss—and I quote him—who talks about alternative dispute resolution in the context of certain types of litigation. He says, "It should be treated instead as a highly problematic technique for streamlining dockets." My fear is that the mediation proposed in this legislation has as its primary goal the relief of pressure on our family courts that have dockets as long as your arm and family court judges and court staff who are working 10-, 11-, 12-hour days and being forced to make decisions in a sausage-factory manner.

I don't know whether or not this bill is going to finish debate today. But I find it offensive for there to be some sort of arrogant proposition by government members that somehow a bill shouldn't get debate because that particular minister wants it passed then, there and now. There is a process here. I expect government members to stand up with their analysis of this bill and explain why they think it's ready for passage. I similarly expect other opposition members, because it's their job, to stand up with their analysis of this bill and explain why they continue to have concerns about it. You don't get a whole lot of kicks at the can around here. This is not going to be re-addressed real soon.

We appreciate that Andrea Horwath worked as hard as anybody could, with great skill and professionalism, in the committee hearings and presented a number of amendments, one of them being oversight by the Ombudsman. Why would the government vote down oversight by the Ombudsman? What are they afraid of? That is so fundamental.

I say, should there be any mention of this bill not having been called earlier, let the government House leader explain why he didn't call it, and let Mr. Takhar

explain why his stubbornness, his selfishness, his pure self-interest prevented not only this bill but a number of pieces of legislation from having the debate they deserved during the course of this three-week session.

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

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): This is a bill that provides for permanency planning for children in the care of children's aid societies, provides for accountability and recognizes the unique needs of our First Nations children. But this is a bill not for this government, not for this party; this is a bill for the children of Ontario. The children of Ontario we're talking about are, by and large, in foster homes, and they're in good foster homes. But for a number of reasons they're not going to remain there for their life, or their foster parents and foster families have to quit fostering. I want to tell you about the effect on these children of living in limbo in a foster home.

They have already been physically removed from their birth parents, and rightfully so. But now they face the trauma every day of, when a car comes in, is that car coming to get them and move them? They have difficulty sleeping. They have difficulty doing well in school because they're in limbo. If you left here, not knowing where you are going to live tonight, you would understand that.

For each move they leave their school, they leave their friends and they lose friendships they've built. They're already traumatized while they try to make new friends. What you may not have thought of is that they lose the pets they've established a bond with in the foster home. They view the foster parents' relatives as their relatives, and suddenly that's all taken away. That is a feeling of rejection for them. Even if they've done nothing wrong, they feel rejected when they have to move again.

What foster children in this province need is a sense of permanence, a sense of being part of a family, of having some worth. This bill provides for that to happen, whether it be faster through adoptive parents, kinship or friends or perhaps even permanency in the foster home.

I beg and plead to the opposition: Do not play games. This is a bill that would profoundly improve the quality of life for our children

1630

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): The opposition parties are not playing games in this Legislature when they do their job, which is to debate legislation and come forward with ideas that may have been brought to our attention. This afternoon, we're debating an important issue. I don't think anyone would doubt the sincerity of the Minister of Children and Youth Services in bringing forward Bill 210. For my part, as a member of the Legislature who was able to participate for a few days during the public hearings and the clause-by-clause discussion of the bill, I would say that it's one I support in principle and I'm hopeful it will pass into law.

It was unfortunate that the government used two of their staged questions during question period this after-

noon to ask questions of the Minister of Children and Youth Services in an attempt to suggest it's the opposition's fault that this bill may not pass today. Let's face it, the government House leader can call a bill that's before the House at any time. To heap scorn and blame on the opposition when the Legislature is sitting for three weeks and this winter session is coming to a close—we're getting to a point where we're getting down to brass tacks. There's still an opportunity if the House leaders want to meet to discuss the issues that apparently have created this impasse, but certainly the opposition parties have good reason to express concern about the way the Integrity Commissioner's report was handled and the way the government seems to be attempting to sweep under the carpet the condemnation of this Minister of Transportation that was represented in the Integrity Commissioner's report and to hope that it will go away.

