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Thursday 15 June 2006

Jeudi 15 juin 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

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L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 15 June 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 15 juin 2006

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I wish to move the following resolution:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately increase health care funding in Durham region to the provincial average, and, thereafter, develop and implement health care funding in Durham region based upon population growth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Elliott has moved private member's notice of motion number 19. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mrs. Elliott, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mrs. Elliott: The single most important issue that arose during the course of the most recent by-election in Whitby–Ajax, which resulted in my election as the member on March 30, was health care. That was the issue that I heard about time and again as I went door to door speaking to voters to find out the issues that were most important to them.

Specifically, the view that most of the voters in Whitby–Ajax held to was that Durham region generally was not receiving its fair share of health care funding. The evidence has certainly borne out this perception, which I will go into in greater detail in a moment. But I did promise the voters of Whitby–Ajax that if they saw fit to elect me as their member to the provincial Legislature, I would continue to press the government to allow Durham region to receive its fair share of health care funding.

What I would propose with this resolution is that the government restore health care funding in Durham region to at least the provincial level, and then implement a funding model that would recognize the explosive growth in Durham region. I intend to honour this promise, starting with today's resolution.

I would also like to recognize the excellent work done by the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance. As you know, the alliance has spent considerable time and effort in examining health care spending, concentrating on the four regional municipalities that are in the GTA: Peel, Halton, York and Durham. The rate of population growth in these

four regions is more than double the rate of growth for the province of Ontario as a whole. This sustained high rate of growth, combined with a population that is aging faster than the provincial average, raises a significant concern about the ability of our local hospitals to provide access and deliver appropriate care to the residents of our community.

In saying this, I cannot stress enough the contribution made by the physicians and health care professionals in our community and the hospitals in Durham region: the Lakeridge Health Corp. and the Rouge Valley Health System, as well as the Whitby Mental Health Centre. They've shown incredible diligence and devotion in the face of increasingly difficult working conditions. They've been able to manage with very few resources and certainly are to be commended for the excellent work they've done, but this is not sustainable over time as the population growth continues apace. The issue needs to be dealt with by this government, not just as a matter of fairness, but also to fulfill its own mandate. If this government is committed to the success of its Places to Grow policy and strategy, it needs to implement a health care strategy for high-growth regions.

Let's take a look at the facts. The provincial average for per capita hospital funding is \$781 while the Durham region per capita hospital funding number is only \$502, which is a difference of \$279 per capita per year. In terms of the provincial average for total health care funding compared to the Durham region per capita total health care funding, there is an even larger gap. And if that weren't bad enough, the gap is continuing to widen as the population growth continues, so the gap is going to get bigger and bigger over time if something isn't done about this. This fact seems to be virtually ignored by the government in allocating provincial funding for hospitals. I should also note that the alliance regions are now paying \$573 million per year in health care premiums, yet there is no evidence that these amounts are being proportionately reinvested.

These are the raw numbers, but let's consider the ramifications of this chronic underfunding. First of all, the hospitals in Durham region are operating at maximum capacity. Capacity currently stands at 94%, while the provincial average is 77%. This very high occupancy rate, combined with an underfunding of hospital and health care services, will result in several ramifications:

Number one, there is an even greater challenge to our local hospitals to respond to local outbreaks of disease or other emergency situations. This is particularly important in light of present events and events of the recent past,

with a number of suspects being arrested for alleged terrorist activities. This is something that we need to be increasingly mindful of and we need to make sure that our hospitals and health care facilities have the resources they need in order to respond quickly to emergencies of this nature.

The second point is that residents need to wait longer for hospital and other health care services. This government is taking credit for reducing wait times for a number of health care procedures, including cancer surgery, hip and knee replacements and angioplasties, among others, but the fact remains that the wait times in Durham region for all of these procedures are significantly higher than in most of the rest of Ontario.

Number three, Durham region residents, like the residents of the other GTA 905 communities, are the least able to access health care in their own communities. As a result, it means that the residents of our communities need to travel to other communities, thereby placing a strain on the resources of those communities. Again, one of the principal strategies of the Places to Grow formula is the need for people to have local access to quality health care services, and that's certainly not happening in Durham region.

The growth in Durham region and the health of its residents demand a solution. I would urge this government to be responsible and fair to the residents of Durham region. Address the current situation by increasing the level of health care funding in our region to the provincial average and then develop and implement a funding formula that recognizes growth and provides growth funding for hospitals in high-growth areas. Basic fairness requires nothing less.

That would conclude my portion, Mr. Speaker, but I do have a statement that one of my fellow members, the member for Durham, Mr. John O'Toole, has asked me to read, which, with your permission, I will do.

1010

Mr. O'Toole has provided the following statement:

"I would like to offer my full support to ballot item number 43 and the motion introduced by the member for Whitby-Ajax. Unfortunately, Durham region is a victim of a growing funding gap between hospitals in the GTA-905 area and the rest of Ontario. The GTA/905 Health-care Alliance notes that the gap was \$164 per capita below the provincial average in 2005-06. The gap is expected to widen to \$191 below the Ontario average by 2008-09—an increase of 15%.

"The GTA-905 area grows by about 100,000 new residents every year. It is home to more than three million Ontarians. We must ensure that each one of these residents has access to quality care close to home. That is why I would urge the members to support the resolution before us today."

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'm looking expectantly at the NDP, but it falls to us to continue this resolution of Mrs. Elliott.

First of all, let's look at the short history of what has expired. In 1998, a few short years ago, it was the Tory MP for Whitby-Ajax who sat by when the Health Services Restructuring Commission, which was ordered by the Tory government, ordered the Whitby hospital closed. Wow. Here we have the member stating that funds should increase, and rightly so; we recognize that. But at the same time, we should look at a bit of the history to see just how this came about and why there was a shortfall in the first place.

Imagine this, then: The Health Services Restructuring Commission ordered a number of things closed. What was the first one? The Whitby hospital. But guess what? The people of Durham worried for five long years, and just before the 2003 election, guess what? "We will pull back from our decision to close the hospital." So congratulations to you. You must have been the one who told the Health Services Restructuring Commission just before the last election, "Stop, because the people of Whitby don't have enough health services and certainly we cannot afford to close the hospital in Whitby."

Let's look at the record on a continuous basis. You also cut \$6,364,000 in operating funds from the Lakeridge Health Corp. That was in the first two years of your party's government, just after the election. The Rouge Valley Health System in Ajax and Pickering cut—again, operating funds—in the amount of \$12.7 million in your first three years in office. That's a 10.5% reduction in funding. Why would you do that? When health care is so important, as you say—and we agree; it is—why would you let the people of Whitby-Ajax down? It's not only Whitby-Ajax, but you carry that responsibility on your shoulders even today. The history is not an easy one for you when it comes to health care: Brantford closed, Ottawa Salvation Army Grace Hospital closed, Port Hope hospital closed, Doctors Hospital in Toronto closed, St. Mary's Hospital in London closed, the Perley Hospital in Ottawa closed, Toronto Central Hospital closed, the Great War Memorial Hospital in Perth closed, Pembroke Civic Hospital closed, St. Joseph's General Hospital in Peterborough closed, Sarnia closed, and the Toronto Wellesley Central Hospital closed. Overall across Ontario, the bed capacity in hospitals fell by 7,110 between 1995 and 2003, creating the backlogs and shortages that we've all experienced.

What have we done? We recognize that you have a point, and you should be congratulated in doing it. I'm happy to see that the former Minister of Health is here as well to listen to this debate. I'm sure that she will participate later on. What we're doing right now is creating the Durham West family health team in Ajax and Pickering region, which was just approved in April 2006. We've just announced over \$4 million to Durham Access to Care for acute home care services. The Lakeridge Health Corp. received in 2005-06 infrastructure renewal funds of \$835,000. We're giving the Lakeridge Health Corp. \$231 million for 2006-07, an increase of \$18 million, and an additional \$2 million for community support services for assisted living programs. Since

taking office, the McGuinty government has given an extra \$21,900,000 to long-term-care homes in the Durham region. In short, over half a million dollars to the Head Injury Association of Durham as well to treat patients with acquired brain injuries.

So there were some significant steps that have been taken. In terms of your own response to ballot item 43, it is significant that you raised this issue. But our party has stepped up to the plate, and as I have just indicated to you, the fairly massive amount of health care services in terms of dollars that are provided in Durham is certainly a good step in the right direction.

I thank you for your concern.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

It is my pleasure to rise in support of my colleague from Whitby–Ajax and motion number 19: “That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately increase health care funding in Durham region to the provincial average, and, thereafter, develop and implement health care funding in Durham region based upon population growth.” It seems like a no-brainer that that is exactly what people should be able to expect in Durham region.

I had the pleasure of joining Christine Elliott on a number of occasions during the recent by-election and going door to door with her and a number of her absolutely tremendous and wonderful canvassers during that campaign. She is absolutely right when she says that the number one issue being raised at the door was health care, but more specifically, health care in Durham region and how they felt this government was short-changing them.

Notwithstanding the address from the honourable membership from Davenport, who wants to take a long historical look, we need only look at the record of this government. In the GTA it may be somewhat different, but if you go to Durham directly, the region which the member serves and is speaking for, the numbers are quite staggering. The per capita gap has risen from \$194 in 2002-03 to \$279 in 2005-06. When you're behind and you're continuing to fall behind, that cannot help but affect the ability to deliver health care services in those areas.

It is clear that the Durham region is one of the fastest-growing areas in the entire province, and if a government is aware of what's going on and not asleep at the switch, as I hope the current government is to some degree, they will no doubt recognize that measures must be taken—and quickly—to ensure that health care in the region of Durham is not compromised. When a population base is growing at that kind of rate, if you want to continue the economic benefits that come from that, you have to ensure that adequate health care is available. In fact, one of the first things people look for if they're considering relocating to a specific area or a new region with their family, or even if they're without children, but particularly then if they are aging seniors, is to ensure that the health care services they need will be there, should they be called upon. If we want to ensure that the region of

Durham continues to prosper, as it is, we have to ensure that the health care services that are required to allow that to be built on are, in fact, there.

1020

I must say about the new member for Whitby–Ajax that one of the things I also heard during that campaign was the recognition in her community of her personal commitment to the people; not just during the by-election, but a long-standing, personal record of involvement and commitment to her community. In fact, I believe that last year she was named citizen of the year in Whitby or a part of that region; I couldn't tell you exactly what, but I do recall that she was named person of the year for her contributions to not only children's services but health services in the community.

What I admire about her—one of the things; of course, there are many—is the fact that at the earliest possible date she has moved to follow up on the commitment to the people of Whitby–Ajax that she made during the by-election to do whatever she could in her capacity as the sitting MPP to bring pressure to bear on this government to honour its commitment to health care in this province and recognize that Durham is being left behind. That is something that we're very thankful for and the people of Durham are thankful for, because she has made that commitment, and she has honoured that commitment, unlike many of the commitments that were made by this government when they took office. They haven't honoured them. We're hoping that—not only a commitment, but an absolute responsibility to the people of Ontario and to the people of Durham—they will in fact honour their commitment to health care by supporting this resolution, as tabled today by the member for Whitby–Ajax.

I know I have other members of caucus who wish to speak to this resolution as well. I'm not going to use all the time. There are many, many things we could be talking about with regard to support for this resolution, with regard to statistical backup for the need for this resolution to be supported by all parties, to ensure, as I say again, that the health care of the people of Durham remains a priority, as health care for everyone in the province should remain and that they do not continue to be shortchanged by this government.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Nipissing.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would seem our friend from the Beaches is feeling a little shy this morning, so I'll go ahead before him. I'm happy to speak to this resolution and to talk about the investments that our government has made and our commitment to health care.

The resolution from the member for Durham reflects her view of history and not the actual history that has occurred in this province with respect to health care. As you know, between 1995 and 2003, while the Conservative Party was in power, they cut over 7,000 hospital beds, they closed 13 hospitals, and not just that, they refused to make the necessary investments in our

health care system. So now we find ourselves with an infrastructure deficit across the province that our government is left to address.

Let me just talk for a moment about the infrastructure deficit that we had in the north. As you know, there were many hospitals that were left to languish in the north and that were not redeveloped as they should have been. Although commitments were made and rubber cheques were presented, nothing happened. Case in point: the hospital in the Soo, which Mr. Oraziotti, our member for Sault Ste. Marie, has worked very hard to see move forward, and it is moving forward. In Sudbury, a half-built hospital was left to languish because the previous government wouldn't move forward with it. We are moving forward with it. In my own riding, the Mattawa General Hospital, which for 27 years resided in portables, is finally going to be redeveloped under our government, under our watch, something that has been in the works for 27 years. These people have worked hard to hold it together, practically with Band-Aids, and we're going to move forward with a brand new hospital in that community, which I'm sure the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke would appreciate, because it's actually fairly close to his riding. And of course, in my hometown of North Bay, we're moving forward with a brand new hospital as well, something that's long overdue and long been waited for, something that was promised, something that we had lovely blue cheques for and pictures of the former Premier digging holes that didn't go anywhere. But we will see shovels in the ground this fall, and I'm very proud of that.

I'd like to speak a little bit this morning about the spectrum of health care and the investments that we've made in the Durham region: investing \$4.8 million in Durham Access to Care for acute home-care services. In the spectrum of care, this is an incredible investment and important for the people of Durham, who are hoping to have home care and not find themselves in hospital or long-term care.

Let me just speak for a moment about long-term care, because you know it's an issue that's near and dear to my heart, where I spend a great deal of time. In the Durham region, we have 18 long-term-care homes. I would say that the Durham region is very well served with respect to long-term care. In fact, of those 18, nine of them are brand new or have been redeveloped. That's exceptional. The Durham region is very well served in that area of health care. In fact, just this morning, at 10 a.m., Hillsdale Terrace is being opened, an investment of \$43 million in Oshawa in a brand new long-term-care home to serve the people of the Durham region.

The people of Durham region are well served. We are making investments across the province in order to ensure that all residents deserve and receive the quality care they are entitled to. So we are making those investments, we are addressing the infrastructure deficit, the health care deficit that we found when we came into office, that her party—her husband as finance minister, her government—caused and we are addressing that as best we can and making investments where we can and

ensuring that every single resident of Ontario receives quality care.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I am extremely pleased to have the opportunity to support the resolution put forward by my colleague the member for Whitby-Ajax. The motion reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately increase health care funding in Durham region to the provincial average, and, thereafter, develop and implement health care funding in Durham region based upon population growth.”

I am very pleased to speak to this resolution because I certainly share the concerns of many people in the province of Ontario about the McGuinty Liberal government approach to health care funding. We have seen, time and time again, the Minister of Health and this government make announcements, whether it be for family health teams or for hospital funding or for health human resources. The announcements are totally lacking in details for funding, details as to the timelines for implementation. In fact, many of the announcements go back and all the way—promises, supposedly, that are being made for 2009 and 2010. We all know that with this government, when they make a promise, you can't believe them.

We've had over 50 broken promises to begin with. One of the promises that has probably been most disappointing for people in the province of Ontario was the commitment that was made by the Premier not to raise taxes. He wasn't going to lower them, but he wasn't going to raise them. Regrettably, in their first budget, they said they were now going to implement a McGuinty health tax. They are taking from the people in the province of Ontario, at the current time, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$2.4 billion for health care. They broke their promise not to raise taxes.

What does this mean for individuals? Some people are paying an extra \$300 in health taxes; some might be paying \$600; some might be paying as much as \$900. Unfortunately today, in the McGuinty Ontario, people are paying more for health care and they are getting less. Certainly this motion is testament to the fact that the people in Durham region are not seeing increased health care funding, and this motion asks for that funding to be provided.

Prior to the election of the member for Whitby-Ajax, I indicated in a statement that I had made that—I said this after the budget of 2006: “The McGuinty Liberals' year-end spending spree effectively shut out Durham region. While the Liberals rushed to shove about \$1 billion into a slush fund to spend on transit and roads in other parts of the GTA, Durham region was noticeably excluded in the one-time investment to help GTA municipalities.” I went on to say, “It appears that Premier McGuinty does not consider Durham region a high-priority area.”

1030

At the same time, I went on to talk about the member who is now the member for Whitby-Ajax, and I indicated that if she was elected—and the people in that

community certainly recognized that she was the best candidate—she would fight for fair funding for the people in Durham. Here she is just a few months later doing exactly what she had committed to the constituents who she now represents. I said, “She will fight for fair funding of Durham hospitals.” Really, today she is doing that.

I spoke about the fact that the people in Whitby–Ajax were paying the illegal health tax while the wait-times in that riding were going up and the services and the staff were being cut. That’s exactly what’s happening.

So I applaud this member. I congratulate her constituents for having the foresight and the vision to elect her to be their representative. They made a wise and outstanding choice. Here she is today, just a few months later, doing exactly what she has committed to do.

I want to remind the government that in 1995, when our government took over, we had in this province a deficit when it came to health care. There had been no investment in capital infrastructure whatsoever. There had been no attention paid to long-term-care beds. There had been no building in over 10 years. So in 1997, our government committed to invest in 20,000 long-term-care beds, we invested over a billion dollars into community services, because we were going to be providing a continuum of services. We also increased hospital funding. We made decisions to ensure that the hospitals in the province of Ontario were all centres of excellence. That meant that we had to take action, which the former NDP and Liberal governments had refused to do. We had 10,000 empty beds in hospitals in Ontario. We were paying for bricks and mortar; we were not paying for health services.

We took the difficult decision to ensure that we provided a continuum of health services that started with promotion, that went into primary care and family health teams. We set up new hospitals. We expanded hospital services. We increased the number of cancer facilities and cardiac facilities. We increased the number of MRIs in the province of Ontario. We built new dialysis areas throughout the province. We took the tough decisions that were necessary.

Then, we added 20,000 long-term-care beds, because we had all of these people who were inappropriately housed in our hospitals who needed quality of care, improved care that could only be provided within the home-like setting of the long-term-care facilities. We also invested, for the first time, in comprehensive community services.

That’s what our government did. What is this government doing? They are now underfunding Durham region. In fact, they are underfunding the entire community of the GTA. They do not recognize that between 1996 and 2005 this area grew on average by 106,000 residents annually. This represents half the annual population growth in Ontario over this period. It’s equivalent to adding the population of the city of Kingston to the GTA each and every year.

We have to remember, not only is the GTA growing, it is aging at twice the provincial rate. It is increasing

culturally, and socially and economically it is very diverse. Yet despite this growth, this aging population and increasing diversity, access to hospital services in this fast-growing area of Ontario has fallen behind the province, due primarily to the way the government funds hospitals. My colleague today has spoken about this widening per capita gap in Durham for our hospitals. She has mentioned the chronic underfunding. She has talked about the fact that this presents a challenge if we have an unexpected outbreak of disease, an emergency. They cannot have the services close to home as our government wanted everyone to have. I support her resolution strongly.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Perhaps for the edification of some of the members opposite, they might notice that I am alone here today. I have the entire 15 minutes, and I thought I would participate in the debate after having heard what some of the other parties might have to say to it. As you might also be fully aware, under the rules and procedures of the House, our party, being the third party, is often skipped.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): That’s because you don’t want to.

Mr. Prue: No. You will often notice that happens under the rules and procedures in terms of members’ statements and other things. There is a noticeable skip, and it seems to me to be—

Mr. Levac: By choice.

Mr. Prue: —by choice. So I am here now to speak.

I would commend the member from Whitby–Ajax for bringing this motion forward, but at the time I commend her, I also have to state how saddened we are that it is necessary for her or that she feels it is necessary for her to do so. She has come forward today because in her opinion her community is not getting the necessary resources at a time of great population growth. As people are expanding into, moving to and living in Durham region, she sees that there are not sufficient facilities in terms of health care for that community.

It is a difficult proposition for me to talk to, and I’m sure for all members, because we have many roles in this House. One of the roles, when we are elected, is to represent our community, to stand up, as I would on behalf of Beaches–East York, as the member from Brant might on behalf of the people in his riding of Brant, or as the member here today talks about her riding and the people of Whitby–Ajax, which forms an integral part of Durham region. But having said that, I think we also have other obligations. When I see motions such as this, I wonder about those other obligations, because not only do we speak on behalf of the people of our own riding, we also have to, as legislators, speak on behalf of all the people of Ontario.

When resolutions such as this come forward, it troubles me somewhat. Although I know that what she speaks about is justified, although I know what she speaks about is correct and although I understand that the money flowing into that community for hospital and medical purposes will not be as high on a per capita basis

as some other areas of the province, it still troubles me because there are different and unique circumstances in each and every one of our ridings that need to be looked at as well.

If I can talk a little bit about that, the region of Durham, justifiably in my view, has been shortchanged by this government—not justifiably that the government is doing it, but their comment is justifiable; I should be very careful how I say that. Their comment is justifiable. In terms of the hospitals, we can see that there are not sufficient hospitals and that the hospitals tend to be overcrowded. In terms of health care, the member from Whitby–Ajax has made a very strong case. In terms of transit, we have just seen the transit allocation, seen this government’s finance bill, this government’s budget, come forward with a great deal of money for transit throughout the GTA, but literally none for Durham.

So I can understand how the people of Durham are feeling shortchanged. Juxtaposed to that, though, I have to ask this question, and I’ve heard some others talk about it. This is a member who is before this House today asking that we spend more money in her particular riding. This is a member whose party spent less money, and certainly when times were good.

1040

I heard what was said about the NDP not spending money between 1990 and 1995. I was not a member of this House, but I have to tell you, times were pretty tough. They were bad; they were really bad. We were in a depression and nobody got much of anything in those days—and even doing that, there were huge deficits because there weren’t jobs and the worldwide economy was in bad shape. And it wasn’t just here in Ontario; it was literally everywhere in North America and most of Europe. The economies were in bad shape and the money was not there to be spent. Times started to change around 1994, 1995, 1996, Things started to get better. But in that period there were closures of hospitals and there was a chronic underfunding, I would think, of much of the health care system in this province, to the point that many health care institutions had to go cap in hand. Many could not build what needed to be built, many services that needed to be offered could not be offered.

This is the same party—and I have heard them, and I wonder about this; perhaps the member can talk about this when she has a couple of minutes at the end—that says they oppose the health tax, they oppose the \$2.6 billion that is being spent on precisely what she is asking to be spent in her region of Durham.

New Democrats oppose the health tax as well—we do—but unlike the Conservatives, who say they are going to abolish it, we say we would abolish it but replace it with taxation from the ordinary tax system. We think the health tax is wrong because it penalizes people at the bottom levels. We don’t think it is fair that you take money from people who can ill afford it, and that people who earn \$100,000 or \$200,000 or \$300,000 a year pay just such a pittance towards their own health premiums. We would like to see a much fairer system.

We would abolish the health tax and replace that through the income tax to garner the same amounts of money.

On the other hand, from what I have heard from the Leader of the Opposition and from members of the Conservative Party, they would abolish the health tax, period. I have not heard in any way that they intend to replace that money. So I don’t know what happens to this resolution, and I don’t know what would happen to this resolution in the event that some 14 or 15 months from now, following the election, the Conservatives should win that election and abolish the health tax. If they do not replace the money, where does the money come from to fund what Durham needs? I believe that Durham needs this, but I don’t know where the money will come from. So I have to ask that question. I think it is central to the whole issue and, depending on how the member might answer this, to whether or not I support her motion here today.

The expansion of Durham is a very real factor, but there are many places in this province that are expanding, and unfortunately there are some rural and northern places that are contracting at the same time. There was a private member’s bill just this past week. The member from Halton talked about recalculation. I think that was a good idea, because we have to not just use the Statistics Canada figures every 10 years, or the mini-census that comes every five years in between, to calculate how big towns and cities and regions are, because some of them are experiencing very quick growth. Durham is one such place. Relying on the Statistics Canada figures collected every 10 years does not give a proper indication of how large those towns and cities are. Conversely, it is not uncommon in small one-industry northern towns, where the industry moves out, for it to depopulate fairly rapidly, yet the census figure might say that it’s still chock-a-block full of houses and people, where in reality that is not the case. We need to find another mechanism. I would suggest that his private member’s bill last week would go a long way to helping this particular circumstance as well, because I would hazard a guess that the people of Durham and the government are using the statistics from the census, which is now five years old. I would hazard that’s why you’re getting that money.

There are other issues, though, that we need to talk about, because this is an important one being raised by the member from Whitby–Ajax. This is where I have to put my hat on to speak for all of Ontario. There are areas in this province, particularly northern, near northern and rural areas, where there is isolation, where people don’t have even the crowded hospital system that they have in Durham. They don’t have any hospital system, literally, at all.

If you live in small-town Ontario, particularly in northern Ontario, you will know about the isolation. You will know the great distance you have to travel to go to Sudbury or Timmins. You will know the great distance you have to travel to Thunder Bay or to any place where there is a hospital, because your community doesn’t have one. Your community may not have a doctor; it may not

even have a nursing station. I think the difficulty of trying to provide services to people in those locations has to be looked at too. That cannot be seen in isolation and it cannot be seen in isolation of what is being said here today about Durham.

Once a year I try to go with my colleague the member from Timmins–James Bay to visit some parts of his riding, particularly those parts that are First Nations. It is an opportunity for a boy from the city to see how people in other parts of this province live—people from other cultures, people in the far northern and remote communities. I want to tell you, in terms of the health care they are provided, it would make most Canadians, if they were to see it, quite ashamed.

I know that it is not totally a provincial responsibility and I know the federal government, in great part, is to blame for the conditions one finds in those communities, but we as Ontarians need to speak out strongly in support of our First Nations people. We need to talk about the kinds of conditions they have: the fact that the nursing station cannot adequately look after the needs of the people; the fact that medevac has to come in there to evacuate them if there's any kind of serious problem; to show the social and health conditions, where they're drinking tainted water and they're under boil-water advisories for years, as in the case of Kashechewan; the problems of the mould in the schools and the lack of medical facilities in places like Attawapiskat; the isolation and the remoteness of a little town like Peawanuck. If you go into Marten Falls/Ogoki and have a look at that place, you will see that all of the infrastructure that was built has literally never been occupied—the arena they built for the kids—because the ice storm actually destroyed it before it could be occupied. There has never had any money, either from this government or from the federal government, to restore it so that there is at least some facility in the town, something for the kids to do. As much as we need to talk about Durham, we need to talk about that.

We also need to talk about the rural areas, where people live in some isolation. It may not be the isolation of the far north, but I will tell you about my own parents who live near Bancroft. My mother had to go down to have a cataract removed. It took more than a year or a year and a half to get an appointment. It was in Peterborough. That may not seem like the end of the earth, but that's an hour and a half. My parents don't live that far. Today is their anniversary, by the way. Happy anniversary, if you're watching.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Did this come to you?

Mr. Prue: No, I'm going to phone them later too.

Mr. Yakabuski: You made a member's statement the other day.

Mr. Prue: Yes, I did a statement as well.

They don't live that far. If you live up in Maynooth or Barry's Bay, that's a long way to go if you have to go down to Peterborough or Ottawa to have just routine kind of stuff. That's something that needs to be addressed too,

because not only do we need more hospital in Durham, I would suggest we need more hospitals throughout all of Ontario. Asking people in rural, northern and farm country to travel the distances that we do is simply not right.

We also need to talk about the urban areas and the money that is needed for the urban areas, because there are higher incidences of poverty there, there are more people who are aged and have special conditions; there are new immigrants who come with medical problems that are perhaps unique to them and are not fully understood in this country. The money is needed for all of them. The money is needed for everybody.

I want to hear what the member has to say to what I have raised here today. I recognize that her cause is right for Durham, but I also want to know how that fits into the whole perspective of Ontario, for the 13 million people who live in this province, many of whom have needs that are unique and significant and need to be addressed as well.

1050

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I appreciate the opportunity to add some comments for a few moments for the member from Whitby–Ajax. This is her first resolution and I congratulate her on the opportunity to present to the House in this fashion. I apologize for not being here for her earlier comments. I was on other government business during the earlier part of the morning, which I'll have to return to.

Both of us are new to this place—the member from Whitby–Ajax is new in the past number of months, and myself new during this mandate—so we don't necessarily have direct responsibility for what has transpired in previous years. We do have some responsibility for what transpires during this time frame.

I can start by saying that there is a principle in the resolution that I endorse, and that principle is that growth in growth regions needs to be addressed as part of the overall health strategy. Durham certainly is one of those areas, but it's clearly not the only area within the province, nor is the GTA the only growth area within the province.

To an extent, our government has been addressing this through some strategic decisions about the application of financial resources, directly from the standpoint of hospital investments, or the distribution of family health teams throughout the province in areas that are seeing growth or the addition to or satellites for the community health centres that are in growth-related communities. We have been addressing growth from that context.

I think it's important, though, that we reflect on how we got to the state we're in, and thus my comments about neither the member from Whitby–Ajax nor myself having direct responsibility for that. It was in 1998 that the former government, the Tory-appointed Health Services Restructuring Commission, ordered the closing of hospitals throughout Ontario. This included the closing at that time of Whitby General Hospital. At that time, the member for Whitby–Ajax was a member of cabinet, and yet the activity to downgrade health care and remove one

of three hospital structures in Durham was certainly a jeopardy. It wasn't until 2003, in May, as we were all anticipating a provincial election on any given day, that the government of that day moved back from that particular call. As a matter of fact, the Oshawa, Whitby, Clarington and Port Perry This Week—News headed off with, “Facing possible flat-line, Lakeridge Health Whitby has been given paddles by the province to keep it afloat.”

Hospitals and health care in the province and in Durham region were busy either closing or restructuring through amalgamation, and spending all their time and energy on how to either get rid of sites or consolidate sites with little opportunity to build on what the real needs of the community were in a growth community.

Since coming to office, I know that I, on behalf of my constituents, and I would suggest constituents throughout Durham region, as the only member from the government side of the House and having some long history in Durham region, certainly have been called upon by the health care systems, the health care providers in Durham to come to their aid. I know that the members opposite who represent Durham have similarly lent their voices to that, but clearly, people look to the government side for assistance.

During this time, we have finalized the funding for the R.S. McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer Centre, which will be commissioned this November and operational next spring. We have put into our five-year rolling capital plan for 2007-08 the redevelopment of the Ajax-Pickering Health Centre as part of the Rouge Valley Health System, long-awaited, and announced, without funding, like many other hospitals across the province, particularly those, as I was suggesting, in growth regions, in May and June and March and the like of 2003.

We have put into that rolling capital plan, so it's clear what the plan is and what the time frames are, with the funding for 2009-10, a major redevelopment at Lakeridge, Oshawa, for, I believe, about 140-odd acute beds.

So in the limited time we've confirmed the funding that allowed the cancer centre to move forward. We have finalized the approvals and funding capacity for both Rouge Valley Health System and Lakeridge in Durham region.

Mr. Speaker, I wish there were more time.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Ms. Elliott, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Elliott: First of all, I'd like to say that I appreciate the comments made by my colleagues the members from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Kitchener-Waterloo, and the statement made by the member from Durham that I read from in support of this resolution. I appreciate their comments.

We have heard from the government members about how much they've done in Durham region in recent years. My response to that would be, that is really just, if I may say, a drop in the bucket compared to the need, that almost the existence of Durham region has been ignored by this government since it was elected in 2003.

That is certainly the perception, the view that is widely held by members in the riding of Whitby-Ajax, the many people I've spoken to during the election campaign. They feel our concerns have been ignored, not just in health care funding but across the board in terms of education and infrastructure funding. If you look at what happened with the most recent budget, as the member from Beaches-East York mentioned, there was no mention of any transit funding, or any infrastructure funding for the Durham region in the budget for that matter. A great deal of money went to the other regions, but east of the city there was virtually nothing. So the residents of Durham region, to some extent, are feeling upset that their concerns haven't been addressed.

To respond to the comments made by the member from Beaches-East York with respect to the health care tax, yes, our party leader, John Tory, has been very strong in his statement that we would eliminate the health care tax if we were elected to government, because we think Ontario taxpayers are taxed enough. That's all I would say about that, but that is something we are very committed to.

Finally, though I don't like to rehash events of the past, because it has been mentioned by enough government members, I feel the need to respond to the statement with respect to Whitby General Hospital. I would say that, first of all, the decision was made by the hospital restructuring commission, not by the government, and the hospital was never closed.

ARTS EDUCATION WEEK ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA SEMAINE DE L'ÉDUCATION ARTISTIQUE

Ms. Mossop moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act to make the fourth week in October Arts Education Week / Projet de loi 118, Loi désignant la quatrième semaine d'octobre Semaine de l'éducation artistique.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms. Mossop, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): The opportunity to put forward a piece of legislation is a rare privilege and there are countless issues, all valid, worthy, compelling issues that might be addressed, so why, some people might be asking, would I choose something as seemingly innocuous as declaring the fourth week of October Arts Education Week in Ontario? It's not exactly a headline grabber maybe that you might expect coming from a former journalist, but then I didn't get into this business of politics, of government, to grab headlines, and I didn't get into the business of journalism to grab headlines. In fact, I did it because I wanted to try to make a difference. Maybe I am an incurable idealist or optimist, but I did get into this business and into journalism to try to make a difference in the world. What I wanted to do was to make the world a better place, and to make it a

better place not just for some people but for all. I wanted it to be a more humane, a more thoughtful, a more beautiful and a safer place, not just for some but for all.

1100

So why Arts Education Week, if that's my goal? There are dozens upon dozens of research studies from all over this world that point to the undeniable benefits of arts education. There are direct links between arts education and academic success, higher standardized test scores—for example, in literacy and numeracy—cognitive development and problem-solving skills. Arts education has also proven to be an effective way to reach those who are having trouble in school, those with learning disabilities, maybe, or children at risk. Also, the arts engage children in learning and have proven to keep kids in school longer and to have better adult outcomes. Arts education has proven to keep kids out of trouble and keep them in their communities as well as in their schools. It decreases anti-social behaviour and emotional problems, increases self-esteem, self-confidence and self-discipline. As a result, the costs associated with children's aid, with health providers and with the justice sector go down. Tolerance, understanding and effective interpersonal and communication skills go up. These are the ingredients of successful individuals and successful societies.

All these things have been proven empirically. We always seem to need that intellectual security blanket, that thing that tells us on a piece of paper or in science that this is right, that we can back this because science tells us this is okay, it's good. But in fact we know it in more important ways. We know the importance of arts education anecdotally. We've all heard the stories. Every one of us in this room and beyond has heard the stories or witnessed those magic moments when a child is engaged and focused, maybe even for the first time, because they've had an experience with the arts. You can see in their eyes at that moment that a seed has been planted that's going to yield a better life.

I was talking with one of the artists who's involved in the learning through the arts program, Pier Rodier. He went to a school and helped the math teacher give a lesson in math using artistic techniques. The next day the principal called and said, "We'd like you to come back and give our teachers a workshop in discipline. You must have wonderful techniques in discipline, because the kids were so focused while you were here and they were so well-behaved." In fact, it wasn't that. It was because he connected with them and he engaged them in the learning experience and in the subject matter. They took ownership of the experience; they took ownership of what they were learning.

We hear all these stories and we know that at the end of the day that's what we all are: We are stories. And if there are no storytellers, whether it's through the written word, through song, through drama and through visual arts, then to a certain extent we cease to exist because our stories cease to exist.

Also, the arts are the expression of that intangible essential called the soul. The arts are a unique and primary form of communication and expression for human

beings. They give our creativity a voice and they fuel our imagination. So how important is imagination? There's a gentleman in the members' gallery from the Science Centre, Vishnu Ramcharan, who told me how important it is this way. He said that if you take a young child—perhaps they're having a difficult life or a difficult time—and you show them a plate and you say to the child, "What is this?" the kid looks at you and shrugs their shoulders and says, "Well, it's a plate." "Yes, but what else can it be?" And they start looking at it differently. Maybe you can put a planter in it and it will catch the water and it can be a planter. Or you can paint it and it can hang on the wall and be a piece of art. Or if it's made of something non-breakable, you could turn it over and fling it across the room and it would make a good Frisbee. What you do, then, is teach this child that things can be different, they can be better. So if you're having a bad day today, tomorrow can be different; it can be better. And that gives all of us hope. That is something that each and every one of us needs in our survival kit of life.

I'm going to now move into a practical area. The arts are also where there are some very satisfying jobs, careers and businesses. Ontario, in fact, is the third-largest employer in the cultural sector, and the cultural sector is expected to be one of the top three growth industries in the next 20 years.

There is a race on all around the world right now for communities wanting to become creative cultural communities, because they realize that that is where people want to work and live, and if they are going to attract businesses and industries, they have to have something for those people to do. If those companies want to attract good people, they have to have something for the people to do after they get out of work and after they get out of school. They want to be in a culturally rich community.

We talk a lot in this House of how we should be spending taxpayers' dollars. We spend a great deal of it on health care, and I understand the importance of health care, but quite frankly, there is not a single one of us in this room that actually wants to have to use health care. None of us wants to go to the hospital, none of us wants to need health care, but every moment of every day we are living culture, from the minute we wake up in the morning and our eyes rest on the favourite painting we have hanging on the wall, and our radio turns on and the music starts playing, and we read the newspaper. We go to work and we walk amidst the architecture. We get to work, and we have lunch, which is culture as well. Food is culture. At the end of the day, we curl up with a good book or we watch a good movie or we watch television. It's all culture.

So what we need to do is provide these cultural communities, these creative communities with, simultaneously, a workforce and an audience. This is where arts education again comes in. This is not just an Ontario issue. UNESCO just held an international conference on arts education in Portugal. It was discussed at great length, but what was basically understood was that the

knowledge-based economy that we have in our world today requires the creative, flexible intelligences that are developed through artistic languages and pursuits.

Critical Evidence is one of the latest papers to come out of the United States that talks about arts education initiatives in the United States. In that it says that 95% of people understand the benefits of arts ed and want arts education for their kids, but there is still a disconnect between that desire and making it happen. There is a fabulous school in Montreal called FACE, Fine Arts Core Education; parents line up all over the place for this public school. They line up on the front lawn every year to get their kids into this school because it is an arts education facility and it has proven to keep their kids in school, keep them out of trouble and raise their test scores. They have academic success. In fact, the parents say that sometimes they can convince their kids to stay home when they're sick. That's how much they enjoy going to this school.

Educational Leadership is one of the leading documents on arts education and education. It says that we need to get serious about integrating the arts back into our curriculum.

So this bill will set aside the fourth week in October each year to celebrate, honour and manifest arts education. Arts specialists and community arts organizations can work with schools and with teachers to organize events for that week. They can do exchanges with other schools. They can bring artists in. They can go out to artistic events. Projects, performances or exhibits can be held all during that week. Also, they can launch them during that week and maybe have them culminate in Education Week, which is in May.

I've talked to a lot of people in the community; some of them are here with us today in the members' gallery, from the Ontario Science Centre, the Ontario Media Development Corp., the Ontario Arts Council, Artsaround, the Ministry of Culture, Soundscreens. I want to thank you all for being here to support this. I've been working very hard for a long time on this initiative, because I really believe in it. I think the possibilities and the opportunities are endless, with a little imagination.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to rise this morning and speak to Bill 118, introduced by the member from Stoney Creek, An Act to make the fourth week in October Arts Education Week. I want to say that it's a motherhood issue and I would expect that when the time comes to vote on this bill it will get unanimous support from the House, because I don't think there would be anyone that would suggest it wasn't appropriate to recognize the importance of art and culture as it relates to educating young people. I think it will be supported by all.

1110

As recently as this week, I had a visit from one of my constituents, Linda Albright, who was in my constituency office to speak to me about the arts being used in the education system. Linda lives in the town of Tillsonburg. For—I'm just making a guess—somewhere in the

neighbourhood of eight to 10 years now she has been involved with using the arts and music to deal with at-risk students. When the previous government—the government I was proud to be a member of—introduced the Safe Schools Act and we ended up having students who were not able to go to school and had to be educated in a different way, Participate, in the town of Tillsonburg, took on that challenge and helped educated those children and get them back into the mainstream.

It was an amazing feat when you saw this happen. Where these children would come into the system and get involved with the arts and music, it became such a driving force to get them back on the right track. I want to commend Linda for doing that. I also want to say that the reason she was in my office is that she's involved with the Arts Network for Children and Youth. They know how much art contributes to the benefit and the help of at-risk youth in the province of Ontario.

Of course, the other reason she was there: She has concerns that the system that we have in Ontario today is not funding that part of education. She was looking for ways to deal with and getting advice on how to approach the different levels of government to support the program. The Participate program in Tillsonburg has moved out of their small quarters. They are now in a nice area right in the town hall with the support of the town of Tillsonburg. But of course that is not sufficient to carry on as the program is growing. She's looking for more stable funding to help make the program sustainable for the future.

I think it's important that the Arts Network for Children and Youth is in fact doing a lot of good around the province to bring together the needs of these at-risk students and the community in general. I think it's important to recognize that it should be part of all systems in government: the justice system, the social services system. There's a direct connection between the needs of these children and the social services that are available, that these children should be able to avail themselves of—again, the health and of course as the bill speaks to the education system.

I have to say that I'm concerned that this government talks a good story but has done very little to ensure that all students in all schools have equal opportunity to experience the arts in their schools. That's the reason I bring that up, of course: The member introducing this bill is a member of the present government. I think it becomes so important. It's more than just recognizing arts in education as an event that we need to think about one week in the year; I think it's more important to see that the government takes it seriously and actually supports the arts in the education system.

I'll just give some examples. The government announced on May 5, 2006, a \$4-million arts education partnership where they expect private-sector donors to support the program—big announcement, little substance and no help to the schools that are trying to educate students through the arts. It's a great system to make an announcement on, but having matching dollars—in fact,

this doesn't provide equal opportunity for all students throughout the province. This was brought out by the People for Education news release upon that announcement in May:

"Ontario parents will fundraise over \$50 million in the 2005-06 school year to provide arts enrichment and augment their schools' budgets. This amount has increased annually since 1998-99, and indicates a growing dependence on fundraising to provide publicly funded schools with resources.