But it's not going to go away and it can't go away. The opposition parties have an absolute responsibility to continue to raise this issue. We've no choice, because this is the first time in the history of the province that the Integrity Commissioner has written a report such as he did, condemning a minister, and the Premier of the day is refusing to admit that his minister has been condemned by the Integrity Commissioner. He is refusing to act upon it in the appropriate way, which is to ask the minister to step aside and appoint a new Minister of Transportation so that the integrity of this place is upheld.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I think the member from Prince Edward–Hastings should be a bit careful with his remarks. The remarks around the issue of playing games are hurtful, if not dismissive, of the comments that people have made here. You've heard—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Perhaps you didn't mean it; I'm not quite sure. Or other members maybe don't mean it; I'm not quite sure.

But you've heard the member from Kenora–Rainy River speak passionately about the issue of aboriginal people. He's not playing games when he says aboriginal people were not informed and were not aware that this bill was before this Legislature and was about to go to hearings. They didn't know that hearings were going on and they didn't know that their lives, as it relates to the care of their children, were on the line. That's not playing games. That speaks to the issue the member from Kenora–Rainy River says is a key and important part of aboriginal people.

We thought you believed in those matters. We felt you believed that aboriginal people ought to be consulted, that you should not be abrogating your responsibility as it relates to aboriginal treaty rights, that even if the civil servants forgot, you would, as politicians, make certain they would be actively engaged and consulted before the bill was drafted so as to make sure their issues were taken care of, and not have my friend from Hamilton East have to bring forth amendments to make sure their rights were restored as it relates to children of aboriginal families. We had to bring amendments. The government should

have taken the care to have the appropriate language that addresses their issues. How can you say we're playing games with the issue? That's only one issue, as it relates to process and as it relates to aboriginal families and their children—one issue amongst many.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I really feel compelled to say something today. I sat through many meetings with aboriginal leaders prior to the hearings, and if you listen to the members from the NDP, you'd believe they were the only ones who put forward amendments that would respect what the aboriginal leaders told us. I don't find that to be an accurate portrayal. We worked really hard with the NDP to put amendments in that were very similar. We allowed the NDP amendments to go forward. We have absolutely listened to the aboriginal leaders. We've tried to make this the best bill.

I feel absolutely confident that this is the type of legislation that aboriginal leaders and chiefs would want us to do. They asked for these specific amendments. We absolutely delivered. We're here with a good bill, one that is going to protect children for the foreseeable future. The last bill had unintended consequences. It had legislation in it that hurt children. We listened to what we heard at those hearings. We had young people come towards us. We had grandparents come forward and ask us to make changes that would affect their lives in the future. We listened to them. There are amendments here, and we struck out whole sections of the bill in order to meet what aboriginal leaders and chiefs told us would make a difference to their children. So if you hear today that we didn't listen, that is not the case; we absolutely did listen, and we put in legislation that we heard was necessary to respect the aboriginal community.

This is a good piece of legislation. Nothing could be further from the truth than that we didn't listen. We spent considerable days. In fact, we doubled the time that we could hear witnesses before our committee in order to accommodate what the aboriginal leaders said were tight time constraints. We listened. We heard them. There is nothing more important than our children. We have to make a decision. This affects people's families and lives. This government has brought forward a good piece of legislation. We should vote on it.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response. The Chair recognizes the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: I want to comment and respond especially to the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, who suggests that if an opposition member dares bring up the fact that this legislation was grossly unfair and contemptuous of First Nations, somehow an opposition member is playing politics. There's only one organization that played politics with this bill today. The McGuinty government tried to play politics with it.

I want to respond, of course, to the member from Brampton Centre. I remember saying to the Premier, "Look, you've got major problems with this bill. It is contemptuous of First Nations. It is prejudicial to First Nations. Will you, instead of trying to force it through, withdraw it, hold it back, allow for a consultation with

First Nations?" Do you know what the response of Premier McGuinty was? "No. This bill is perfect."

The only reason this bill was amended was because First Nations had to come here to Queen's Park and tell you holier-than-thou members of the McGuinty government that you were not observing their constitutional rights, their treaty rights, their aboriginal rights, nor were you living up to the promises you made to aboriginal people. They had to come here en masse and tell you that because you were so holier-than-thou, you weren't going to listen.