"Relying on fundraising for necessities like books, classroom supplies, art programs and computers creates a system of 'have' and 'have-not' schools, because schools' ability to fundraise depends on the amount of free time parents have, parents' capacity to raise money and the wealth of the community."

Again, of course, that's a great concern that would show that that's not equal opportunity for all children in the system. They go on:

"There are significant differences in schools' budgets for arts programs, and many schools rely on parents to supply the funding. This year, 20% of secondary schools and 54% of elementary schools report that parents fundraise for arts enrichment in their schools.

"The government announcement of up to \$4 million to 'match' money raised by arts organizations does not do enough to address this issue." I point out that I think it's important, as we agree to this bill, that we collectively encourage the government to put more money in place.

The same report from People for Education deals with the class size cap that the government has put in place, from kindergarten to grade 3. Of course, they're obligated to have a smaller class size in those areas. Many of the school boards are taking away the dollars, the resources that they formerly were putting into the art community or art education, and using that to lower the size of the lower classes.

Another thing I just wanted to mention—it's kind of a personal thing—is that the Premier went out and made an announcement, and it was written up in the *Toronto Star* by one of the writers there. The reason that one caught my eye is that that is the school my granddaughter will be attending in about three and a half years when she starts school. She and her mother were able to attend the announcement that the Premier made at the school, Palmerston Avenue Public School. It says here, as from the *Toronto Star*:

"With great difficulty, the teachers and students at Palmerston Avenue Public School behaved like good stage props this month when Premier Dalton McGuinty and his entourage swept in to announce a \$4-million commitment to arts education." That's the same announcement I spoke to earlier.

"What everybody at the school knew was that Palmerston's arts program, one of the best in the province, doesn't get a cent from Queen's Park. It wouldn't exist if parents hadn't raised the money for everything from the instructor's salary to the supplies."

From the instructor's salary to all the supplies, everything was being supplied by the school, and yet the Premier was there announcing how we, as a government, were investing that much money into the arts in that school. Obviously, not a nickel of it was coming from the province; it was all being provided by the parents and the community.

The same article goes on:

"In fact, McGuinty's May 5 announcement at Palmerston Avenue Public School reinforced that trend. The Premier pledged to match, dollar for dollar, money raised privately for arts education. Such 'partnerships' worry Kidder"—and this is, of course, Annie Kidder from People for Education—"and other advocates of public education for three reasons." The first one, of course, and the most important they feel, is that, "They widen the disparity between the 'have' and 'have not' schools."

I do have more here, but I know my colleague wishes to speak to this bill too, so I will leave it at that and say we support the bill, but I think it's very important that the government realizes that if we're going to recognize arts as an important factor in educating our children, we fund it in a way that it can be used advantageously for all the children in the system.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's my pleasure to speak—

Applause.

Mr. Marchese: You don't know what I'm going to say yet.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: Kathleen knows what I might say.

It's a pleasure for me to speak to this bill and to support Bill 118. I must tell you, I will be critical towards the end of my comments, but you'll have to wait for that.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): Just stay positive.

Mr. Marchese: It's hard to be positive when I point out some of the weaknesses of your government, but I'll do that at the end of my remarks.

New Democrats believe that professional and community art and culture are vital to our social and economic well-being as a society. I want to tell you my experience, briefly, as a former Minister of Culture, and I want to say to those of you who might not remember, that in 1990, when we got elected as New Democrats, we were in the depth of a recession. Most economists will admit that was the case, except for Liberal Party and Conservative Party members who can never acknowledge that we had a difficult economic time, but we did. But in that recession, we did not cut, in culture, one cent. We didn't do that. I wager to say to the few cultural friends who are here that if Tories were in power in that recession, and/or our good friends, the Liberal Party, they would have decimated culture, and I'll explain why: If Liberals can cut in a good economy, as they did this year, and I will explain that later, imagine what they would have done in a recession, not to speak of my good friends the Tories. Because of the tremendous cuts they made in a good economy, think of what they would have done in

a bad one. But we maintained our support for the Ontario Arts Council to the tune of \$47 million at that time. When the Tories were in power, by 2003 it was at \$26 million; it went from \$47 million to \$26 million, and in a good economy, I tell you. Imagine what they would have done if it was a bad economy.

1120

So we maintained support for all of our big cultural institutions, including the Ontario Arts Council, and not only did we create a book and magazine—I did that. I created the book and magazine publishing centre to protect those publishing in magazines and books that were going down. Imagine what the other governments would have done if they were there at that time.

What I learned in government is that the Ministry of Culture doesn't have a great deal of power, not then and not now. In spite of what anyone might tell you in government or while they were in government, the Ministry of Culture—I was about to say, "is the least important," but not entirely, so I'm not going to say that—has no importance or power in government, and the reason for that has nothing to do with the ministers, although some ministers are better than others in terms of being good advocates.

Interjection: They're all good.

Mr. Marchese: No, they're not. There are good ministers and there are some terribly bad ones. There are caretakers of the ministry and there are those who are strong advocates. But in spite of that, it doesn't matter whether you're a strong advocate or a weak one; you're still powerless in cabinet. I don't know why some of the members are sort of shaking their heads, because they ought to know. And the ministers know. And the minister knows. And the reason for that—

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): In the McGuinty government, every minister has a word.

M. Marchese: Mon ami, ce n'est pas le cas dans ton gouvernement. Je peut te dire que ce n'est pas le cas.

The reason for that is because we do not have a cultural sector that lobbies government strongly. If we did, the Minister of Culture would be one of the strongest ministers in this government or any government. Until the cultural community realizes that the reason why ministers have no power is because they do not press governments—until then—they can come and we can pass this bill today and you can all feel good. The member from Stoney Creek can feel good. I can feel good in supporting it. We can all feel good, and nothing will change.

Culture is important in this country and in this province. Just to give you some old statistics I kept a while ago, the business of culture is big business in Ontario. Ontario's cultural industries contribute more than \$5.3 billion to Ontario's economy and generate more than 40,000 highly skilled jobs in Ontario. Just to break it down, Ontario-based book publishers generated \$1.7 billion in revenues in 2001 while total revenues in Canada amounted to \$2.4 billion. The direct impact on the 2002 GDP for Canadian-owned, Ontario-based book

publishers was \$98 million. Film and television production spent \$874 million in 2003. Domestic production expenditures in Ontario were \$504 million, representing the first increase in over four years as a share of total industry. The annual economic impact of Ontario's growing interactive digital media industry is estimated at \$1 billion. Ontario's magazine industry contributed approximately \$740 million to the provincial economy. Ontario-based record companies generated almost \$1.1 billion in revenues. Total revenues in Canada amounted to just over \$1.3 billion.

The facts are clear to anyone who wants to understand them, but what I want to say to the cultural sector people who are here today and those who might be watching is that the facts do not matter. What matters is if you're able to lobby government and convince them that culture does matter, not just to our economy but to our identity as Ontarians and as Canadians. Until you do that, the facts are meaningless, because we simply do not pressure governments to have them understand that culture is an important part of who we are. That's the problem we have in this country.

Measured on a per capita basis, governments, corporations, consumers, visitors and philanthropists invest far more in operating art sectors in the great cities of the world than we do in Toronto, which is one of the most important cities in Canada as it relates to the arts. Economic and quality-of-life returns on investment in, say, New York, London, Paris, San Francisco, are highly attractive. In fact, nearly every centre of world trade and commerce possesses and aggressively promotes a vibrant arts sector. We know it happens in great cities, and not just the ones I mentioned but other great cities in Europe as well. They know how vital culture is, not just to their tourism but to their economic and cultural identity and social well-being.

We also know that those who are involved in the arts and culture in general have high levels of education. But we know there is also a high proportion of self-employment, there is a predominance of women in the sector, and we also know there are very low earnings. People get involved in this field because they love it, not because they're going to make money or get rich, except for the few people in some of the cultural industries. The majority of the people in the arts are poor. They're the ones who support the cultural sector, in spite of the fact that they make so very little, and no one knows that except those who are involved in culture.

The earnings, I'm telling you, are incredibly low. Artists' earnings are the following: the average earnings are \$26,800, 24% less than the average earnings in the overall Ontario labour force. There are some other statistics that speak about even worse incomes. Another key factor in the low earnings of artists is the situation of female artists, who earn on average \$11,000 less than male artists, which is at \$21,900. We know that people get involved in the culture sector not because they're going to make a whole lot of pecunia but because they feel the arts and they love the arts, and they want to do it because of that love.

When I look at what this government has done, and I review the bill before us, which is an important one because, if nothing else, celebrating for a week simply allows people to say that culture is here and it's important—if nothing else. To the member from Stoney Creek, as you speak so beautifully about the arts today, I want to ask you about your government's commitment to the arts, because when I look at the budget—this is yours, not mine, not even theirs; it's yours. On page 95, for the cultural folks who are here, this is what it says on the Ministry of Culture in terms of what they were getting and the cuts. They were getting \$454 million, which was an improvement over the past many years when my Conservative friends were in government. They were giving \$454 million in 2005-06; for 2006-07, the period which we are in, it's gone down to \$366 million.

You may not know that—I'm not sure—but Madame Mossop from Stoney Creek, your budget went down from \$454 million to \$366 million. This is a serious, serious cut. How do you justify it? How can you justify close to \$100 million in cuts? I didn't add it all up; I could have. It's close to \$100 million in cuts, and then you come with a bill that says we need to celebrate culture. They are inconsistent, in my humble view.

1130

Where is the minister? Where are all the people who are going to speak today on the issue of culture, in terms of defending culture? Because culture is about investing and it is about putting money in, not taking money out. We can't say culture is great and cut so much money out of the budget. We simply can't do that.

Then we go to the status of the artist legislation that provides income security and access to benefits for artists—because we know that most of these people are poor, income poor. They have no safety or protections whatsoever in the majority of cases. In 2003, you said, "We're going to have status of the artist legislation in two years." We're close to the end of the third year, close to the end of this session. We still do not have status of the artist legislation. How do we defend that? This is a promise you made.

We have close to \$100 million in cuts, we have no status of the artist legislation that you promised, and it's an important one, and we also have announcements—you were there at Palmerston school, one of my schools, and Kathleen Wynne was there, Minister Papatello was there, Minister Di Cocco was there, the Premier was there—who acknowledged me, thank God. I had to thank him for acknowledging me, because usually we don't get acknowledged by the others. But the Premier was there and he acknowledged me, and that was really nice. I have to tell you, for those of you who don't know, and publicly, because I haven't said so before, they announced, lo and behold, \$4 million. They announced it as if it was one of the biggest things that ever could have existed in the history of culture. It's \$4 million in matching funds—matching funds, which means that if a school in north Toronto—as an example, let's say Forest Hill—was able to raise \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000, that

\$4 million coming from two ministries would match it. But if you come from some poor school in my area—let's just pick a school: Montrose—and you could only raise 100 bucks, the government would match that 100 bucks for cultural purposes. The government thinks this is cool and great. Sorry. What they need are music teachers, what they need are arts teachers, not a measly \$4 million that is not going to go very far because most schools can't raise any money. They're already raising for school supplies, let alone having to raise more to be able to get some more culture dollars to be able to buy some instruments or whatever else they need.

So, Madame Mossop, Stoney Creek member, I support your bill, but you and your members and your friends here have to go after your government—your minister, your ministry, your ministers and the Premier—to say, "You've got to reinvest." You can't take \$100 million out of culture and say, "This is great." When I support such a bill, I do so under the condition that you're going to have to get that money back for culture; otherwise, this bill is meaningless.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): There are a number of members on the government side who want to speak in support of this bill today, and I certainly want to put my two cents worth in because in North Bay and area we are big supporters of arts education. I'm sorry that the member for Trinity-Spadina wasn't more positive and fun this morning, because this is a positive bill. We want an Arts Education Week. We want to recognize all the good work that's being done.

I remember in grade 6 when we wrote our own play. I remember what it was called. I remember the experience. We were taught so many different life skills through developing that play and putting it on for our parents and families. At St. Joe's high school, which I attended, we put on various plays. We had a great music teacher in Sue Smith. Don McNeil taught us to love Leonard Cohen and taught us that a police song could be a poem. Father J.J. Johnstone taught us that we could have a woman play God in a play. We learned great things through our drama program in high school.

We had fabulous drama programs in the city of North Bay. At Widdifield and Chippewa, they were renowned. They were winners in the Sears Drama Festival every year. Marty Southcott and Art Southcott at Widdifield and Rick Blair at Chippewa did yeoman service and put time and more time into those programs and those students. They produced some of the stars of today: My friend Phil Hughes is in the troupe at Stratford; my friend Blair Williams is at the Shaw; Tamara Bernier, who we knew as Tammy Bernier in her day, played in Mamma Mia! in New York City. These are all kids from North Bay who went on to great things in the arts because of the arts education that we had.

Our public school board and our separate school board sponsor drama programs in the summer for students, through Summer Challenge, TOROS and Dreamcoat Fantasy Theatre. We are seeing the future actors of tomorrow. I go to these productions in the summer and I

see the likes of Jack Bowness and Joshua Pride. I see the future actors of tomorrow, and it's just terribly exciting.

I also attended Learning Through the Arts at St. Hubert school last year, a great program, where I saw kids in grade 7 and 8 engaged in Greek mythology by writing their own plays and developing their own ideas. I saw younger children learning about arts and science through drama, through experiential learning. I know that just recently in our community, we've signed on about eight artists, including Liz Lott, to teach in our schools in the Learning Through the Arts program.

Before I finish up my time, I really have to talk about one particular teacher in my community, Betty Farris. She has taught music for 34 years and is retiring next week. She taught at Chippewa for 17 years, and she touched many through her talent and her experience in all the schools that she taught. Every spring there is Maytime Melodies, a great concert that's put on at Chippewa. She's produced a number of musicians that have gone on to musical careers. A couple years ago for Remembrance Day, her orchestra played at Memorial Gardens, and there wasn't a dry eye in Memorial Gardens. She has contributed immensely to the lives of students in our community—in all of our community, the greater community—through the performances that we've all been able to enjoy. I won't be able to attend the Chippewa graduation this year so, sadly, I will miss her final concert. I know there won't be a dry eye in the place. I want to wish Betty Farris all the best in her retirement. I know that her hundreds and hundreds of students join me in doing that, because she is what learning through the arts is all about.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to join the discussion this morning on Bill 118 from the member for Stoney Creek, Ms. Mossop. All of this stuff that's been necessary from the partisan side has been covered by my colleague from Oxford and also the member from Trinity–Spadina, and they haven't really left me enough time to be partisan. So I know the people on the opposite side are going to be disappointed this morning, but I've just got to speak about some things that actually go on in my riding with regard to the arts, which I do support in the strongest possible way.

I want to talk first about the music program at MVDHS. Mark Robbins, the teacher there, is an absolute gem. Both our kids have been in the music program, and I'm going to tell you, it changes them. Mark's approach to music and life changes students, not just from the perspective of music but from the perspective of how they view the world and how they view other people in the world. It is a tremendous program they have there.

I want to talk a little about the South of 60 Arts Centre in Barry's Bay. Curator Anya Blake does a tremendous job of bringing in different types of exhibits. I want to just mention the ones that opened the season this year. One was entitled A World of Textiles, the opening display of the year, a display of fabric materials from over 30 countries, which was quite fascinating, I am told, as I did not have the opportunity to see it myself; also,

Barb Blackstein, a local artist who is becoming somewhat famous, and her husband, Fred, who is already famous for the tremendous work he does throughout the county in supporting various important causes.

Currently at the South of 60 Arts Centre, there are the works of Boguslaw Mosielski, who is an artist born in Poland. He had been painting for many, many years and passed away in 2004. It's called Boguslaw Mosielski: A Retrospective. His wife, Elizabeth, is working with the South of 60 Arts Centre to bring that off.

Also, appearing upstairs, is Barney McCaffrey, who is a famous personality throughout the Ottawa Valley, not only as a musician but as an artist, a poet, an activist and an actor. Barney has covered the gamut and lives in the simplest possible way. In fact, a few years back the McCaffreys lost their home to a fire, and the community got together and built them a new home. There was no insurance on that home, but the community around Wilno and Barry's Bay area got together, with the help of Keetch's as the contractor and various other groups, and built them a new home. I know the McCaffreys appreciate that, and it, in only a small way, compares to the contribution that Barney has made to our area.

1140

I also want to talk about the Stone Fence Theatre. When you talk about actors and acting, the Stone Fence Theatre has been around for a number of years and this year they've gone a step beyond. They're going to have all their performances this year at the Killaloe Lions Hall, which is going to be air-conditioned. The last few years they've been having them at Our Lady of Holy Angels parish in Brudenell, which, on those hot, hot, hot summer days, can be a little uncomfortable. I have attended many of these performances and I just have to tell you what a great job Ish Theilheimer, Barry Goldie and the group of actors—I don't think I have time to mention them all—have done over the years with such productions as Reflections of a Century, which was a retrospective of the Eganville Leader's first 50 years, as depicted in their book—for the first 100 years, but they only did the first half of it in the play; Al Capone's Hideout, which was on last year—fantastic; Looking Back at Mac was a story about Mac Beattie, a famous Ottawa Valley musician; and this year they've got Here to Stay!, a musical about rural rage and survival by Ish Theilheimer, and it's kind of a sequel to Reflections of a Century; Upstream to Basin Depot, by Barry Goldie and Lee LaFont—a musical recalling shanty days along the headwaters of the Bonnechere River in Algonquin Park. That should be fantastic. The third new production this year: Barn Dance!, produced by Ish Theilheimer, a musical tribute to the stars of old-time Canadian country music. I can tell you it's going to be fantastic when I look at some of the people who are going to be performing there, including Louis Schryer, who is a world-champion fiddler. He's going to be performing there this year. So I want to tell you, there's lots of stuff with regard to the arts that goes on in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. There are some fantastic people.

I will agree with the member from Trinity–Spadina that—I didn't catch every word, but something to the effect that these people “ain't doing it for the money,” like they say; they're doing it because they love what they do and they love what it means to the people out there who have the privilege and the pleasure of being able to partake in what they offer at their performances.

I wish I had become a lot more tuned in to the arts when I was in school. My children are much more interested in that than I was. Unfortunately, I can't tell you what I was more interested in, because that might be unparliamentary. However, I wish I had spent more time in the arts when I was a little younger, to gain an appreciation at a younger age. I am learning that as I speak, and I want to thank all of those people who do make that dedicated effort to make our lives better by enriching us with the arts.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm happy to support Bill 118. The member for Stoney Creek is a sincere and diligent—persistent, even—advocate of arts and education. She has done a terrific job in our government promoting this issue.

What I want to say is that she's not alone as a representative of the Ministry of Culture, along with her minister. The education ministry is a partner in promoting arts and education.

I want to speak to some of the comments that the member for Trinity–Spadina made, and I want to know him, not for his uncharacteristically negative comments this morning, but for his role as a school trustee on the former Toronto Board of Education. He was a school trustee at a time when arts education flourished in this city, and in fact there were many models that have been looked at and have been copied across the province that were developed in the city of Toronto.

I have to say, the member for Oxford, when he was talking about what we were or were not doing—it was a little rich, from this side of the House, to be listening to his voice on this subject now, quoting from People for Education, who have developed a tracking document that I was part of developing, when he was in office and I sat in that gallery and I didn't hear the member for Oxford talking about the benefits of arts and education at that time. I didn't hear his leader, who was in the private sector at that time, bemoaning the fact that we were having, in this province, to cut teachers; we were removing funding for education across this province; instruments were going unremedied; instruments were not being bought; we didn't have itinerant teachers; we didn't have music specialists in our classrooms. That was result of the previous government's legacy.

What we're trying desperately to do now—the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Education—is build back the supports that were taken out of the system during that period. In the last two years, we have invested in specialist teachers. Over the four years, there will be 2,000 more specialist teachers back into the system. That's the systemic approach to delivering arts in the curriculum.

There are things that we can do in conjunction with the Minister of Culture, and some of the people here today come in from the outside and they deliver terrific programs in the schools, but we have to have those building blocks as part of the curriculum, and the curriculum is there. But we need the teachers to deliver the curriculum so that they can benefit from all the wonderful programs that people from the outside bring in. Those specialist teachers who are going back into the system as a result of our government's investments are the critical systemic approaches that have to be in place, and we will continue to do that.

Finally, two things, quickly: I wouldn't be here if it weren't for arts and education. My mother was born in Nassau, Bahamas. She was sent up to school here, and she was an orphan. The thing that kept her going was music in her school. She went on to the Royal Conservatory, became a singer, and that was what kept her interest. I think we have to be very careful not to make arguments about how music helps math and that's why we should teach music. Yes, learning music helps you when you learn math, but maybe it's the other way around. Maybe learning math helps us to understand music, and we need to turn that paradigm on its head.

Finally, I want to quote Winston Churchill during World War II. He was resisting calls for cuts to the arts spending with the words, “God, no. What the hell have we been fighting for?”

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I want to commend all the speakers for entering into this rather vigorous debate. As the MPP for Perth–Middlesex, and representing my hometown of Stratford, I can tell you that the arts are integral to our community. I think we are the cultural capital of this province, and it's not just because of the Stratford Festival.

But when I look at all of the wonderful actors who now grace the stage of the Stratford Festival, they are Canadian. Though over 50 years ago, there were many people who came over from England to help start our festival, it has formed the basis of an amazing theatrical revolution in this country of ours, of Canada, where we have created our own talent.

The thing that has made that happen, I think, is the fact the festival has always understood the need for us to create, to invent our new audiences. I want to particularly thank Pat Quigley at the Stratford Festival, and the education department. They've worked so hard with all our school boards despite the travails we had to face in some years when the arts were denigrated in this province. The Stratford Festival, our boards of education and our teachers have worked together to make that unique experience, that place where our children discover a new part of their humanity.

I'm so happy that our children are visiting today from one of the schools in Ontario, because this debate is about your future and about what type of society we are going to have. I'm proud to be part of a government that is re-engaging with our arts community, to say that they are valued, that they are part, that we are ensuring that is part of our curriculum.

I want to thank my friend the member for Stoney Creek, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture, for her passion about the need to make arts and education the same thing. What are we teaching our children if we are not teaching them about their humanity? And what greater way is there for them to understand their humanity than through the arts?

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): A wonderful opportunity, to speak to Bill 118. I just preface: As an educator for 25 years, a principal in my last few years, I can attest to the extreme importance of the arts in a child's education. But I also want to make sure that this point is understood: It's not just about children. It's about the adults who are surrounding the children. It's about the adults who model for our children. The arts are, and the arts always will be, who we are as human beings.

I don't think there is any argument around the House, and I will make it very clear that these will not be partisan comments.

1150

I want to talk about what my experience has been as an educator. What are the arts? The arts are learning and creating through and about the arts. The arts are introduced in specific subject matter into the school curriculum—that's one area—but what's important is that the arts are also used to teach curriculum and apply to the whole person, to the whole child, to the whole spirit of who a person is. If you do not have the arts in you as a human being, you don't have a whole human being.

That's the essence of what we're trying to celebrate, and if you understand that celebration, that's what this bill is going to give us an opportunity to do: to focus on what that celebration is, on who we are as human beings. So I laud the member, I appreciate the member and I say to the member, thank you for making us celebrate for at least a week who we are as a whole human being.

There are empirical reasons, and I know they've been spoken of. There's a link between arts education and general academic success, specifically in literacy and numeracy. This was an empirical study: Students scored significantly higher—11% higher—in computation and estimation after three years of sustained art programs in schools that were compared to control school studies. That's evidence; that's empirical evidence. That's telling us who we are as a whole human being.

Standardized test scores over five years for students in the arts program rose 49% in mathematics, 63% in reading and 39% in writing. This kind of comment is for those people who want to calculate—left-side brain/right-side brain stuff. So if you're a person who wants to use that calculated side, this is what the arts does for that side of the brain: It makes us a whole person. To remove the arts in any way, shape or form from who we are as human beings is tantamount to criminal. It's not an acknowledgement of who we are as human beings.

By the way, it is very clear—there have been studies done in the business world of top executives, of the type of people they want in their upper and middle management, and do you know the first thing they said? A liberal arts education. That's who they want.

Interjection: A Liberal.

Mr. Levac: They want a liberal arts education—no, no, no. Non-partisan, a small-l liberal arts education. And why? Because they're critical thinkers. They're analytical in their mind. They feed both the left brain and the right brain, and you get the whole person. What can you do but be more successful when you use the entire, whole person in making your decisions in the business world? That's who they said they want—people who provide a liberal arts basic foundation in their education. Only then do you move on to the other disciplines. But they want people with arts.

It's a challenge to all of us. It's not just in the schools. It's about who we are in our communities. There isn't a member in here who hasn't stood up at any time, during my time here, who hasn't bragged and told us about the good things that are happening in their communities involving the arts. This tells us again that this type of bill is asking us to celebrate, focus and celebrate again who we are in the arts. It's a challenge.

In private members' time I've stood in this place time and time again and said, "This isn't about partisan politics; it's about finding the best in who we are as people. It's about finding the best possible legislation that we can to make this a better place." And what better way to do that than to celebrate what the arts are in making us a whole person?

It is a challenge; it will be a challenge for every single government of the day. Not Liberal, not Conservative, not NDP, nor any other party, but who the government of the day is collectively, both sides of the House, of who we want to be as human beings. Do we want to be seen as understanding who we are as a whole person, or do we want to say we can fragment it all and put it into silos? I say no. I say support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Mossop, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Mossop: I want to thank the members from Oxford, Trinity–Spadina, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Don Valley West, Perth–Middlesex and Brant for speaking in support of this bill. You have to wonder sometimes, though, why you do these things when you get that big push back. You know it's going to happen. It doesn't matter what you try to do in here, you're going to get that political push back, and I didn't want to go there. But let's face it: The arts were starved into near non-existence in our schools under your government. And you, sir, thank you very much for the things that you bring up. I agree with you; the Minister of Culture in many jurisdictions is a bigwig. Not here in North America, not very often. If I were king, I would make it different. I would agree with you on that.

I have to say, though, that I am proud of what our government has done: \$146 million a year to restore specialist teachers in our schools over four years, up to 2,000. We're rebuilding. We have introduced legislation to have alternative diplomas in our secondary schools, one of which will likely be an arts diploma. We have success teachers. All the studies show that smaller class

sizes are necessary. We do have to incorporate that. We have put learning through the arts back into the schools and we continue that program. We have Artsaround, a new program that we have funded as a pilot. We have arts education, which we're tweaking through the Trillium Foundation, adding some in that area as well.

The arts education partnership initiative was referenced. This is a matching program, but this is how we get the cultural organizations to come to the table and get into the schools. As well, we have Arts Education Week, which has been subversively timed by me, so that these organizations have an invitation to go to the school boards, who make a lot of the decisions about how our money is spent, at the beginning of the school year and say, "Let's talk arts ed. Let's talk now," and get ready for arts ed week in October and then do a celebration during Education Week in May.

It's a little subversive maybe, but I think it's well worth it because we need the cultural organizations and we need the artists in the schools because they are the fire that ignites the spark. Thank you.

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We'll deal first with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mrs. Elliott.

Mrs. Elliott has moved private members' notice of motion number 19.

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 nays have it. The motion is lost.

ARTS EDUCATION WEEK ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA SEMAINE DE L'ÉDUCATION ARTISTIQUE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 44 standing in the name of Ms. Mossop.

Ms. Mossop has moved second reading of Bill 118.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I've got control of this. Don't worry.

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

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I would ask that Bill 118 be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

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

The House recessed from 1158 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FIESTA WEEK

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): This Sunday, June 18, Father's Day, the community of Oshawa will kick off its 34th annual cultural festival known as Fiesta Week with a parade of floats and marching bands, followed by the fiesta concert and six days of international pavilion displays.

Fiesta Week is best described as a taste of Durham, a week-long multicultural celebration that gives residents of the region an opportunity to experience European, Asian and Caribbean cultures and foods without leaving our hometown. Fiesta Week brings the people of Oshawa together to celebrate and appreciate our city's rich multicultural heritage. It provides thousands and thousands of people with an occasion to examine our community's diverse culinary, dancing and musical talents from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Various cultural communities in Oshawa operate pavilions highlighting their respective cultures across the city, including Lviv, Dnipro, Odessa, Roma, Club Carib, Loreley, Belgrade, Budapest, Krakow, Greek, Portuguese, Philippines and Poznan, to name but a few.

The Oshawa Folk Arts Council is a voluntary, non-profit community organization that oversees all aspects of the annual Fiesta Week festivities. I would like to personally thank and congratulate all the dedicated volunteers with the Oshawa Folk Arts Council, who work diligently throughout the year to make Fiesta Week the great success it is. I would also like to thank all the wonderful members of the various cultural organizations for the many hours they contribute towards Fiesta Week. Finally, I wish to invite all members of the House and everyone in Ontario to visit Oshawa and participate in one of Ontario's premier summer festivals, Fiesta Week.

RIDING OF STORMONT-DUNDAS- CHARLOTTENBURGH

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): It is my privilege to serve the riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh as it begins a renaissance that is transforming for the better all aspects of its community: health care, infrastructure, access, you name it. In conjunction with community leaders and indeed all the residents of the riding, this government has been working to address all the issues neglected by previous governments.

Since January, I have made numerous statements here in this House concerning the issues of my riding and asked some 10 questions about how this government is addressing those issues. The results of all this advocacy are apparent in what has been done, with incredibly beneficial funding announcements and construction on such projects as the St. Joseph's Continuing Care Centre in Cornwall. It is evident in what is to come with the soon-

to-commence repairs to the walls surrounding the St. Andrew's cemetery, burial place of Ontario's first Premier, John Sandfield Macdonald. Just today, it was great news when the Minister of Agriculture gave support to the Seaway Grain Processors in my riding of \$6 million for the construction of their plant.

There is more good news in store for my riding, and I certainly look forward to being the bearer of this news over the coming months. On behalf of my constituents, I know I send a sincere thank you to Premier Dalton McGuinty for his visionary leadership and all the cabinet ministers who have made a dedication and a commitment to my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Two and a half months ago, I wrote the Premier an open letter to tell him that his provincial budget failed to provide the level of support for agriculture that is necessary to sustain it. Today, it appears that the Premier is still indifferent to the plight of Ontario's farm families.

Through this year's Waterloo-Wellington questionnaire, I've surveyed my constituents, and hundreds of them gave me advice on agriculture. Here are the responses. They've said that the government needs to start listening, understanding and supporting our farm families. How can the McGuinty Liberal government continue to ignore 25-year-low commodity prices, increased regulatory burdens, heavier compliance costs, rising input costs and the devastating loss of equity because of the US border being closed to Canadian beef?

Last week, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association joined us here at Queen's Park, making their case to MPPs. I had a follow-up meeting in my constituency office with this group on Friday. The cattlemen's association appreciate the federal government's effort to get on side and be supportive through changes to the Canadian agriculture income support program. Now they're rightly asking when the provincial government will commit to matching the federal announcement in the traditional 60-40 cost-sharing formula. They've also asked the Minister of Agriculture to support compensation for the loss incurred when selling cull cows, similar to the support enjoyed by Quebec farmers.

My constituents want this provincial government to wake up and get behind our farm families in this time of urgency.

HAMILTON GAY PRIDE WEEK

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I rise this afternoon in recognition of the 10th annual Hamilton Pride Festival. As a downtown city councillor when I was there, I was very proud to have supported pride in its early days. Despite the setbacks encountered over the years, some fairly recent and painful, the LGBT community is a strong and significant part of Hamilton. Kicking off last Sunday with the raising of the rainbow flag at city hall, celebrations continue tonight at the third

annual gala pride awards. I want to congratulate the recipients of the 2006 pride business, citizen, group and youth of the year awards. I will be celebrating with you at Saturday's parade.

Pride in Hamilton and around the world centres on the fight for equality for the LGBT community. Despite same-sex marriage finally being legal in Canada, it's still under threat. Homophobia and heterosexism still exist. We all need to be educated not just on tolerance but acceptance of the LGBT community.

I say to the community in Hamilton, you are leaders in the movement for full and real equality. Pride week celebrates you and the contributions you've made to our community, and those contributions are many. I am very, very proud, as an elected representative, to call you my neighbours, my friends and my allies. Today I wanted to take the opportunity to make sure in this Legislature I could congratulate all of the activists in the LGBT community in Hamilton on pride day. Congratulations on 10 successful years of pride in Hamilton.

DEFIBRILLATION LEGISLATION

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Speaker, you and my colleagues in this House would know that just recently my private member's Bill 71 received second reading and is now in committee. That's the Heart Defibrillator Use Civil Liability Act, 2006.

Since that time, I have met with a lovely couple, a very strong couple, by the name of John and Dorothy McEachern. They were the parents of an 11-year-old boy from Barrie who had a heart that was so big that when he heard of the use of defibrillators in arenas and how they can save lives, he wrote to Don Cherry and asked Don's help to promote the use of defibrillators. Since that time, young Chase has died. So I'm proposing, and will propose when this bill comes before committee, a motion that will change the name of the bill to the Chase McEachern Heart Defibrillator Use Civil Liability Act, 2006. I hope the House leaders, I hope the members of the committee and in fact this whole Legislature will support the bill and will support the bill that is in Chase's name. I would appreciate that support.

FABRY'S DISEASE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): It was almost three years ago, in the fall of 2003, that I wrote my first letter to Health Minister George Smitherman regarding treatment for Fabry's disease on behalf of Donna Strauss, whose husband, John, was suffering from the disease. Since then, I have risen in this House on at least 17 occasions to call on the minister to act to provide life-saving treatment for those with Fabry's, without any action from the minister to do so, despite the fact that 30 other countries in the world, including the United States, were doing so.

Finally, yesterday an announcement from federal Health Minister Tony Clement told us that the federal

government would be participating with the provincial and territorial governments and the drug companies for a study of the disease, to allow those with Fabry's disease to gain access to treatment.

Today I want to congratulate the patients, their families and all the others throughout the province of Ontario who have worked so diligently and sent so many letters to the Minister of Health to gain funding for the treatment of Fabry's, brave people such as Donna, Julia and Lee Strauss, Darren Nesbitt, Rick Sgroi, Carolyn Augur and Bill Taylor. These people are our heroes. It has been a long road for them. I was honoured to work with them to bring provincial and federal pressure and attention to this issue.

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HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I rise today to announce with pride multi-year funding for Listowel Memorial Hospital in my riding of Perth–Middlesex. Listowel Memorial serves the community of North Perth in my riding, but also some communities in the townships of Mapleton and Minto, just outside of Perth–Middlesex.

For the second time in the province's history, every Ontario hospital will now know how much it's getting over the next three years instead of just one. For the next three years, Listowel Memorial can count on more than \$1 million in additional funding. The hospital will receive some \$542,000 additional in this fiscal year, \$275,000 in the next, and \$273,000 in the year after that.

Margret Comack, the CEO of Listowel Memorial, was pleased with the three-year commitment and the ability for the hospital to predict and plan for health care programs more effectively over time. That's exactly why we're doing it. It's only reasonable that hospitals have a predictable source of income for the near future, yet past governments did not commit to stable funding over multiple years. Our multi-year approach allows hospitals to make informed, sustainable decisions to meet the needs of their communities and their patients. Multi-year funding is just the latest investment in hospitals across the whole province.

I also had a chance to see first-hand the redevelopment construction underway at Listowel Memorial. It's great to watch the province's \$7.8-million investment in this much-needed project moving forward on budget. These are just some of the latest examples of the McGuinty government's commitment to building a health system that keeps rural Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access—

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I rise to share some really important news for Ontario health

care professionals and, more to the point, the people of Ontario and their families.

Yesterday the McGuinty government announced an investment of over \$20 million in expanded team-based education programs for a wide array of health professionals. In the past, that kind of government support has only been available to our doctors and nurses, but with this \$20-million investment, Ontario is now providing expanded education and support to other health professionals such as physiotherapists, lab technologists and occupational therapists. In fact, we're supporting a wider range of health care professionals than any other province in the country.

Here's what this means to Ontario families: It means that when we, our children or our parents get sick and need care, all the health professionals attending to us will be better trained to work as a team and able to provide more comprehensive care.

While the McGuinty government is focused on providing top-quality health care for Ontario families, the Conservative Party has another plan for our health system. John Tory has already given us a preview of that plan: He swore to cut \$2.5 billion from Ontario's health care budget. That can't be done and maintain high-quality health care. We are building circles of care with patients at the centre.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): On June 9, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus held their semi-annual joint session in the town of Blue Mountains. Wardens met to discuss questions of mutual concern. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition, John Tory, attended part of the meeting and spoke to the group.

Among the topics discussed was equalization. Here is what Renfrew county warden and Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus chair Bob Sweet had to say about this government's leadership on the issue: "The Premier's drive to get a fair and reasonable deal on equalization, one that will address the fiscal imbalance, has our whole-hearted support."

Mr. Sweet and his fellow wardens realize that fixing the fiscal imbalance between Ottawa and Queen's Park will certainly have a positive impact on municipalities in our province.

This government values and respects our municipal partners. We are unwavering in our position on equalization because we know that added resources are needed to address many pressing concerns in communities throughout the province.

I am pleased that wardens in my region recognize this reality and have expressed their support for the Premier's continued efforts to get a fair deal for Ontario.

I meet with these wardens on a regular basis, and I fully support what they are trying to do. We are trying to achieve that balance, with ambulance funding and with public health uploading—something they never got in the past.

VISITOR

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like members to welcome to the government gallery a friend of mine, and one of Canada's leading recording artists and actors. Maestro Fresh Wes Williams is here to watch what we are doing today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MUNICIPAL STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2006LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
CONCERNANT LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr. Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

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

The minister may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I will make the statement during ministerial statements, Speaker. Thank you.

MASTER'S COLLEGE AND
SEMINARY ACT, 2006

Mr. Delaney moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr28, An Act respecting Master's College and Seminary.

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

The bill is therefore referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSESMUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT
LEGISLATION

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Today I'm pleased to introduce the proposed Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006. This is the McGuinty government's latest initiative to support the fine and excellent work of local governments across Ontario. Our goal is to give municipal governments the respect they deserve and the tools and instruments they need to meet the challenges of today's competitive economy.

We want to enable municipal governments to become more accountable, responsible partners with the provincial and federal governments for years to come. The proposed Municipal Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006, contains our government's proposed amendments to the Municipal Act.

We worked with our municipal partners to identify the legislative reforms that could provide local governments with more tools and greater flexibility to creatively serve their residents. During the review of the Municipal Act, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario told us, and we agree, that "if the municipal role is to evolve in the years ahead ... that if Ontario municipalities are going to deliver on behalf their communities ... then they need greater responsibility, greater authority and greater accountability."

1350

Our government has been taking progressive steps, including the Stronger City of Toronto for a Stronger Ontario Act, 2006, to provide municipalities with the tools and flexibility they need to more effectively serve their residents. Rather than being prescriptive, as some of the present act still is, we are proposing that the act give broad, permissive powers that would let local councils have more control over their destiny and the destiny of their residents.

Let me give you some examples of the possibilities of these broad powers. If our proposed legislation were passed, a municipality would have the flexibility to pass bylaws regarding matters ranging from public safety to the municipality's economic, social and environmental well-being. A council would have more flexibility to pass bylaws to deal with the financial management of the municipality, its accountability and the transparency of its operations. A municipality could better protect its affordable housing stock by passing bylaws to control the demolition of rental housing or its conversion to condominiums. A municipality would have broader authority to undertake economic development so as to become more competitive and its citizens more prosperous.

We want all Ontarians—in our north, in our rural communities and in our urban centres—to live in and enjoy thriving communities where they can look forward to a promising future. One of the steps in our government's plan to attain that goal is to make sure that our municipal partners have the flexibility and broad powers they need.

However, while we recognize the need for local councils to have broad powers, I want to assure my fellow members of this Legislature that the laws we pass here in this House will continue to apply to municipalities. Certainly, Ontario municipalities would have more power to control their own destinies if the proposed legislation is passed, but within the framework of all other provincial legislation. If a municipal bylaw conflicts with a specific provincial law, of course provincial legislation will take precedence.

Our proposed amendments would enable municipal councils to have more flexibility to delegate powers and responsibilities to committees, to boards and to staff. The

proposed amendments would also enable a strengthened accountability framework. If the bill were passed, a council would have the flexibility to pass bylaws to deal with the financial management of the municipality, its accountability and the transparency of its operations.

Our government has taken important steps to assist Ontario municipalities to fund the services they provide, and we will continue to work in partnership with them to meet future challenges. For example, in the 2006 provincial budget we made the strategic and prudent choice to work with municipalities and invest additional revenue this year in transportation infrastructure of this province. We are investing \$1.2 billion in public transit systems and municipal roads and bridges. That's enough money to repair up to 800 bridges and to resurface over 3,000 kilometres of road. We've enhanced the Ontario municipal partnership fund to \$763 million, up from \$707 million, so as to address the high municipal social program costs relative to residents' household income. When you compare this year's figure to what was paid under the former government's CRF program the year we took office, it is about \$150 million more than three years ago. The McGuinty government's OSIFA program is providing more than 190 municipalities with access to \$2.4 billion of low-cost infrastructure financing.

By October of this year, our government will have fulfilled our commitment to provide two cents of the provincial gas tax each year to municipalities. Over five years, this program will deliver more than \$1.4 billion for public transit in Ontario municipalities.

A significant move by this government in supporting municipalities was stepping aside to let them negotiate directly with the federal government for the transfer of more than \$1.8 billion worth of federal gas tax revenue over five years to Ontario municipalities for infrastructure funding.

Recently, our government announced an investment of more than \$50 million to strengthen land ambulance services in communities across the province. This is only the first instalment of the \$300 million in additional funding we have committed over the next three years to achieve a true 50-50 funding share of municipal land ambulance services by the year 2008.

We increased the provincial share of funding for public health units to 65% in January of this year. This is part of a series of stepped-up increases to move the government's share of provincial public health funding to 75% by 2007.

We are providing \$301 million over the next four years for affordable housing. Over the life of the affordable housing program agreement, federal, provincial and municipal governments are investing a total of \$734 million.

I know the members opposite totally agree with this approach.