So I say again that the only people who have played politics with this legislation are members of the McGuinty government, members of the McGuinty government who were so arrogant that they wouldn't listen to First Nations—who were so arrogant that even when they came here, you tried to shilly-shally around and avoid their legitimate issues. And still today you're playing politics with it, and you suggest that when somebody raises legitimate First Nations issues, they're playing politics. You are just as disgraceful today, sir.

1640

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I appreciate the opportunity to participate.

Mr. Hampton: Disgusting; worse than disgusting: arrogance from the beginning and continuing today.

The Acting Speaker: Will the leader of the third party allow the member from Leeds–Grenville to debate this bill?

The Chair recognizes the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: I understand and share the anger of the leader of the third party with respect to what we saw in this House today. The House leader for the third party, Mr. Kormos, is here as well. I'm the House leader for the official opposition. What we saw today was, I think, a disgraceful show with respect to this bill, Bill 210.

Our party is supportive of the legislation. Over the past several weeks we have offered, as a party, encouragement to the government to call the bill, that we were prepared to support it, to see it passed. Instead, they did not do that. They left it until the end, when they knew our frustration and dissatisfaction with respect to the way they've dealt with the Takhar matter was boiling over. And then we see a disgraceful performance in this House today, misusing government backbench questions, and then the minister herself: a terribly embarrassing and shameful performance on her part, trying to blame the opposition for the fact that this bill has been delayed.

The reality is that there was a list of objectives that the government had when we first sat down as House leaders. We tried to work in a co-operative fashion; we're talking about three people who are veterans of this place, who don't like to play games. We have to do our job as members of the opposition in a responsible way, to make sure that the concerns of the public and organizations and groups are heard and expressed and, in some cases,

conveyed through amendments etc. That's the role that we, Her Majesty's loyal opposition, have to play. But we're not here to be obstructionist; we're here to do the good job that we were elected to do as opposition members. I think that's the way both the House leader for the third party and myself have approached this, and I believe that the House leader for the government has approached it in that manner.

They came with a list. We felt that much of that list could be accomplished in this brief three-week sitting, and that's the way we approached it. But if you take a look at what has happened, at what has caused the situation we're in today, where we cannot proceed with third reading of Bill 210 in terms of finalization, we wouldn't have been in this box if Mr. Takhar had done the right thing when the Integrity Commissioner tabled his report in this Legislature and had stepped down. An unprecedented rebuke of a cabinet minister—in the history of this province, unprecedented—but he had the gall not only to stay in that job but to stay here today and vote on his own report. He had the unmitigated gall to stay in here, smile through all of this, with no appreciation or recognition of the history behind this, the fact that he's the first minister ever to be reprimanded by the Integrity Commissioner for egregious and careless conduct.

The other party who's responsible here is Premier McGuinty. If he had respected the standards that he set for cabinet integrity when he was sitting over here as the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Takhar would not be in that job. We would not have been engaged in this debate. We could have worked productively to accomplish what was realistically accomplishable. But that didn't happen. Mr. Takhar didn't do the right thing. The Premier ignored his own standards, and has really, virtually—there are no standards anymore, as far as we're concerned, with respect to the ability to stay in cabinet.

That outlines why we are so frustrated, why we are so upset, and why Bill 210 is not proceeding. It's not the responsibility of the government or the opposition; it's the responsibility of Mr. Takhar, it's the responsibility of the government and it's the responsibility of all those people who played these shameless, shameless games with all of us here today.

On that note, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Leeds–Grenville has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1645 to 1715.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise.

All those opposed, please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 5; the nays are 38.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

To continue the debate, the Chair recognizes the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity once again to participate in the debate around Bill 210, legislation which the Progressive Conservative Party is supportive of, and we've indicated that on a number of occasions now.

There were concerns surrounding the legislation, and certainly you've heard some today from the leader of the third party, but the member for York North, Ms. Munro, who's our critic in this portfolio, has also expressed a number of reservations about the long-term implications of the legislation and whether indeed it will accomplish what it is purported to be drafted to accomplish. I think those concerns are very valid, very legitimate. The member for York North has, through the committee process, suggested that there should be a sunset clause incorporated into the legislation so that at the end of a five-year period, the impacts could be measured to see whether indeed it was accomplishing the goals that it set out to achieve or that the government set out to achieve, or whether it was creating serious problems. I know some of our members in the Progressive Conservative caucus have had some concerns as well about the implications, and what they believe are very serious implications.