In partnership with the federal government, we are using the COMRIF program to provide municipalities with \$298 million over five years so that rural municipalities can improve their water and sewage treatment

and waste management facilities, and fix local roads and bridges.

Certainly, Ontario municipalities will have more power to control their own destinies if the proposed legislation passes, but within the framework of other provincial legislation. Our proposed legislation backs up our often-stated assertion that municipalities are "mature, responsible and accountable governments" that know what is best for their local communities and act in the best interest of their residents.

If our proposed legislation is passed, our municipal partners will be able to work even more effectively for their electorates, for the working families they represent. Municipalities can be even more effective in the admirable work they do to keep Ontario's communities strong and vibrant places in which to live and work, now and in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? The Minister of Tourism.

VISITOR

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Before I commence my remarks, I would like to have members join me in welcoming to the west members gallery Deb Hutton, the wife of Tim Hudak, MPP for Erie-Lincoln, and a well-known whiz kid in years gone by.

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Today, the province of Ontario is joining other jurisdictions across Canada and around the world to recognize June 15 as the first World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

I know that there is a broad commitment in this Legislature to eliminating elder abuse in Ontario. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day serves to remind all of us that this form of abuse is a daily reality for far too many older adults across the province. It is estimated that of Ontario's 1.6 million seniors, between 64,000 to 160,000 of them have experienced, or will experience, some form of abuse: financial, emotional or physical.

As Ontario's seniors population continues to grow, the need for positive action in our communities and across the province becomes more critical and more urgent. Ontario is playing a leadership role in helping to end elder abuse. Ontario was the first province in Canada to introduce a strategy to address this issue. Ontario's five-year, \$4.3-million strategy to combat elder abuse addresses three key priorities: greater coordination of community services, more training for front line staff who work with seniors, and broad public education and awareness building.

In 2004, Ontario was the first province to set aside a special day as Elder Abuse Awareness Day. At that time,

the Ministry of the Attorney General expanded its victim support line. The line allows seniors to get the help they need, speak to trained and qualified counsellors, and be referred to appropriate community services.

Today, we launched three television public service announcements aimed at raising the public's awareness of elder abuse. These PSAs highlight our victim support line, so that more Ontarians who suspect elder abuse will know where to turn for help.

I would like to thank the many organizations and individuals who work tirelessly to eliminate elder abuse across the province. There is no place for elder abuse in Ontario.

It is my hope that World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and other initiatives will continue to heighten our understanding of this issue, our willingness to take action and our shared commitment to the safety and dignity of Ontario's seniors.

1400

RENEWABLE FUELS

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I rise today to deliver good news for Ontario farmers, good news for agriculture, good news for the economy of rural Ontario and good news for the air every Ontarian breathes. This government is firmly on the side of families and farmers in rural Ontario. That is why we support the production of ethanol, which contributes to a cleaner environment, healthier Ontarians and stronger, more prosperous rural communities.

Building a domestic ethanol industry in rural Ontario is important for a number of reasons. It will help encourage additional private sector investments of up to \$500 million in rural communities. It will create as many as 400 permanent jobs. Most important, building a domestic ethanol industry will expand an emerging market for Ontario's corn producers.

Ethanol is all about our health and the health of our children. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping Ontario to do its part to address global warming. The renewable fuel standard, which was introduced by this government, will reduce emissions by an amount equivalent to taking 200,000 cars off our roads. It will improve the air that we breathe.

The McGuinty government has taken the lead in promoting biofuel development. In 2004, our government took the first step by introducing a renewable fuel standard. Next, we created the \$520-million ethanol growth fund to help us meet that standard with ethanol being produced right here in Ontario.

Today, we took the next step toward building an ethanol industry in Ontario. This morning in Aylmer, I announced that under the ethanol growth fund, the McGuinty government will provide \$32.5 million in capital assistance toward the construction of three new ethanol plants. Those plants will be located in Cornwall, in Hensall and in Aylmer. Once in production, these

facilities, along with two other ethanol plants in Chatham and Collingwood, will be eligible for up to \$60 million in annual operating grants. This investment is part of our government's long-term vision for Ontario's agriculture industry. It is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to rural communities and the environment. We are helping farmers by expanding agriculture's role, bringing alternative, renewable fuels into mainstream use by our society.

Today's announcement is about helping our rural communities thrive and helping our grain and oilseed sector prosper with new uses for their crop.

Ontario's farmers are the best in the world, not just because of the crops they grow but because of their ideas and their innovations. I want to give credit to the innovative thinkers in Ontario's agriculture sector who are helping us expand ethanol production. This province is home to some of the brightest leaders in industry, science and agriculture. Together, we are bringing renewable fuels to the mainstream in our society. Today's announcement demonstrates that the McGuinty government is there to support their efforts.

Today's announcement places Ontario as the leader in Canada for ethanol production. The federal government recently announced a target of 5% ethanol in gasoline by 2010. That's fully three years after Ontario reaches the very same goal. When it comes to the environment, this government is taking the lead.

I want to conclude by congratulating all of the successful applicants under the ethanol growth fund. They would be Integrated Grain Processors Co-operative, Seaway Grain Processors Inc., Blackstone Energy Services Inc., and Commercial Alcohols Inc. The McGuinty government is proud to support these leaders in the agri-food sector. We are proud of the support that we've received in rural Ontario. We know that it will contribute to the health of all Ontarians. Today's announcement demonstrates our support of that.

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

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I just want a few words in response to the Minister of Municipal Affairs with the introduction of the amendments to the Municipal Act. I want to thank him for bringing forward those amendments. Obviously the municipalities and the opposition have been waiting for some time. Many months ago, we were told that the Municipal Act would be reformed at the same time as the new City of Toronto Act was going to be introduced. We were then told that no, that wasn't going to happen, because we were going to have a City of Toronto Act and we would see how that worked, and then we would have a Municipal Act to emulate what was in the City of Toronto Act that would deal with the rest of the province.

As we all know, the City of Toronto Act was passed this week. Now we have the Municipal Act. What is

interesting is what the minister didn't say in the introduction, which is that the ability to increase taxes will not be afforded to the other municipalities in the province; it will only apply to the city of Toronto. I think that's interesting, because that is what we heard during the review of the City of Toronto Act: that taxing authority should not be allowed or sent down to municipalities. In fact, the minister has listened. We commend the minister for listening to us, seeing that it was wrong for Toronto and it's wrong for the rest of the province. We thank him for that.

There are a couple of other things. I think the minister mentioned the issue about responsibility and accountability. The municipalities already have the ability to be accountable, and they are accountable. In terms of responsibility, I have yet to find one municipality in the province of Ontario that says they want greater responsibility. They think they are looking after too many of the provincial responsibilities today.

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I would like to join all members of the House and join the minister for seniors in acknowledging world elder abuse day. It strikes me as odd that we've never once had the government acknowledge the work of Dr. Elizabeth Podnieks. The reason I want that on the record is that she was the vital link in this province to help, when I was the minister, to develop the first elder abuse strategy in North America. She took that strategy, approved by this Parliament, to Madrid, Spain, for the United Nations international conference on protecting adults. She received a standing ovation, and it was her resolution that called for a world day in recognition of elder abuse. So every year when I have occasion to stand on this occasion, I continue to pay tribute to this outstanding, seasoned citizen who has done so much for our country and globally on abuse awareness. Dr. Podnieks has received the Order of Canada and various other accolades. She is a woman from Toronto who has done immense work.

I support the government for extending the program that was started by the previous government. They haven't increased more money, but at least you're funding at the same amount that we were, and we commend you for that.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I'm pleased to respond to the announcement by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. Minister, again this is another McGuinty Liberal announcement that we're all supposed to jump up and be thrilled about. Three years into their mandate, they're finally making some kind of announcement, because for three years they were missing in action. Missing in action, three years

since the election. It has been a big story for them since their election, it was a big election commitment, but only now, after people like Mayor Terry Geddes in Collingwood has chastised them for sitting on their hands and doing nothing about this, and my colleague Jim Wilson from Simcoe–Grey as well, they are finally pressed into some kind of action on this. They've been embarrassed by the federal government because their commitments were far earlier in coming.

Now they've set some targets. Well, this government has a wonderful, wonderful ability to set targets; it's very, very poor when it starts to have to shoot for those targets. Case in point is their coal promise here in the province of Ontario: "It's on, come hell or high water." "No, no, no, we're not going to quite make it." "Oh, we're not going to make it at all."

The people in this province don't believe anything you say anymore. There is nothing that you people can say to the people of Ontario that they're going to believe anymore. In fact, in the real world, if someone set targets and missed them as often as this government does, as I suspect they'll miss another one, they would be out of a job. On October 4, 2007, you're up for an interview. My bet is, you're out of a job.

1410

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Agriculture, who wants to claim that she's doing something wonderful for Ontario farmers today. The truth is, the McGuinty government is doing something wonderful for American farmers. We all know—because I've met with grain and oilseed farmers—that most of the corn that is going into the McGuinty ethanol plants is subsidized American corn from Michigan, from Ohio, from Iowa, from Nebraska. In fact, grain and oilseed farmers in Ontario have to watch as the trucks go by their door bringing the corn from the United States to the ethanol plants that the McGuinty government is subsidizing.

I'll tell you who will be happy about this: George Bush will be happy about this. Dalton McGuinty is helping him subsidize American grain and oilseed farmers while Ontario grain and oilseed farmers go out of business. If you really wanted to help Ontario farmers, you would be doing what Manitoba is doing: make it part of the licence of the ethanol plant that they have to buy their product—their corn, their grain, their oilseed—from Ontario farmers.

But no, the McGuinty government is in there with George Bush, helping to subsidize American farmers. And now they want to claim credit for it.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): In response to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I thank him very much for sending me over a package that of course I cannot use: a computer disk. We are not allowed to have computers on our desks, so there it is.

And then he sends me 400 pages to which to respond, 200 in English and 200 in French.

But I have had a chance in the last 15 minutes to look through some of it, and I have to tell you that this bill, long in anticipation, is very short in substance. I've looked through it. I saw what you did for the city of Toronto; we supported what you did for the city of Toronto, although the bill itself was severely flawed in many respects. But we supported it because it did more good than harm. But I will tell you, I expected to see some of the same things for the municipalities in Ontario, which I simply do not see here.

What I do see here, though, and what I heard in your own announcements, is that the heavy hammer of the minister stands ready and poised to make sure that if the municipalities take even one step out of place, you will put them right back where they belong and where you think they belong. I will tell you, if you are really going to say the words that they are mature and responsible forms of government, then you have to give them that kind of respect. I do not see it in this bill at all.

I was rather puzzled and somewhat bemused to see schedule B contained in these 400 pages, because schedule B has a number of clarifications, adjustments and complementary changes to improve the wording of the City of Toronto Act. It's only two days old and you're already amending it. Obviously, you knew you were going to amend it. I can't believe you printed this up this morning, because it's 400 pages long. Even as you were passing it, you knew it wasn't right, and there it is. I see all the amendments that you're making in schedules B and C, and there they are.

But what was really missing and what we always look forward to and all the municipalities really need is a better funding formula. We know that your government stands up on the federal government and talks about a \$23-billion gap. What about the \$3-billion gap between this government and the municipalities in the bill you're passing today? What about the \$3 billion that you take off them in the taxation each and every year? We are the only province in Canada that does that. I'd like to quote the federal government. The federal government noted this situation in the 2004 federal budget, and I quote them: "Spending for social services, health and housing represents a very small share of municipal expenditures in most provinces, except in Ontario where it represents almost a third of total municipal spending." That's what you need to fix, and that's what you're not fixing: \$3.2 billion that are you taking from the municipalities and that you ought not to.

Those are the kinds of things we think should be in this bill. Those are the kinds of things, unfortunately, that you shy away from, the kinds of things that you're not willing to repair, the kinds of things you're not willing to change. That's what a Minister of Municipal Affairs should be doing and should be advocating. We look forward to hearing from the municipalities if what you're giving them was what they want or if what you're giving them is not—

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): On a point of order, the member for Brant.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Thank you, Speaker, for allowing this. Today, visiting us all the way from Brantford, Ontario, are Mr. and Mrs. Craven, the grandparents of Jared, named in Kevin and Jared's Law. They're out front collecting names for a petition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): My question is for the acting Premier. Can you explain to this House, to the people of Caledonia and to front-line OPP officers just why your government is going back to the negotiating table with individuals who are refusing to turn over someone charged with the attempted murder of an OPP constable? Why would you do that?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I refer that question to the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I think the member opposite needs to get his facts straight. He's listening to comments from spokespeople in newspapers. He's listening to innuendo. The facts are that there is a protocol between the Six Nations police and the OPP. The Six Nations police are a police force under the authority of the elected band and council of Six Nations, which is the largest First Nation in Canada, about 22,000 people. It has a professional police force, and it is doing its job and is co-operating with the OPP in pursuit of these offenders.

Mr. Runciman: The facts are that Ontario is now operating under the Neville McGuinty rule of law, where persons breaking the law are laying down the terms for thinking about complying with it while they hide those who have broken it with impunity. Minister, how can you expect to achieve a fair resolution to this standoff when you are displaying such incredible weakness?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I don't think it was weakness when the Premier of Ontario basically called off these negotiations a few days ago because he did not see the progress we were expecting. Since that time, when the Premier asked for those barricades to be down, those barricades have come down. Life is as normal as it can be at the moment in Caledonia. We have land that is still occupied, but we are working on that. As we speak, in fact, the long-term table, with Jane Stewart representing Ontario, is in discussions now. I would hope that the member opposite would be wishing, as I wish, Godspeed to those people so they can progress and solve this peacefully.

Mr. Runciman: We've been hearing the same line from that minister for two months now. This past Monday, after 105 days, the longest native land occupation in

Canadian history, Mr. McGuinty did his Arnold Schwarzenegger imitation and laid down two clear and explicit conditions for re-entering negotiations with the occupiers. The very next day, he waved the white flag and headed back to the negotiating table.

From the beginning, the Caledonia lawlessness has been a textbook demonstration of political chaos, confusion and cowardice. Minister, do the right thing and walk away from the negotiating table until those charged with violent lawbreaking are turned over to the police. Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: What the Premier asked for and what the Premier received was the co-operation of the Six Nations police force, and that is happening. That professional police force, which polices 22,000 Canadian citizens south of Caledonia on that reserve, is acting as the professional police force that it is. It is doing its job, and it's working in conjunction with the OPP.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Over the last 108 days of the crisis in Caledonia, we have seen some 15 Ontario Provincial Police officers injured. We have seen hundreds of others confronted by thugs, threats and extraordinary violence along the protest lines. I ask the minister, how does a front-line Ontario Provincial Police officer feel when he hears that a fugitive, wanted for the attempted murder of an Ontario Provincial Police officer, remains at large and that Premier McGuinty returned to the bargaining table with the exact same people—a fugitive, Minister, wanted for the attempted murder of an Ontario Provincial Police officer. Please tell me, Minister, that you stood up in cabinet and that you will stand up in the House and tell Premier McGuinty he is just plain wrong.

1420

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Let's talk about who is just plain wrong. What you have just said is that someone should go in, circumvent the police process and grab somebody. This is the rule of law. Right now, we have a situation where warrants have been issued. There is a recognized professional police service in Six Nations, and they have agreed to co-operate with the OPP. The police are doing their thing without political interference. What you're doing is trying to inject political interference, and that's totally unacceptable.

Mr. Hudak: Minister, with all due respect, you are a senior cabinet minister around that table. You are a veteran here in the Ontario Legislative Assembly. Your word carries great weight in the assembly and at the cabinet table. But what have we seen of this minister? We have seen the minister effectively condone a no-go zone for the Ontario Provincial Police. We have seen police officers dragged out of their car, their windows smashed, arrested by protestors, and you don't say a word. Minister, when are you going to stand up for our

hard-working Ontario Provincial Police officers, say that you're behind them, and tell Premier McGuinty that his weak leadership and going back to the table while these fugitives are still at large is just plain wrong?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: Let me tell you the situation we have. The only ability the opposition has to raise questions is what they read in the media. I don't know what they're doing with their research money, but obviously the only thing that ever triggers anything, whether it be John Tory or whether it be the former Solicitor General or whether it be you, is what you read in the paper. I have to say, with all due respect, that a lot of the things that are in the paper do not reflect what is happening on the ground.

We have a situation right now where the provincial police—I have a lot of confidence in them, and they are doing a wonderful job in that area—are working in co-operation. The spokesperson for the chief for the First Nations police service has said that they are co-operating with the OPP, and they're letting the process work. You're trying to circumvent that process, and that is not acceptable.

Mr. Hudak: What I want to read in the paper is a minister who is going to stand up and support the Ontario Provincial Police in the province of Ontario. All we're seeing from this minister, a veteran and respected cabinet minister, is lying down while Dalton McGuinty goes back to the negotiating table while somebody wanted for the attempted murder of an Ontario Provincial Police officer runs at large, without co-operation.

I cannot imagine what we've seen, where police officers are not permitted to wear protective gear when confronting protestors. I cannot believe that we have not seen the minister stand up and say that is just plain wrong. Minister, I can't believe you're not calling Dalton McGuinty on the carpet for his gutless leadership on this file. Are you going to stand up for the police and tell the Premier he is wrong, or are you going to step aside and let somebody else do the job you should be doing?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: If the opposition would only stand up and say, "Here's what you should do: Go in and interfere with the police. Do all of these things"—if you feel that I have the authority or the desire to tell the OPP how they should dress their officers, how they should deploy their officers, that is in fact political interference. The former Solicitor General is on the record as saying, as the previous minister, "I would never interfere with the police." That is what we are doing right now. The police have the ability to deal with the situation as they find it. I certainly challenge you to have one single senior police officer—

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

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. It's been quite a big week for the Minister of Energy. He unveiled the McGuinty nuclear mega-scheme to a room full of

reporters. He sponsored a well-attended technical briefing. He conducted hours of one-on-one TV and radio interviews. My question is this: During all of that, can the minister tell us why he never said a word to anyone about the McGuinty government's new regulation 276/06 which undermines Ontario's environmental assessment process and exempts the McGuinty government's nuclear mega-scheme from the provincial environmental assessment it really needs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): As Minister of the Environment, I am telling you in the strongest terms that no new electrical facility will be built in this province without an examination under an environmental assessment process. No new plant will be built, whether it's wind, hydro, water or nuclear, without undertaking either a federal or a provincial environmental assessment. That is my firm and unbinding commitment to the people of this province, some of whom from my riding are up in the galleries today. They depend on us to make sure they are safe. They depend on us to make sure we have a clean, green supply of energy into the future. We are going to do what those on that side of the House have not done. We are going to make sure that we build a clean, green supply of energy in this province, that we stop burning dirty coal, and that we do it to make sure future generations are safe and healthy in this province.

Mr. Hampton: The regulation speaks for itself: "Designation and Exemption of Integrated Power System Plan" from an environmental assessment under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act. This was all done secretly behind closed doors. Minister of Environment didn't say a word; Premier didn't say a word; Minister of Energy didn't say a word. It's a very cynical, cheap attempt to avoid proper public scrutiny of what will be the biggest nuclear mega-scheme in the history of Ontario. My question, again to the Minister of Energy: When did the Dalton McGuinty who promised to stand up for Ontario's environment become the Premier who waters down the Environmental Assessment Act and tries to hide his nuclear mega-scheme from proper scrutiny?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Let me be absolutely clear, as I have consistently been, and the decisions I have consistently made are that broad government policy direction is not the appropriate subject matter of the Environmental Assessment Act. The IPSP will be a reflection of that broad government policy direction. The IPSP is being developed by the OPA, and Ontario's Environmental Assessment Act does not designate the OPA as a public body. If you take a look at the Electricity Act, it clearly says that the OPA is not a crown agency. The law is very clear. I read the law, I follow the law and I make decisions according to that law. I make decisions to protect the environment and the health of Ontarians so that we can together see a future where we will have more wind power, where we have more solar power, where we will have clean, green sources of electricity, so that we can stop spewing pollutants into our air.

Mr. Hampton: I think people across Ontario know what is going on. This \$46-billion nuclear mega-scheme will have huge impacts on the environment, huge impacts on people's hydro bills and huge impacts on the economy of the province. Under current Ontario law, it's required to undergo a provincial environmental assessment, but the McGuinty government wants to hide its nuclear mega-scheme from proper scrutiny. The McGuinty government wants to look for a place to avoid proper public scrutiny under an Ontario Environmental Assessment Act process.

My question to the minister is this: If you say you've got nothing to hide, then why are you trying to hide? Why are you passing a regulation to exempt your nuclear power scheme? Why are you looking for a way to avoid proper scrutiny? If you've got nothing to hide, why are you trying so hard—

1430

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question's been asked. Minister.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I think the member opposite is confused. He has confused what is in the regulation. It's an administrative regulation that is confirming what I have said and decided all along. This is the same decision I made with respect to the coal replacement plan last fall—that that broad policy decision was not the subject matter of an environmental assessment—and I didn't hear the member opposite complaining about that decision at that time.

I guess he chooses to agree or disagree with the precedent of the law depending on how it suits his purpose. I don't operate that way. I look at the law. I follow the law. I read the Electricity Act and the Environmental Assessment Act. I make decisions that historically follow that legislation. The administrative regulation that has been put in place is to provide certainty and clarity so that we can move forward in this province and build the generation capacity we need to build so that we can have a clean, green future in this province. We're prepared to make tough decisions and—

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

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of the Environment: There never was a coal replacement program. People across Ontario found that out this week. It was another one of Dalton McGuinty's promises to get a vote.

Minister, this is what your order says:

"Designation and exemption from ... integrated power system plan...."

"3(1) Any enterprise or activity related to an integrated power system plan, or any proposal, plan or program in respect of such an enterprise or activity, carried out by or on behalf of Her Majesty in right of Ontario"—that's the McGuinty government—"is exempt...."

Minister, if your nuclear mega scheme didn't require an environmental assessment, why in the backroom, in secret, is the McGuinty government passing a regulation to exempt it from an environmental assessment?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I would say to my friend opposite that there is no secret. The regulation was posted on e-

Laws. You didn't find it in my desk drawer. You didn't find it under a rock. You found it on a publicly accessible website, where that information was posted to disclose administrative decisions that have been made.

As I've said before, we have been clear and consistent all along. Broad government public policy is not the subject matter of an environmental assessment. The regulation has been put in place to clarify and to provide certainty with respect to those decisions that have been made, to ensure that we can move forward.

As I indicated, my friend has misunderstood the regulation in terms of what that regulation is about. You've also missed companion regulation 424, which I'm going to be pleased to tell you about in the supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The Minister of the Environment says the McGuinty government has nothing to hide. We see, day after day, ministers get up and announce legislation or new regulations. We saw the Minister of Energy go on his media tour, telling people what a great plan he had, but not a whisper, not even a nod, from the McGuinty government that it was in the backroom, passing a secret regulation to exempt their nuclear mega scheme from the Ontario environmental assessment that otherwise would be necessary.

Here's what you've done, Minister. Instead of standing up to protect Ontario's environmental laws, you have watered them down and weakened them. I say again, when did the McGuinty government, that was supposed to protect the environment, become the government that is looking for a place to hide your nuclear mega scheme so it doesn't get any public scrutiny?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I'll remind my friend opposite what I have consistently said: Every single project will be subject to an environmental assessment process to ensure, and ask the questions, whether it should be built, where it should be built, how it should be built, and how we will move forward with developing new electricity in this province while ensuring Ontario's residents are protected.

Companion regulation 424, which my friend fails to comment on, strengthens the requirement that the Ontario Power Authority consider the environment. We've ask the OPA to examine the issues related to the environment, to clarify the consultation requirements, to add a definition of environment, and ensure that they consider the environment in the plan preparation. While they are examining this broad plan, which is not the subject matter of the environmental assessment, they will examine the issues related to the environment as we move forward. We know that will take them some more time to do, but we think it's important they put the issues of the environment—

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: I think the people of Ontario know there is a proper place for the Dalton McGuinty nuclear mega-scheme to receive an independent review. It's called an Ontario environmental assessment. What the McGuinty government is doing is exempting it, and then they're going to send it to the Ontario Power Authority,

an agency that promotes nuclear power and coal, and say, "Oh, that'll be an okay substitute." Let me tell you, the Ontario Power Authority has already made up its mind on these issues. They're not going to give it an independent review.

Minister, it's your job to stand up for the environment. Instead, you are weakening Ontario's environmental protections. I ask you this: Why do you get the extra money? Why do you get the limousine? Why do you get the title of Minister of the Environment if you're not prepared to stand up and do your job? If you're not prepared to stand up and do your job, why don't you resign, Minister?

Hon. Ms. Broten: Anybody who knows me knows I drive in a hybrid, so perhaps my friend hasn't seen my travel to and from work.

As Minister of the Environment, I'm repeating once again, and telling you in the most crystal clear nature I can, that no new plant will be built in this province without being the subject of an environmental assessment. Whether that's federal or provincial, the issues will be examined. Our directive is absolutely clear. Our directive is about moving forward in a way to ensure that we have a clean, green supply of energy in this province, that we double conservation 10 times from where we are now, that we double renewables, that we get rid of dirty coal and that we ensure we can keep the lights on in this province.

We are prepared to make the tough decisions you were not prepared to make when you were in government, and that the former government was not prepared to make. We are going to move forward. At the same time, we will protect Ontarians. I take the responsibilities I have been given very seriously. We are strengthening the provisions for the OPA, and we will ensure that we have a clean, green—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. New question.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is to the Acting Premier. On May 10, I rose in the House and asked your Minister of Health to provide interim bridge funding for treatment for Isaac McFadyen. Isaac, if you remember, was born with an extremely rare, relentless and debilitating disease called MPS-VI, which results in shortened stature, joint stiffness—just to name a few. According to Dr. Joe Clarke of Sick Kids, enzyme replacement therapy can reverse some of the problems of this disease and may prevent them altogether.

Despite the assurances of your minister on that day, the McFadyen family has been very frustrated with the lack of progress. They're here again today. In fact, Andrew McFadyen, the father, says in an e-mail, "I've been in contact with the Ministry staff and they simply continue to say they are 'working' on the file." I ask you, Acting Premier, will you commit to respond to their

desperate plea for interim bridge funding for enzyme replacement therapy for their son?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I appreciate the family's concern, obviously. My understanding is that the minister's office has been in touch with the family and are working with them. As I think the House, the Legislature, knows, it's a drug that, I gather, does not have what's called here a Notice of Compliance from Health Canada as yet. It's currently only available through their special access program. I know the minister is working with the manufacturer, trying to work to our resolution. Like many of these new drugs, with a fairly significant investment required, sometimes these things take time. I would just let the House know that only today, I think, the ministers of health announced a program on another drug with a significant advancement. So I'd say our minister is working on these matters. On this particular one, I know he has been in touch with the family, looking for a solution. I don't think one has been found yet, but I know he's been working on it.

1440

Mrs. Witmer: Well, Acting Premier, I know you're a compassionate person, and the reality is that there has been little communication, if any, with the family. They are very frustrated at the lack of contact and at the speed at which progress is being made. If we take a look at Fabry disease, I've raised that issue 17 times in this House since April 2003, I believe, and we now have finally seen some resolution at the national level.

This treatment that I'm asking for is available in other countries. Time is running out. The family can get treatment in Britain, and if they do not get approval from your government, they will be forced to move. I say to you today, will you commit to provide interim—I'm not requesting for permanent—bridge funding for treatment until a long-term solution can be found? Please listen to their pleas for help. They're here again today from Kingston. They are desperate for your help.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I appreciate the member's comments. I'd just say about our Minister of Health that I actually don't know where he gets the energy. I find him, frankly, very accessible and constantly meeting with individuals. I say that in his defence.

I hope the member and the public appreciate the challenges in these things. I repeat: I think it was just today that the ministers of health announced funding for a new drug—I realize not this one—but an additional \$148 million, I believe. These matters are difficult to resolve. I certainly will undertake to talk to the minister. He has already said his office is in contact with the family and looking for a solution. I can assure you, on our behalf, that our minister will do whatever he possibly can. These matters sometimes are not easily resolved, as I think you, as a former health minister, would know.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Attorney General. You have repeatedly claimed that your plan to reform the Ontario Human Rights Commission is inspired by the Cornish report. Today, Tom Warner, a former Human Rights Commissioner and one of the members of the Cornish task force, says that your plan will weaken, not strengthen, human rights protection in Ontario. Mr. Warner is one of hundreds of people, the very people who rely on the Human Rights Commission, who say your scheme will undermine their human rights.

My question is, why are you ignoring them? Why won't you stand your bill down and conduct the province-wide consultations on the Human Rights Commission that Tom Warner and others have been asking you to do for some time now?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I thank the member for the question. I know that everyone who worked on the Cornish task force, that was empanelled by the NDP government in 1992, I believe, is extremely dedicated to improving our human rights system. I know that Mary Cornish herself has indicated that she feels this bill is a very positive step forward. She and a number of people have quite rightly been taking this opportunity—an historic opportunity; the first of its kind in more than 40 years—to make changes to the Human Rights Code. I think we all want the same thing, and that includes public consultations. That's why we're very anxious to get going with full public hearings, which, of course, is a very important reason, if not the primary reason, for the consultation. We look forward to having them under way, and if the member wishes those to be under way right away, I—

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

Mr. Hampton: People like Mr. Warner are very clear: They're not interested in public hearings on your flawed bill and your flawed process. What they want is to go back to the drawing board and consult on that the real issues are at the Human Rights Commission and then seek consensus on what needs to be done.

It's not just him alone; we've heard from advocates for racial, religious and ethnic minorities, advocates for gays, lesbians. They all say they can't get the public consultation process that they've asked for over and over again, that you simply refuse to listen to them. Now, a former human rights commissioner is saying the same thing. All they're asking for is a fair process, a province-wide consultation on what the issues really are rather than your narrow, selective approach. What's wrong with what they're asking for, Minister? It seems perfectly reasonable to me.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member is the leader of a party which is opposed to this. They are opposed to a direct access system. They had an opportunity to bring in a direct access system when they were in government,

and they were against it. We've heard from the justice critic for the NDP: They're against it. They're against a direct access system. They're against the recommendations of the Cornish report—that's clear—so they're on that side. We're on the side of people who want to make improvements to a human rights system that quite frankly has not been working for many, many years.

I'm not sure that the member entirely accurately characterizes what was said today. I received the letter from the people who spoke today. They said, "We commend your government's commitment to advance human rights." They said that no one wants the status quo. So I say to the member, yes, we're having a debate on this; yes, we're consulting on this; yes, we've been consulting on this for years. But unlike what you want to do, we're not going to delay this. We want to bring this forward in the name of human rights and in the name of modernizing—

The Speaker: Thank you.

HIGHWAY 24

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, as I am sure you're aware, the riding of Brant is growing. Brantford's population is expected to increase to 100,000 people within the next five or so years. Their post-secondary student population is rapidly expanding, with Mohawk College, Laurier Brantford and Nipissing campuses in the downtown core. With our downtown revitalization project and our proximity to the K-W area, Kitchener, Cambridge, Hamilton, the new Toyota plant in Woodstock and the GTA, Brantford's commuting population is also increasing.

Highway 24 serves as a vital link from Highway 403 to Highway 401 for many of my constituents and companies. Because of the development along the current Highway 24 and increases in traffic volume, congestion and safety is a growing concern; economic development as well. Minister, can you tell me what our government is presently doing to help that congestion, safety and economic development along Highway 24?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the member for Brant. I don't think I was the Minister of Transportation for about two seconds when this member was asking me about Highway 24, so I commend him to his constituency for his tenacity. I am pleased to stand in the House today to say that the Ministry of Transportation will in fact begin a planning and environmental assessment study for a new and improved corridor from Highway 403 in Brantford to Highway 401 in Cambridge. This study will look at all the alternatives through this section, including major realignment, bypass sections of the existing highway, a new provincial highway, widening the existing highway and a transitway. Of course, we will do this in concert, with consultation with the municipality and with the public.

Mr. Levac: Talk about music to my ears, and I know to many, many people in my riding; Highway 24 expansion is a great piece of news for us. I look forward to working with the folks at the MTO, my constituents, the stakeholders, the public and the municipalities to address what we know moving forward on 24 really means; actually, I want to call it 424.

As I said, Brantford's proximity to the GTA and other business hubs such as Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Cambridge, Woodstock, Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk make it a very attractive place to live, work, play and raise a family. People often comment that transportation issues are a top priority to this commuting nation. I know that transportation is a priority to the McGuinty government as well. As we speak, Minister, a meeting between eight mayors representing over 1.8 million people is being planned to discuss Highway 424. Would you be able to tell me what provincial investments have been made up to this point to help ease our congestion and concerning safety and business development in this riding?

1450

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise and answer the member's question. Obviously, we believe that congestion means striking a balance, not only with our public transit but, as well, investing in our road infrastructure. That's why the McGuinty government is making the largest investment in public transit in a decade. We're also the first government to dedicate two cents per litre of provincial gas taxes to supporting municipal transit.

Since October 2003, Brantford has received \$1.5 million in gas tax funding to support their investments to expand and rehabilitate their transit system. Also, in this year's budget, the McGuinty government has announced \$1.4 billion of Move Ontario funding and has included a one-time \$400-million program to support municipalities. Of that, \$2.7 million went to the county of Brant, and the city of Brantford received \$3.7 million.

There's no question that we are committed to investing, not only in the infrastructure on our highways but also the infrastructure in our transit, to move the people of Ontario, efficiently, effectively and safely.

NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Last Thursday, in response to my question regarding the community fisheries and wildlife involvement program, you committed to full funding of the \$1-million program. As you know, this funding funds thousands of local stocking and fish habitat programs involving some 35,000 volunteers across the province. While this is good news, can you tell this House whether the \$500,000 in funding, the CFWIP, will be new money or will it involve the reallocation of money from another program

within the Ministry of Natural Resources? So, new money or a reallocation of money?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): This will be the same money that we used last year, except it's this year's new money for this program. It's all within the budget; we just didn't cut it out. So the budget item is there, as it was last year. It's there again this year, and those monies are flowing out, as we speak, to the community organizations.

Mr. Miller: I'm happy to hear that you won't be taking funds from another program. Every day, we hear about cutbacks in your ministry, whether it be parks staff, conservation officers, counter service at district offices or stocking programs.

Minister, I'd like to ask you about another promise you made in the election, and that is that you and the Premier and the Liberal Party of Ontario made a written commitment in the 2003 election to fully fund the fish and wildlife program of the Ministry of Natural Resources. The government heard in the prebudget consultations from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters that this program is unable to properly protect Ontario's fish and wildlife and in fact is underfunded to the tune of some \$25 million. Minister, when is your government going to honour the written commitment made in the 2003 election campaign to fully fund the fish and wildlife program?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: As the member knows, MNR is probably one of the only ministries in government that has two special-purpose accounts: one of them is involved with parks and the other with fish and wildlife management. What that means is that the revenues we take in from the sale of licences goes into the special-purpose account, solely for the purpose of managing fish and game. This is something we want to work with our stakeholder groups about, because we feel that with some of the decline in purchases of hunting licences, for instance, those revenues are projected to decline. So we're going to have to sit down—we are having negotiations and discussions, in a broad sense, with our stakeholders as to how we can build the revenues up for the special-purpose account. Obviously, this could possibly mean increases for licenses. This is something that I don't necessarily want to do at the moment. It's something we want to move on very carefully and make sure that we're talking with all the people concerned, because we don't want to be imposing increased fees on hunters and anglers—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): A question for the Acting Premier: In February, your Minister of Health received a letter from the family and friends' council of the Peter D. Clarke long-term care centre in Ottawa that reads as follows:

"The nursing staff work very hard to do all they ... can for the residents with the person-power and time available but there never is enough. Volunteers and family members have to fill in the gaps...."

"We understand that inmates in prisons, who have ... done something against society, get more money allowed for food each day than long-term-care residents who have done nothing wrong other than get old and sick and are seemingly forgotten...."

"We are asking for your help by giving long-term care in Ontario more funding for food and staffing."

They have yet to receive a reply to this letter.

Acting Premier, in the last election your party promised residents like these that you would provide an additional \$6,000 in care for every resident. When will your government actually fulfill that promise?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I would just say, I'm quite proud of what we've done with long-term care, and the Minister of Health has made it an enormous priority. I'd refresh the member's memory and certainly the public's memory that since we came into office less than three years ago, we've increased the investment by 35%—\$740 million. This year alone we put an additional investment in these important institutions of \$155 million—almost a 6% increase. We've allowed them to hire, as a result of this funding, almost 500 more nurses and 2,300 more staff. We have some regulations around 24-hour, seven-day-a-week nursing and minimum baths.

In spite of the fact that we inherited a relatively difficult fiscal situation, we've made sure that we put a priority on this. As I say, a 35% increase in investment, \$740 million in long-term care, is a substantial and meaningful investment, and I'm very proud of what our Minister of Health has done here.

Ms. Martel: The promise is quite specific. In the last election, the Liberal Party said, and I quote, "Invest in better nursing home care, providing an additional \$6,000 in care for every resident." Over the last three budgets, the amount of annual funding going directly to care of residents has only increased by \$2,000, not \$6,000. That is why Donna Rubin, who's the president of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, said on March 23, 2006, the day of the budget, "We're disappointed and, quite frankly, very frustrated. With the province recording higher-than-anticipated tax revenues, we expected the government to make good on its commitment to revolutionize long-term care."

I say to the Acting Premier: Your party made a very specific promise. When are you going to provide the additional \$6,000 in care for every resident in every long-term-care home—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again I say to the member, and directly to the public, I think we have made major investments in this. I think the public understand the situation we inherited, and I hope the public understand that we have made a major commitment to this. The NDP

always says it's never enough, but it's \$740 million, a 35% increase in investment—a major investment—2,300 new staff, almost 500 new nurses, tougher inspections, 24/7 nursing.

I must say, I do get slightly tired of the lectures from the NDP. When you were in government, you increased—and this is always rich. You lecture us, but you increased prison food payments by almost 7%; you increased long-term-care food payments by zero. So I appreciate the lecture, but I think the public should understand that we're delivering.

STREET RACING

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Attorney General—

Interjections.

Mr. Racco: If I can ask the question, please? And the Conservatives may want to listen. It has to do with law and order that we certainly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The member for Thornhill.

Mr. Racco: John Tory may want to know that this question has to do with law and order, and the Conservatives should wait for the answer.

My question is for the Attorney General. Recently there has been coverage on the news about the dangerous activity of street racing and the devastating effects it has had on the people of Ontario. While street racing has been an issue of concern for some time, the frequency and severity of damage related to this irresponsible behaviour is increasing and unacceptable.

In January, Tahir Khan, a Toronto cab driver, was killed in an alleged street racing incident. More recently, on May 28, Rob and Lisa Manchester were killed when their vehicle was struck by a car involved in street racing. As a result of this tragedy, their seven-year-old daughter, Katie, has been left without parents.

1500

York region is a particularly bad area for street racing due to its history as a rural and industrial area. It is highly unacceptable for my constituents to be exposed to this behaviour. Minister, can you tell this House what legal instruments are currently available to us to address the problem of street racing—

The Speaker: Thank you. The Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I thank the member for his question. Obviously, all members of this House express their deepest sympathies to the Manchester family and to the Khan family for the tragedies that they've experienced, and all the victims of street racing, the more than 30 people who have died in the Greater Toronto Area alone in not too many years since 1999.

Currently, law enforcement tools are available and the police and prosecutors use them through our criminal justice system. As well, there is a civil forfeiture system which we are using, building on one of the oldest con-

cepts of law, to seize, forfeit and, where appropriate, destroy property that's being used for unlawful purposes.

The bill and its action focus on the connection between property and unlawful activity. That's not dependent on any criminal charges or convictions. It allows us to make our communities safe, and I'll provide more details in the supplementary.

Mr. Racco: I have discussed the subject of street racing with York Regional Police Chief Armand La Barge, not only this morning, but in the past. He and I would like to see action taken as soon as possible in order to prevent any further tragedies.

Minister, can you please tell this chamber whether this legislation has ever been used, and if so, how has it been used specifically to address the issue of street racing?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Since the fall of 2003, we've used the legislation to seize more than \$2 million of assets, and more than \$8 million is before the courts—everything ranging from equipment used in marijuana grow-op operations, weapons, money, a crack house in Hamilton that was closed down.

Today, along with York Regional Police Chief Armand La Barge, we destroyed for the first time, using this legislation, two street racing cars. Chief La Barge and his police service have really been leaders in working with the ministry in using this legislation. Practically speaking, what we've done is taken two cars, which were obviously extremely dangerous to that community, and put them out of commission for good; and secondly, sent a message to the streets that those who engage in street racing will face the wrath of the criminal law, yes, but we're also going to take their cars away and we'll take them away forever.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is for the Acting Premier, given that the Minister of Transportation had to leave; that's unfortunate.

On December 14, 2005, the previous Minister of Transportation, Minister Takhar, told me in response to an order paper question that his ministry was waiting on federal approvals from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans before they could continue with the realignment and paving of Highway 26 from Stayner to Collingwood.

Well, Acting Premier, I wrote the federal minister and I just received a letter from him that indicates that you people haven't talked to the federal government about Highway 26 since you came to office in 2003. The letter states, "To date, DFO"—Department of Fisheries and Oceans—"has not received design plans from MTO." I've also just gotten off the phone with the district director at fisheries and oceans, and he confirmed what the minister has said.

Minister, are you going to continue to blame the federal government or are you going to stop the excuses and restart the safety initiative, the realignment of Highway 26 between Stayner and Collingwood?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): The information I have regarding Highway 26 is that the staff at MTO—Ministry of Transportation—do continue to work with the municipality and the archaeological society to ensure that all issues regarding that burial ground have been resolved before we move forward with awarding construction contracts. This is information I have.

I'm told that human remains were found along Highway 26 several months ago. We continue to work to identify the remains. They were found during a tree contract that was being conducted along the designated route for the new Highway 26.

My understanding is that the staff at MTO are working on this matter with the municipality and the archaeological society, and until it's resolved, obviously, it can't proceed.