In this caucus, the Progressive Conservative caucus, we're supportive of seeing this legislation receive third reading in this three-week sitting of the House. In fact, we indicated very early on, at the start of this process, this three-week sitting, that we were quite prepared to see the bill passed. For a variety of reasons, that hasn't happened. The government chose, for whatever reasons, not to pursue it on the basis of our advice, and we now find ourselves in a situation where, because of their failure to deal in an appropriate way with the Integrity Commissioner's recommendations related to Minister Takhar, we cannot allow this bill to pass at this point in time.

It's regrettable, but what is even more regrettable are the tactics that have been adopted by the members of the government with respect to this issue to try and blackmail us. I think that's an appropriate description of the approach they've taken today: efforts to intimidate us and suggest that we are somehow delaying this. In fact, the reality is that we could have dealt with a whole range of legislation, let alone Bill 210, if Minister Takhar had done the appropriate thing and stepped down in the wake of that report, an unprecedented report, an unprecedented condemnation in the history of this province of a minister of the crown by the Integrity Commissioner. But instead, he chose to sit tight, put his head down and go through this process—

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 23(b), the topic under discussion is Bill 210 and not the Integrity Commissioner's report.

The Acting Speaker: That's noted, and I would tell the member from Leeds–Grenville that we are discussing Bill 210.

Mr. Runciman: Mr. Speaker, I felt I was referencing Bill 210, explaining why the bill is not going to get third reading before we break.

The responsibility lies with the government. That's what we are talking about, Bill 210 and why it's not proceeding this evening past third reading, not because we don't agree with the legislation; we do. We support the legislation.

The reality is that Minister Takhar's lack of response to the Integrity Commissioner's report and the Premier's failure to meet the ethical standards he set as the Leader of the Opposition—in terms of standards for staying in cabinet, he has lowered the bar to the floor to allow this individual to remain in cabinet. That's why we are here this evening. That's why we are not in a position to proceed with Bill 210. As regrettable as that may be, the total responsibility for that lies at the feet of the Liberal government of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I move—

Mr. Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the member for Mississauga West.

Mr. Delaney: Mr. Speaker, the same point of order: Pursuant to standing order 23(b), the member for Leeds–Grenville is again addressing a matter already dealt with by the House, and not Bill 210, which is the topic under discussion.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Runciman: I move adjournment of the House, Mr. Speaker.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1723 to 1753.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise.

All those opposed, please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 3; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Further debate?

Mr. Arnott: I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this important debate on Bill 210 for a few moments. I realize that in about three minutes the House will adjourn and this special winter sitting of the Ontario Legislature will conclude. I'm disappointed that, unfortunately, there was an unwillingness on the part of the government to accept the points that were being made in a united way by the opposition parties on the issue of the Integrity Commissioner and his report to the Legislature—the government's absolute unwillingness to accept the recommendation that was made by the Integrity Commissioner, the censure of the Minister of Transportation that was included in that report and the government's unwillingness to respond in the appropriate way, which would have been, of course, to seek the resignation

of the Minister of Transportation. So we are talking today about the lack of ethical standards that the government is demonstrating. As a result of that, unfortunately, Bill 210 is not going to be brought to a vote this afternoon.

Of course, it was very disappointing this afternoon during question period when a couple of the government members, who had an opportunity to bring forward important issues on behalf of their constituents, instead chose to try to cast aspersions on the opposition and to heap scorn and blame on the opposition parties when in fact every member of this Legislature knows full well that it's the responsibility of the government House leader to call legislation for debate. Certainly, the government House leader over the last three weeks has had ample opportunity to call this. It's our understanding from the report we've received from our House leader that he indicated some time ago that we were willing to pass this legislation, but unfortunately, the bill was not called for third reading debate until recently and was left till the very end.