Mr. Wilson: We heard this excuse from Mr. Takhar, the previous Minister of Transportation, when he said there was a graveyard in the way. The graveyard was found several years ago. It's not even a graveyard; it's one grave. The bones have been identified. They're 15,000 years old. You're going to find them all over Simcoe–Grey and all over Simcoe county.

Tell me why your government doesn't care about the 833 people who have been maimed, harmed and mutilated on that highway in the past eight years? It's a safety issue. We didn't do it for politics. The facts have obviously been obfuscated by the previous minister. First, he tells me he doesn't have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): You might want to rethink the use of that word. Withdraw.

Mr. Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

In the three years I've been asking questions, I've been told there are human remains in the way, which is laughable to the local people. Mr. Takhar told me in this House that he didn't have the final design plans, so the next day I brought them into the House, all six inches of them, and I handed them to him.

I just want to know, is this behaviour from your government indicative of the way you're going to treat serious safety issues on our highways? You've not been straightforward. You've used every excuse in the book, and it's time you and your government came clean on this issue. We're tired of it, frankly, and the thousands of people who travel that highway—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: The people in his area recognize that he was in government for eight years, and he didn't get it done. He can get red-faced here and yell all he wants, but there are some processes that I hope you would want us to respect, including when we find human remains. We're not going to go ahead and pave it just because you want it done.

I would say to the people of Simcoe county, again, recognize that while he yells at us today, in eight years he didn't get it done.

Remember the budget presented by my colleague here just a few weeks ago—\$400 million, year end, sent out to the municipalities for roads. If I'm not mistaken, at least \$8 million of that went to your area. So I would say, if you want the evidence of our commitment to good roads, there it is. If you want the evidence of a kind of manufactured outrage from someone who didn't get it done in eight years, well, we're getting it on with this. You'll see it in the House today.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. We learned yesterday that hydro ratepayers will have to pay tens of millions of dollars in cancellation fees, and perhaps damages, that result from the McGuinty government's decision to cancel the natural gas pipeline in Thunder Bay that was supposed to go over to the coal-fired plant.

Acting Premier, since this all comes out of the very cynical promise of Dalton McGuinty to close the coal-fired plants, a cynical promise that never had a plan and that you had no intention of ever implementing, don't you think the Ontario Liberal Party should be paying these costs and not hydro ratepayers?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Who paid for that rainforest in Costa Rica?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): That's right.

I think it's fair to say that you have to look at the costs we're developing in replacing coal-fired generation, which you opposed. You told us to do this, by the way. You told us not to do this. You have to look at those costs associated, say, for instance, with the opportunity to develop more hydroelectric opportunities in the north-west, something the member would likely support.

So rather than proceed with an undertaking that was becoming more expensive, we decided, all facts considered, there may be a less expensive way to shut down the coal-fired generation. I know you don't agree with that. We are proceeding on that basis. We've asked the power authority to look at all those options again to ensure that, as we phase out coal-fired generation, we do it in what I would call a responsible fashion financially.

1510

Mr. Hampton: Minister, this is about hydro ratepayers, who have already watched the McGuinty government drive their hydro bills through the roof. This is about industries like paper mills and pulp mills, where you're forcing them to pay seven and eight cents a kilowatt hour for electricity that only costs 2.5 cents a kilowatt hour in northwestern Ontario to produce, and they're simply asking why they should now have to pay even higher hydro bills, when this all comes out of Dalton McGuinty's cynical promise to close coal-fired plants. Why isn't the Ontario Liberal Party paying for Dalton

McGuinty's cynical promise? Why do you force hydro ratepayers to pay for Dalton McGuinty's mistake?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The ratepayers of Ontario are paying for the 53% increase in electricity prices [*inaudible*]. The ratepayers in Ontario are paying the price today because you didn't take the decisions that we've taken to bring on a cleaner, greener and newer supply. Ontario ratepayers are paying for a history of neglect, are paying for governments that bought rain-forests in Costa Rica, are paying for failed schemes, are paying for the fact that you cancelled the Conawapa hydro deal. They're paying for the fact that you've cancelled all conservation programs. They're paying for the fact that he and his colleagues showed no vision, no insight, when they cancelled the last future hydro plan, because they said, "Oh, we won't have demand that high that far in the future." They were wrong then; we're paying the price now. This government is showing leadership. It's moving forward for a cleaner, greener, reliable, safe, secure supply of electricity, now and in the future.

WINE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. I understand that your main focus, of course, is to ensure that the economic environment in Ontario is conducive for small businesses and entrepreneurs to operate their businesses and to ensure their growth and success.

As we also know in this House, it is Ontario Wine Week. Thanks to the member from Essex, who introduced a private member's bill, we do have Ontario Wine Week, which we are celebrating right now. For those of you who don't know, you should know that Ontario has some of the best wines in the world. It is an industry that has grown up in a tremendous fashion by doing a great leap of faith about 20 years ago, when they ripped out some of their old grapes that weren't producing good wine. They planted new ones, experimental ones, and they have grown into one of the best industries in this world, some of the best wines in the world.

I digress a little bit, Minister, but I do want to know exactly what your ministry is going to be doing to support this important industry in our province.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I want to thank the member from Stoney Creek for asking this question. Let me say, I think the wine—

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Is this your first question?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Maybe he wants to answer the question. I will let him answer it.

Interjection: Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: So let him answer it. Let's see what he says.

The wine industry is very important to our province. Ninety wineries employ almost 6,000 people and do

about \$394 million in wine sales. As the Liberal government took power, we actually gave \$10 million over a five-year period for the wine study fund. In the 2006 budget, we gave them another \$3 million to promote VQA wines. In addition to that, we gave another \$1 million to promote marketing activities and another \$1 million to the grape growers to assist them in research activities. So we have supported the wine industry quite a bit, and I will be more than—

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

Ms. Mossop: Thank you very much for this news, Minister. I know that this government has been working closely with the industry. We have a wine caucus. We've been supporting the research end of things, bringing back the Vineland Research Station to the agricultural research area, where it had lost its trail for a while, but it's back. We've been supporting the industry in a number of ways, and I know it's important. I hear that all the time, because I do have wine country and a number of the wineries in my riding.

I also understand that you were in Niagara today, at Vineland Estates, for another announcement with regard to another investment you are making to help ensure that Ontario wineries can maintain their competitive advantage, because this is something we hear repeatedly. This is a highly competitive, global industry, and we need to support them as best we can. So could you please explain to us exactly what you were doing today in Niagara at Vineland Estates Winery?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I want to thank the member again for her question. Today, what I announced is a \$10-million steward program to help facilitate the growth of Ontario's wine industry. This program has three objectives: First, we want to help the wine industry; second, we want to help the grape growers; and third, we want to promote the VQA table wines in Ontario. So what we have done is give them \$10 million over a three-year period. It will be \$3 million the first year, \$3.5 million the second year and \$3.5 million the third year.

I was very pleased to have the member from Niagara join me at this event as well.

What this will basically do is help them actually open up more markets through the LCBO, which is the largest channel to sell wine. Our support for wine and grapes is a part of our overall strategy to build a stronger, more vibrant and prosperous Ontario.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent from the House that the following motion be adopted: that the government call Bill 122, the Street Racing Act, 2006, for second reading before the House rises for summer recess; that the House leaders agree to the allotted time for debate, and that immediately after second reading debate, the vote be called for third reading.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Klees has asked for unanimous consent. I heard a no.

DONATION TO SALVATION ARMY

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It is reported in today's Toronto Star that, in an extraordinary gesture of generosity, a former member of this Legislature, the Honourable Jim Snow, and his wife, Barbara, have donated their home farm property, Pine Crest, to the Salvation Army. Along with the MPP for Halton, Ted Chudleigh, and our area's member of Parliament, the Honourable Michael Chong, I was pleased to attend the event on June 3 at Pine Crest when this donation was celebrated.

I know that all in this House would want to join with me in thanking Jim, Barb and the Snow family for this incredibly generous, philanthropic act.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: From time to time, you will be aware that members arise in the House asking for unanimous consent on various pieces of legislation, and as you would be aware, the House leaders discuss these matters from time to time and continue to discuss all these matters. That is the channel we wish to go through when we're trying to ensure that legislation makes it through. There's an impression that's created—on all sides, may I say—that somehow members get up and ask for these unanimous consents, but we try as House leaders to deal with these matters as expeditiously and as well as we can.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): On the same point of order? The member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: I'd like to respond to this point of order by pointing out that many times, on all sides of the House, members have stood and asked for unanimous consent, whether it be for private members' business or other business. The reason I brought this forward, with regard to the street racing bill, is that it was my impression that the government felt that street racing was a serious concern. We have legislation before us now—

The Speaker: Thank you. The standing orders permit members to ask for unanimous consent. There's nothing out of order about asking for unanimous consent.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: For the edification of all members of the House, the three House leaders discuss, along with whips and deputy House leaders and the deputy whips, matters related to what goes on in this House at House leaders' meetings each week. We try to deal with these matters as well as we can, and we will continue to do so. Members may still free-lance when they wish, but I think they'll find that the system works best when the House leaders are trying to resolve these matters as well as we can.

Mr. Klees: On the same point.

The Speaker: I've ruled that it is a point of order to ask for unanimous consent. Yes, member?

Mr. Klees: It's a point of order because we all know what the House leader is referring to. I would then request that the House leaders take into consideration Bill 122, the Street Racing Act, and discuss among themselves when they can bring it forward.

The Speaker: Absolutely. All members have access to their various House leaders and can discuss with their various House leaders what they want raised at the House leaders' meetings. The Speaker has absolutely no control over what is spoken about at the House leaders' meetings, so all members can talk to their own House leaders about such matters.

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PETITIONS

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): As a deputy House leader, I can tell you that House leaders' meetings are pretty well useless, but anyway, having said that:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

“Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

“Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

“Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

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

“That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul's elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul's can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve.”

As I said yesterday, I went to this school from kindergarten to grade 8, and my mother taught at this school for 33 years, and I am in full agreement with the petition.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions about this dilapidated bridge on Old Weston Road. It reads as follows:

“To the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services ...:

“Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

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

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

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

I’m delighted to sign this petition because I agree with it 100%.

HIGHWAY FUNDING

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the federal government collects over \$5.2 billion annually in tax revenues from the sale of gasoline products; and

“Whereas the federal government, in addition, collects over \$1.8 billion annually in GST revenue from the sale of gasoline products; and

“Whereas the previous federal Liberal government refused to commit additional funding for assisting road infrastructure in the province of Ontario;

Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work with the new federal Conservative government in achieving a federal-provincial program to assist in further development of Ontario’s interprovincial roads such as the Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 401.”

I affix my name in full support.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): This is a petition that was originally tabled by me on June 15, 2006. A group of my constituents have asked me to read this petition into the record.

“Petition to Ontario Legislature to End Discrimination

“Whereas the Ontario government already fully funds 93% of faith-based schools in Ontario, but the remaining 7% receive no funding, solely because they are not Catholic;

“Whereas the United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled in 1999 and again in 2005 that this arrangement is discriminatory and violates basic international human rights law that Ontario formally agreed to uphold;

“Whereas all three parties represented in the Legislature support Catholic separate school funding, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Canada, so that the only fair and viable solution to the discrimination is to extend funding to the small religious minorities that are currently excluded;

“Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that Ontario has the constitutional power to provide funding to non-Catholic faith-based schools;

“Whereas Ontario is the only Western democracy that fully funds faith-based schools of one religion to the total exclusion of all other religions, while all other provinces” in Canada “except for the Atlantic provinces fund faith-based schools and have thriving public school systems;

“Whereas the cultural survival of the affected minority groups is at stake;

“Whereas faith-based schools produce responsible and productive citizens; and

“Whereas the Multi-Faith Coalition for Equal Funding of Religious Schools in December 2004 submitted to the Minister of Education a detailed proposal for the funding of non-Catholic faith-based schools in a manner that is fair and accountable and protects and enhances the public interest;

“We call on the Ontario Legislature to pass legislation to provide equitable funding in respect of all faith-based schools in Ontario, without religious discrimination and without any reduction in funding for public education, with accountability requirements and standards in place to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded.”

I’m giving this petition to page Madeleine.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 1999; and

“Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe–Grey;

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

“That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe–Grey.”

I obviously agree with that petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I have a petition delivered to me from the president of the Dundas Manor residents' council of Winchester, Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

"Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

I send this petition to the clerks' table by page Gregory.

CAFETERIA FOOD GUIDELINES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition from the students and teachers at Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School supporting the private member's bill proposed by Nupur Dogra. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas childhood obesity rates have tripled over the past two decades in Canada; and

"Whereas the annual amount of money the health care system uses to mend preventable obesity-related illnesses is \$1.6 billion; and

"Whereas the Ontario food premises regulation only provides safety policies that must be followed by the Ontario school boards' cafeterias, but no defined regulations regarding the nutrition standard of the food being served at the cafeterias; and

"Whereas there is a need to encourage nutritious standards in high school cafeterias that support Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating; and

"Whereas the private member's bill proposed by Nupur Dogra under Making the Grade and her fellow students at Iroquois Ridge High School will require all Ontario school boards' cafeterias to adopt and abide [by] healthier eating standards (similar to Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating) that will govern the food choices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the private member's bill that will amend the Ontario school boards' cafeteria food guidelines to follow healthier food standards in all Ontario high school cafeterias."

I support this petition.

1530

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): A petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on fair auto trade with South Korea:

"Whereas more than 260,000 Ontarians make their living and support their families through their careers in the auto industry in Ontario, which has become the pre-eminent manufacturer of motor vehicles in North America; and

"Whereas Canada imports more than 130,000 vehicles annually from the Republic of Korea, which imports virtually no vehicles or parts from Canada and does none of its manufacturing or assembly in Ontario or in any other Canadian jurisdiction, even though Canadian auto workers make the best-quality, most cost-effective vehicles in the world; and

"Whereas the government of Canada aims for a free trade agreement that would include the Republic of Korea in 2006, does not address the structural trade imbalance in the auto sector, and includes no measures to require Korea to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to Canadian-made vehicles, auto parts and other value-added services or components;

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

"That the government of Ontario insist that the government of Canada either cease free trade discussions with the Republic of Korea or make any proposed agreement contingent on fair and equal access by each country to the other's domestic markets in manufactured products such as motor vehicles and in value-added services, and ensure that Korea commits to manufacturing vehicles in Canada if Korea proposes to continue to sell vehicles in Canada."

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most individuals and add a financial

burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

I affix my name in full support.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition is about reducing the barriers to foreign-trained professionals. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will ensure a fair and inclusive Ontario for newcomers; and

“Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, transparent and clear; and

“Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

“Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

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

“That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature.”

I’m delighted to sign this petition because I agree with it 100%.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “Whereas gasoline prices have continued to increase at alarming rates in recent months; and

“Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario’s drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation; and

“Whereas the member from Superior North and the member from Essex, as well as the current ministers from St. Catharines, Eglinton–Lawrence and Sudbury have introduced legislation to freeze gas prices;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario government consider an immediate temporary gas price freeze and fair and transparent gasoline pricing by supporting the previous members’ bills while international gas prices stabilize: Bill 10, the Gas Price Watchdog Act, introduced by the Liberal member for Thunder Bay–Superior North; Bill 18, the Gas Price Watchdog Act, introduced by the honourable

Liberal member for Eglinton–Lawrence; Bill 80, the Gasoline Consumer Protection Act, introduced by the Liberal member for Essex; Bill 32, the Petroleum Products Price Freeze Act, introduced by the honourable Liberal member from Sudbury; and Bill 16, the Gasoline Pricing Act, introduced by the honourable Liberal member from St. Catharines.”

I’ve signed this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have one more petition today. It’s about a long-term-care home for Portuguese-Canadians. The petition is short, and reads as follows:

“Whereas Portuguese-Canadians number 171,545 in the Toronto census metropolitan area, many of whom encounter serious barriers (language, culture and location) to accessing community and long-term-care services; and

“There are no long-term-care homes dedicated to the needs of Portuguese-Canadian seniors; and

“Camões House for the Aged and Portuguese Community Centre of Toronto is proposing a partnership with a local long-term-care provider to purchase up to 160 existing beds in the Toronto area (for a nominal fee) to develop a Portuguese-Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto. This partnership is tentative and is dependent on the approval of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

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

“We encourage the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, his staff, and members of the Legislature to support the Camões proposal and to make the appropriate administrative and policy changes required to develop a Portuguese-Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto.”

I am certainly delighted to sign this petition, because I agree with it 100%.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I’d like rise pursuant to standing order 55 and give the Legislature the business of the House for next week:

On Monday, June 19, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 104, the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act. In the evening, third reading of Bill 11, the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act.

On Tuesday, June 20, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 109, the Residential Tenancies Act, and in the evening, third reading of Bill 117, the Income Tax Amendment Act (Ontario Home Electricity Relief).

On Wednesday, June 21, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 28, the Mandatory Blood Testing Act. In the evening there will be an interim supply motion.

On Thursday, June 22, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 190, the Good Government Act.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRANSPARENT DRUG SYSTEM FOR PATIENTS ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR UN RÉGIME DE MÉDICAMENTS TRANSPARENT POUR LES PATIENTS

Mr. Peterson, on behalf of Mr. Smitherman, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act and the Ontario Drug Benefit Act / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'interchangeabilité des médicaments et les honoraires de préparation et la Loi sur le régime de médicaments de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): Today I have the privilege of leading off third reading of Bill 102, the Transparent Drug System for Patients Act, an act which gives the right drug to the right patient at the right time at the right price.

This comprehensive piece of legislation has been carefully drafted and amended to ensure that it will not only improve patient access to more drugs at reasonable prices, but will also reform our province's drug system.

This bill will improve Ontario's drug system. It will make it more efficient, more transparent, more accountable, more understandable. In short, it will change the drug system into a system that patients, pharmacists and drug companies can understand and trust.

Our government is also determined that Ontario's taxpayers get respect for their money, and that drug companies will continue to spend money on research and development as well.

When Mr. Smitherman introduced this legislation, he noted that at times the Ontario drug system was no longer serving the needs of patients first. Equally troubling, the escalating costs were threatening the very sustainability of the Ontario drug plan.

Our government has been very clear in expressing its support for our public health care system. We've demonstrated our willingness to make bold changes in order to protect and strengthen medicare. Bill 102 is a significant component of such change.

1540

It is important to reiterate that the coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program will not change. There will be no change to copayments, no change to deductibles and no change to eligibility. If you're a patient who currently receives prescription drugs through the Trillium drug plan or through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, you will continue to receive those drugs.

Our reforms are designed to give patients faster access to a wider range of drugs. Faster access to drugs also means better value for taxpayers' money. The people of Ontario, the people whom we in this Legislature rep-

resent, spend \$3.4 billion annually on the Ontario drug benefit program. In business, the biggest customer gets the best price. Bill 102 will allow the government of Ontario, as the largest purchaser of drugs in Canada, to get the best price. This has not been the case. Bill 102 has also been designed to make the drug review system more efficient, faster and more transparent.

The Transparent Drug System for Patients Act will, if passed, do the following: improve patients' access to drugs through conditional listings and exceptional access; ensure better value for money through drug re-pricing and reimbursement; and introduce competitive pricing and partnership agreements, allowing us to strike the best possible deals not just in buying drugs but in educating the public as to their benefits and method of use.

If passed, Bill 102 will close loopholes that will lead to unacceptable price increases for drugs. Our plan will also introduce off-formulary interchangeability. That means that less expensive but equally effective drugs, generic drugs, can be used in the place of brand name drugs. This isn't just good news for patients who need drugs; it's good news for those who pay for those drugs.

So the changes we're introducing will give the people of Ontario better access to better drugs, and do it more quickly. Our plan means that drugs will be approved more quickly, because we will permit rapid reviews and funding decisions for innovative drugs for life-threatening conditions. If a drug is not approved, we'll tell both the patients and manufacturers why, quickly, openly and honestly. This will be an enormous benefit to patients and to the Ontario drug manufacturers, both branded and generic, as they are anxious to introduce new products to the marketplace.

Bill 102 also recognizes pharmacists as front-line operators in our health care system and the trust that the public has already placed in them. It enhances their role and fairly compensates them for providing direct patient care and counselling. Pharmacists have been telling us for years that they want to play a bigger role in our public health care system. They have been underutilized. Bill 102 will engage them, as never before, with patients managing chronic diseases and with patients on numerous medications. Bill 102 will also allow pharmacists to use their skills and expertise to unlock better health care for patients and be fairly compensated.

Our plan calls for us to invest in health care system research by establishing a fund to help pharmaceutical companies make the case that certain drugs help to save on overall health care costs. This fund may include contributions from pharmaceutical companies and from the government. Please be assured that our government is sensitive to the importance of research and innovation in the pharmaceutical sector, as we are in other sectors. We know that advances, innovations in pharmaceutical products, can extend and improve life for Ontarians, so this innovation must continue. But as a government, we must have better research on the economic savings to our system of the faster use of the right drug. It is essential for Ontario and it is essential for Ontarians. The money

that our pharmaceutical firms spend on research and innovation is money well spent, and they will be fairly compensated for the innovative drugs they bring to market.