It's most unfortunate that this bill, which I think most of the members of this House, if not all of us, in the end will support, is not going to pass. It's most unfortunate that the House leaders, when given a couple of opportunities over the course of the afternoon, were unable to come to an agreement. It's most unfortunate that the government is unwilling to—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

GROVES MEMORIAL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The member for Waterloo–Wellington has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Health. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I can't begin my presentation this evening by saying that I'm glad to have this chance to speak in this House, because I would have preferred to have received a reasonable answer to my question yesterday to the Premier, which in the end was answered by the Minister of Health. If a reasonable answer would have been forthcoming, we would not be here right now winding up this special winter sitting of the Ontario Legislature, as the last order of business, talking about the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus.

As you know, the standing orders of the Legislature provide opposition MPPs with an opportunity to register their dissatisfaction with an answer given in question period by requesting what we call a late show. A late

show is a brief debate of up to 10 minutes where the issue can be discussed again in a fulsome way outside of the heated environment of question period.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, in the past, I have rarely asked for late shows, and I do not request them lightly. But yesterday, I once again raised a very serious issue, that being the need for the redevelopment of the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus. In response, the Minister of Health was absolutely dismissive of the concern which exists in Waterloo–Wellington, the fact that we've been waiting now for two years for approval from the Ministry of Health to move forward to the next stage of planning.

In my question, I asked the Premier why it has taken his government two years to grant us permission to move forward to proceed with this needed hospital redevelopment planning. I put the question to the Premier because, on Tuesday of this week, I raised the issue with him in a private conversation. I hand-delivered to him a letter asking for his personal intervention to direct the Minister of Health to give the necessary approval to our hospital. I approached him because I've been raising this issue with the minister for two years, and my patience, quite frankly, has worn out. The Premier appeared to be genuinely interested in this issue, and I know that he's familiar with our area.

Having said that, I was somewhat disappointed when the Premier referred the question back to the Minister of Health. Here's what the Minister of Health said in response to a serious health care question affecting my constituents in Waterloo–Wellington. I quote from Hansard:

"If the honourable member speaks to the person to his left, Mr. Garfield Dunlop, he will find out about a hospital project ... being completed and about a new MRI. If he speaks to the gentleman in front of him, he'll hear about a new project in Almonte. If he goes one to the left, he'll hear about a project in Richmond Hill. If he goes forward and two to the left, he'll hear of a project in Kitchener. If he goes two to his left, he'll hear about a project in Newmarket. If he goes one back and to his left, he'll hear about progress in Cambridge. If he goes over to the member from Oshawa, he'll hear about the new regional cancer centre that's coming to life. If he goes to talk to the member for Renfrew, he'll hear about the project in Arnprior."

1800

Mr. Speaker, while I'm incapable of recapturing the histrionic manner in which the minister conveyed that answer to the House, I think you'll agree that nothing in it conveyed any reference to my constituents in Waterloo–Wellington. It was simply a partisan rant.

Any description of the hospital where I was born almost 43 years ago and where our three sons were born best begins with the hospital's vision statement: "Our vision at Groves Memorial Community Hospital is to be a leader in the provision of excellent, compassionate, rural health care."

Caring, accountability, respect, excellence and integrity are the values which animate the highest-quality

health care that the staff at Groves deliver each and every day of the year. In fact, if you ask my constituents in Centre Wellington to rate the quality of health care in our province, they will say it is very good to excellent because of our hospital.

When the staff at Groves determined that it was time to begin planning for a redeveloped hospital to meet the future health care needs of our growing community, our foundation and many volunteers went to work raising the funds needed to pay for our share of the project. Close to \$15 million was raised in a short period of time. Such is the support our community demonstrated for the hospital and for the project: digging deep to plan for the future.

The Groves Memorial Community Hospital is a 103-year-old hospital in a facility that has 53-year-old, 43-year-old and 28-year-old wings. The redevelopment project would mean major renovations and modest new construction to bring the facility up to current standards, enhance existing services, and position the hospital to accommodate the future needs of the growing and aging population in our catchment area, which reaches beyond the boundaries of Centre Wellington. Our redeveloped hospital will also help us to build on our successful health professional recruitment and retention initiatives.

I've served in the Legislature for a long time, and I expect the government knows that if there's a problem in my riding, I will continue to raise it persistently and repeatedly until it's resolved to the satisfaction of my constituents. They deserve no less from their member—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I'm delighted to respond to the member's concerns today on behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The member for Waterloo–Wellington spoke of his dissatisfaction with the response from the minister, but he failed to actually repeat his question for this House, which began with, "I hope there isn't a pattern emerging here whereby ridings held by government members have their hospital development approvals fast-tracked, and communities that are represented by opposition MPPs are at the back of the line."

That is how he began his question, and in response to that, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care rightfully cited a number of projects, in ridings held by members of all parties, that are moving forward. There are projects in Lanark–Carleton, in Kitchener–Waterloo, in Oshawa, in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that are moving forward. These are not government ridings; these are opposition ridings.

As Minister Caplan, our Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, has pointed out on a number of occasions, our government inherited an infrastructure deficit estimated at \$100 billion. We are moving forward with a number of projects to address that deficit. The Ontario Hospital Association estimates that the amount needed for hospitals alone is \$8 billion. Through ReNew Ontario, our government is starting to overturn years of costly neglect of previous governments. While previous governments over-promised and underdelivered, we are

investing \$5 billion in health care infrastructure. The new investment includes funding for 105 hospital projects. This is a very significant commitment.

The previous government was notorious for its rubber cheque presentations, and my community has been the recipient of some of those rubber cheques as well. There's a lovely photo prominently displayed in the North Bay General Hospital of the former Premier, Mike Harris, the member for Nipissing at that time, presenting a rubber cheque to the North Bay General Hospital Foundation and announcing that our hospital was going ahead. The photo is dated, I believe, 1997 or 1998, and there was a completion date of 2006. We don't have shovels in the ground in North Bay yet and we had the Premier as our representative. He was unable to move forward with our hospital project. There are a number of projects that haven't been going forward, and there are a number of frustrated communities. I recognize that. Our project, happily, is moving forward. Our community is delighted to see it moving forward.

However, at the other end of my riding we have the town of Mattawa. Many in this chamber are familiar with the town of Mattawa. Its hospital burned down in 1967. The people of Mattawa have been dealing with a hospital in portables since 1967. For 21 years they had as their representative Mr. Harris, the member for Nipissing and the Premier of the province, and he was unable to provide them with a new hospital. They are still waiting.

I share the frustration of the member from Waterloo–Wellington because I have a community that is also waiting. Unfortunately, the previous government left us with a huge deficit, as well as a huge infrastructure deficit. We as a government are trying to deal with that. The leader of the official opposition has acknowledged that, and I quote: "No government should say the cheque is in anyone's back pocket," said Mr. Tory, the leader of the official opposition during a visit to Cornwall. "That shouldn't be the sort of thing any government member goes around saying before an election."

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member is referring to—

The Acting Speaker: There are no points of order during this part of the proceedings. Thank you.

Ms. Smith: I did refer to him as the leader of the official opposition. He's also the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey.

As well, I would like to note a quote from Mr. Harde-man, who spoke of his community, saying that while he was "not disagreeing that there was not enough money to pay for all the approved projects, Woodstock General Hospital was not one of them"—again, a member of the previous government acknowledging that the commitments that were made by that government were not covered by sufficient funding.

There is much frustration in many communities, but we are doing our best and moving forward in an unprecedented investment in infrastructure across the province and an unprecedented investment in health infrastructure.

To deal specifically with Groves Memorial hospital, we've seen some major investment made in that hospital in the last three years. Over the term of our government we've seen a \$1.7-million increase in operational funding, \$784,000 invested in diagnostic medical equipment, and a more than \$500,000 increase in annual base funding. We've seen \$60,000 in full-time nursing positions.

Our government has invested almost \$3.5 million in new money in Groves Memorial hospital since taking office. To state that we've forgotten that hospital is a

misstatement. We are committed to improving health infrastructure across the province and we are doing so.

The Acting Speaker: I want to thank the member from Waterloo–Wellington and the member from Nipissing.

There being no further matters to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 27, 2006.

The House adjourned at 1808.

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

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

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

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

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