Reforms are also needed with respect to transparency and accountability. We will strengthen transparency and accountability in the drug system by giving patients a role in drug-listing decisions through two patient representatives on the renamed Committee to Evaluate Drugs. We'll also build a more accountable system through the creation of a Citizens' Council to advise the new executive officer, making Ontario the first province in Canada to permit direct patient involvement in decision-making and citizen involvement in policy direction as well. Our government is very proud of that, and we were pleased to accept an amendment from the NDP that put this directly into the legislation.

To further enhance accountability, we will also create a new position of executive officer of the Ontario public drug programs to manage the publicly funded drug system and make listing decisions based upon the recommendations of the Committee to Evaluate Drugs. In any case, where a drug is refused listing by the EO but that drug was recommended by the Committee to Evaluate Drugs, there will be an automatic second review process.

We will also free Ontario's doctors from the burden of paperwork associated with section 8. We want doctors to spend their time on patient care, not on paperwork. Section 8 will be replaced by a more effective conditional listing system supported by an exceptional access mechanism for very exceptional cases. These mechanisms will be placed in the hands of the executive officer, a much faster and more transparent decision-making structure than the cabinet approval process now in place.

One of the reasons I am speaking to Bill 102 is because I've had the privilege of being part of the legislative process that has brought Bill 102 to this point.

Applause.

Mr. Peterson: Thank you.

Let me take a moment to acknowledge and to thank the many stakeholders who participated in the discussions about this bill. It is a very important piece of legislation, and the input we received from groups and individuals across the province has helped us to improve it and strengthen it.

As members of this assembly will know, a number of significant amendments were made at the standing committee on social policy earlier this month. These amendments include: enabling volume discount benefits for the government on drugs bought for the public system; including the Pharmacy Council and Citizens' Council in the legislation; permitting a review of recommendations made by the Committee to Evaluate Drugs or decisions made by the executive officer to not list drugs; improving transparency by requiring the executive officer to prepare an annual report; stating that nothing in the legislation permits therapeutic substitution; and permitting pharmacists to receive defined professional allowances under a new code of conduct and with regulation-making author-

ity to define a cap of such allowances at 20% of the generic costs in the public drug system.

This truly is a balanced and comprehensive piece of legislation. It is important to note that this package represents a very big fiscal win for taxpayers. These reforms will result in savings of approximately \$277 million in 2007-08 between the ministries of health and of social services. That's \$277 million that will be reinvested in better health care for patients and better access to drugs. Let's remember that this is what this is all about: better care, better treatment for the people of Ontario, the people who elected each and every one of us.

1550

Drug costs have risen by more than 140% since 1997. Ontario needs better drug pricing. Ontario needs a more efficient and accountable drug system. Our balanced and comprehensive package of changes, anchored on the Transparent Drug System for Patients Act, will enable us to achieve just that.

I am proud of Bill 102 and I know that it will, if passed, bring costs under control and ensure the sustainability of both the overall drug system and the overall health care system. Bill 102 will result in the right drug for the right patient, at the right time, at the right price.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I am pleased to join the debate on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party and our leader, John Tory. This is Bill 102; it is third reading today and the last opportunity that anybody has to speak to Bill 102. This bill was just introduced on April 13 of this year and has not had much in the way of real debate or real consultation. This bill is entitled the Transparent Drug System for Patients Act, 2006, and unfortunately the use of that word "transparent"—this bill was anything but transparent.

The bill has three components: Part I deals with sweeping amendments to the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act; part II contemplates amendments to the Ontario Drug Benefit Act; and, of course, part III deals with the commencement.

This entire process from start to finish is one that has been flawed. In fact, if you wanted to write a textbook on how not to introduce a bill into the provincial Legislature in the province of Ontario, you would use this whole process which has unfolded as the model for the textbook that you would write. As a result of the flawed process, there was never any real consultation, no opportunity for stakeholders to take a look at any recommendations. We had a bill that was equally as flawed, and you only have to take a look at some of the headlines that I'll come back to later to show this.

Ian Urquhart wrote on May 17, "Support for Smitherman Drug Law Turns Wobbly." "New Bill Will Hurt: Pharmacists"; that's on June 1 of this year in the Toronto Sun. Terence Corcoran wrote, on June 1, "A Bill to Kill." On June 1, the National Post wrote, "Ontario's Bill 102, which aims to slash the province's drug costs, has provoked a storm of controversy," and then the title, of course, is "Bad Drug Reaction." It goes on and on. Then we have in Mr. Graham Murray's Inside Queen's Park,

“Bill 102 Retreat or Strategic Feint?” Then we take a look at Russell Williams, who had an article on June 6 in the *National Post*, “Killer Drug Plan.”

I think you can see, from the headlines that were in papers in the province of Ontario, the response to this bill, to the process, was anything but positive. Even those who initially thought there might be some good news contained within came to the realization, very, very soon after they had an opportunity to digest and analyze it, that this was not a bill that was going to increase access to drugs for patients. It wasn't a bill designed to improve health outcomes for patients. It wasn't a bill that was in any way or shape going to help patients. This was a bill to contain costs, and the day that the minister made the announcement, he went out of his way to try to demonize pharmacists by talking about rebates, which he was going to eliminate. Unfortunately, even in the press release they put out today, they continue to demonize pharmacists, saying they'd no longer be eligible for tickets to baseball games and whatever. I just hope there are no other free passes being made available to any other health professionals, because this minister has certainly gone out of his way to demonize pharmacists.

How did this all start? In the fall of last year, people suddenly came to the realization that a woman by the name of Helen Stevenson had been hired, and she and the drug system secretariat, we learned—the whole thing was kind of a cloak-and-dagger event, done in a very clandestine manner, but talk was out there that her job was to reform Ontario's drug benefit program. I would say to you that nobody, but nobody, would object to the need to reform Ontario's drug benefit program. It is expensive, it is costly and we certainly need to take a look at how we can improve the system we have in place and make sure that we can provide the necessary drugs for people in Ontario.

We understand that meetings were held between Helen Stevenson and different people in Ontario. In fact, we've heard from people who went to meetings. However, the people who were called to meetings never had an opportunity to respond to any recommendations that the Ministry of Health was contemplating or proposing. Then, of course, at the end of the day, after she completed these—you can't call them consultations, because they weren't really responding to any specific recommendations; they were just nice little conversations about, “What do you think?” and blah, blah, blah.

Anyway, Ms. Stevenson presented her recommendations to the minister. Some people thought that maybe what they had told her might now become public knowledge, and maybe some of the concerns they had expressed, or if they'd made recommendations, they would now have access to that information. Well, not with this government. As I say, the bill is called “transparent,” but when the recommendations were presented to the minister by Ms. Stevenson, I'll tell you, the iron curtain came down. Ms. Stevenson's report was considered advice to the minister and it was kept under lock and key. Nobody to this day has any idea as to what may

or may not have been said to Ms. Stevenson and what may or may not have been contained in her report to the Minister of Health. As I say, it was all done in a very clandestine, cloak-and-dagger manner. To this day, despite the fact that people would like to see her recommendations and her report, the Minister of Health has refused to make this information public.

People are saying, “So much for transparency. So much for accountability.” In essence, there was no transparency. No information was made public after the discussions she had with stakeholders. What happened then? The minister, in haste, I guess, decided that perhaps he now had all the answers and he rushed to put together the piece of legislation that became known as Bill 102. As I say, this is all part of the textbook that you would write on how not to write legislation and how not to introduce it.

Anyway, he decided that he would come out with this Bill 102, which he introduced on April 13 of this year, barely two months ago. He rushed to put it together, and it's obvious, when we take a look at the bill, how poorly it was drafted and how much it needed in the way of amendment. In fact, there's still a lot that needs to be done. He very sneakily introduced the bill on the Thursday before a weekend. Then, to make matters even worse, we only spent three days discussing this bill. I have to tell you that this bill deals with a massive overhaul of the drug system in the province of Ontario—by the way, an overhaul that we in the Conservative Party support, that was needed and that was very necessary. However, we do not support the manner in which the overhaul occurred, the lack of consultation and the lack of opportunity for any public debate.

1600

Anyway, we had three days of debate on this bill, and the government decided to come down with a sledgehammer the likes of which I have not seen in my 16 years in this House. They not only were going to time-allocate this bill, they slammed shut debate on second reading, they slammed shut debate in the committee and they slammed shut debate on third reading. It is very unusual for this to happen. So much for consultation, so much for transparency and so much for accountability. This was a very heavy-handed measure.

As I said, they came down with a sledgehammer. They shut down debate, they shut down discussion and they set down consultation because, I guess, they wanted to get this through before the House rose for the summer, and also because they realized this bill was becoming an embarrassment, not only to the minister but also to the McGuinty Liberal government. People were starting to write, as I indicated before, very unflattering opinion pieces and other articles in the newspapers in Ontario. There were negative media releases put out. Whether it was TV, radio or print, there was a lot of dissatisfaction with this legislation when people found out what the consequences of the legislation were, the fact that it wasn't going to improve access to drugs, that it was really more or less focused on cost containment.

The Liberals realized, "We've got to shut up public debate and discussion on this issue," so they introduced a time allocation motion the likes of which I can't recall seeing in this House. They realized they had to move quickly. It was becoming an embarrassment to the Liberal government. They were hoping that if they moved quickly enough, there wouldn't be any more people who would come to the realization that this bill was poorly drafted and did not achieve great outcomes for patients in Ontario.

Despite their attempts to introduce this sledgehammer time allocation motion, they didn't and couldn't move fast enough, because stakeholders were starting to take notice. I can tell you that our office started to receive phone calls, e-mails and faxes, and we had people wanting meetings with us, because they all had very serious, grave concerns about this legislation.

We heard from patients. We heard from pharmacies. We heard from a lot of individual pharmacists who were concerned that this bill was going to lead to the closure of their pharmacies, particularly those in rural and northern Ontario. We heard from those who said they were going to have to lay off staff. It appeared that many communities in this province might not have a pharmacist in the future, and in some of our small communities, they are the only health professional; there are no doctors. This was going to be a very significant gap in the delivery of health care to people in Ontario.

Of course, the brand and generic industries had their own concerns. There were few people, few individuals, who were not concerned about Bill 102. As I say, the government, despite their attempt to move with lightning speed and apply a sledgehammer, were not able to close down some of the concerns. In fact, I'm going to speak a little bit later about a coalition, a group of people in the pharmaceutical industry who came together and put forward on the record some very legitimate concerns around Bill 102, and that was the Coalition of Ontario Pharmacy.

Also at this time, there was a lot of confusion because the minister and his staff started having meetings with all these stakeholders who became irate and confused. They were hearing one thing from the minister—they'd hear him say something in the Legislature or in a television interview and then they'd read something else about what had happened in the Legislature. I just want to tell you, there was a lot of confusion around what was in the bill and what wasn't in the bill. The truth of the matter was that the minister had made a lot of statements on the announcement of the legislation and, regrettably, a lot of what he was saying was nowhere in the bill. For example, the councils, citizens—nothing was there. So people were worried.

As I say, one of the biggest groups to become concerned were the pharmacists in the province of Ontario. They were very concerned about the fact that if this bill went through as it was, there would be, as a result of an analysis that they did, about 300 pharmacies closing. It's nice to know that somebody finally did an analysis,

because obviously the minister and this government had never done an analysis of the consequences of introducing Bill 102.

They also were concerned because, despite the fact that this bill was saying it was going to provide them with some compensation for providing cognitive services, how could this be positive if there were no pharmacists in the province to provide these cognitive services if they would have had to close their pharmacy?

These people were among the first to do an actual impact study and analysis, something that the government did not do. I find it unbelievable that a bill like this, which introduced such a comprehensive reform of the drug system, would not have an analysis or an impact study attached to it.

Then we have the research-based pharmaceutical companies and the biotechnology researchers. They couldn't understand what this government was doing either because, on the one hand, we had the Premier, who had travelled to Chicago for BIO 2006 and who had proudly proclaimed to all assembled that Ontario was open for business, while at the same time, back at home, his Minister of Health was introducing legislation that would negatively affect this same industry in Ontario.

I want to quote an article from the National Post on June 6, which was entitled "Killer Drug Plan." It was written by Russell Williams, the president of Rx&D. He says:

"We have to seriously ask ourselves what kind of environment we need to ensure that Ontario graduates will be able to stay in Ontario, given the competition not only for the best and brightest graduates, but also for the billions of dollars globally in life-sciences R&D. Overall, we believe Bill 102 as drafted will have a negative impact not only on the quality of patient care but on Ontario's ability to attract jobs, investment and research. And it creates a major conflict in the province's economic growth strategy: The two strategies are inconsistent and incompatible. We believe this proposed legislation, if passed as written, will eventually vastly reduce the amount of R&D carried out in Ontario, force companies to outsource clinical trials to other markets, thus denying patients early access to new therapies, affect our ability to support hospitals, universities, community programs and charitable causes, and make it very difficult for start-up biochemical companies to bring products to market. So we need to step back and take a long, careful look at all of the factors involved in this debate."

1610

I think you can see that there was a lot of concern about this bill. If the minister had done due diligence, had a true consultation process, we wouldn't have had this concern. Now the minister, after hearing all this, is scrambling. As I say, by now his staff are out there trying to have these secret meetings with different stakeholders, trying to appease them in order that some of the noise would disappear.

However, by now we had a very serious problem on our hands. The bill had been time-allocated and we were

going into committee hearings. We all knew that they were going to be nothing more than political theatre and a farce, because there was no opportunity for true input from the public. This time allocation motion shut down debate in committee, it shut down debate at clause-by-clause consideration, and it is shutting down debate today on third reading. In fact, there is not even an opportunity today in third reading for each party to speak to the amended bill for an hour.

I'm going to read the time allocation motion. I think the people in the province of Ontario deserve to know how heavy-handed the McGuinty Liberal government is when it comes to preventing public input and debate on an issue as critical as drug reform.

Time allocation motion: "That, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 102, An Act to amend the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act and the Ontario Drug Benefit Act, when Bill 102 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on social policy; and

"That no deferral of the second reading vote shall be permitted; and

"That"—here's where it becomes unusual—"in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the standing committee ... shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair on May 29, May 30, June 5, June 6 ... for the purpose of conducting public hearings and clause-by-clause on the bill."

Normally, a subcommittee would get together and make some of these decisions concerning hearing dates and hearing times, and also clause-by-clause. Then it says—this is unbelievable, too—we can have these public hearings right up until June 6; however, the motion goes on to say:

"That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on June 6"—unbelievable. There was no time for anyone to analyze the written submissions that we got from the public. There was no time to thoroughly analyze the presentations that were made to the committee. And obviously, there was insufficient time for anybody to draft amendments in order that they would be ready on June 6 at 12 noon.

Anyway, it says that on June 6, "On that day, at not later than 5 p.m. those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved"—a very unusual move—"and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been

put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

"That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than Wednesday, June 7, 2006. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House."

This is democracy? Unbelievable.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's a joke.

Mrs. Witmer: It is a joke, as my colleague here just said.

"That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on social policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

"That, on the day the order for third reading of the bill is called, the time available for debate up to 5:50 p.m.," which is today, "or 9:20 p.m., as the case may be," which will not be the case, "shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

"That, when the time allotted for debate has expired," and I see I have 18 more minutes and 21 seconds, "the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

"That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h);" which I understand is going to be done, "and

"That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes."

Well, I think, as you can see, this time allocation motion shut down committee hearings. It has shut down debate on this bill. For the government to put the word "transparent" in front of this bill is a joke. It is a misnomer. In fact, I thought we were part of a democratic institution, but I will tell you, the way in which Bill 102 has been handled in this House is an embarrassment to this House and it should be an embarrassment to the government. There was no transparency, and all the stakeholders did not have the opportunity to participate.

In fact, this bill created a tremendous amount of anxiety for families, for pharmacists, who thought they were going to lose their pharmacies or have to lay off staff. This is not how we deal with legislation in Ontario. This bill was conceived in secret, it was amended in secret—well, there was no time to debate the amendments. I showed you what the time allocation motion was like.

There were 314 groups and individuals who asked to appear before the standing committee on social policy; only 99 could be accommodated. Even then, we couldn't have the normal time of 15 or 20 minutes; we could only have 10 minutes. I don't know how people could defend the action they took on this bill. Presenters would come in—it was a joke, unfortunately. The Chair tried to do his job to the best of his ability and he had to cut people off

in the midst of their presentations. There was no opportunity for us to ask anybody any questions. If we tried to, we'd be cut off in the middle of our question. There was just no opportunity to engage in dialogue with those who were coming in with really legitimate concerns. And then the hearings ended suddenly on Monday, June 5, at 6 o'clock.

As you know, in this House, when you have a committee, you have a time period between the final hearings and such time as you do clause-by-clause in order for the clerk to put together a package that talks about the presentations of the various presenters and about the recommendations they made for changes to the bill. I can tell you, as a member of that committee, the poor legislative clerk had no opportunity to do any of that work. There was nothing. And then, you had to have your amendments in.

I want to thank my staff, who worked really hard. I want to thank Erin and I want to thank David and I want to thank Marie. Those people were here working almost 24 hours, seven days a week from the time of the introduction of this bill. I want to thank the many stakeholders who were kind enough to actually draft amendments for us, because there was absolutely no time to do so in the time that was allocated.

At one point, one of the members of the committee from the other side said, "You agreed to the time allocation motion." Can you believe it? Unbelievable. I don't think they even understood what the government had been doing.

1620

Interjection: They still don't.

Mrs. Witmer: My colleague tells me they still don't.

There was not enough time for proper consideration of what this committee heard. As I say, over 300 people wanted to present; we only heard about a third of them and we had hundreds more who presented us with written deputations. It was impossible for us. It really was a farce.

I think of these people in the province of Ontario who had a legitimate concern to share with us about this bill and who spent a lot of time drafting letters and recommendations and concerns. If the truth be known, there was no chance. There was no humanly possible chance for anybody to have read what those people had written. I think that's embarrassing for us, who say that we live in a democracy. There was no democracy when it came to Bill 102.

Amendments were submitted. There were 177 in total. This is in a bill that's barely 30 sections long. I am pleased to say that, thanks to the hard work of our staff, and certainly the stakeholders in the province of Ontario, we were able to introduce on their behalf—because all of our amendments were a result of what we had been asked to introduce to attempt to improve this bill. We introduced 84 amendments on behalf of stakeholders. The NDP, which worked alongside us, introduced another 56. The Liberals introduced 37 to their own bill, which tells

you how badly flawed this bill was. I think that speaks to that.

The members of the committee got a copy of the amendments as we were sitting here in the House in the afternoon, attempting to do what we needed to do in question period. We got them about an hour before clause-by-clause started. In fact, the copies were still warm from the photocopying machine. I tell you, I am a speed reader, but I cannot read 177 amendments in the time period that was allocated to us. So there was no time to read the amendments, let alone understand the implications of the amendments that had been put forth by the other two parties.

It was bad enough that we only had one hour to read them, even though we're supposed to be busy here in the House and paying attention to question period, that we only had one hour to debate the amendments, because at 5 o'clock all debate ceased. In fact, we were only at amendment 29 out of 177, but once that magic hour of 5 o'clock came, according to the time allocation motion, we were now voting on amendments that we didn't have time to read or understand the implications of. What a farce.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Democratic renewal.

Mrs. Witmer: Yes, democratic renewal, as my colleague says. The government talks about democratic renewal. I'll tell you, this bill was anything but democratic. Things were moving so quickly that most of us could barely turn the pages fast enough to keep track of what amendments had been accepted or defeated.

At the end of the day, the government wanted to say that they accepted one of our amendments and one from the NDP. You know what? The way this bill was introduced, the way this bill was moved through this House, the way this bill went into committee, the way that clause-by-clause took place, the way we're debating third reading today—I will tell you, this is not how governments should be introducing and passing legislation.

Most of what happened, when it came to this bill, was based on some secret negotiations that were taking place at the same time as we were having hearings in committee and having discussion in this House, because the government realized what a bad bill it really was, and so some changes were made. But I'll tell you, the method that this government used is shameful. I want to contrast that, because the government could have done a good job.

As I say, we agree with the need for drug reform, but they could have done what they did in the province of Quebec. I want to talk a little bit about the province of Quebec and their process. They had a consultation paper. They had a white paper.

This is what Grant Tipler, president of the Toronto Biotechnology Initiative, says:

"Contrast the Ontario process with the more respectful process of drug policy review in Quebec that began in 2004 with a government policy paper, public hearings, followed by legislation last year. The Quebec policy paper recognized the importance of balancing the health

policy objectives of access to formularies, fair and reasonable prices and optimal drug use with maintaining a dynamic pharmaceutical sector in Quebec. This final policy objective—a dynamic pharmaceutical sector—is inexplicably missing from the Ontario exercise. To quote from the Quebec paper, “The pharmaceutical sector is a major player in the Quebec economy. It is therefore important to link health and industrial policy in order to ensure that the government acts coherently in these fields.”

That type of statement was totally missing from the Ontario initiative. In fact, I’ll tell you, Mr. Speaker—and I hope you have a chance to take a look at this draft pharmaceutical policy that all people in the province of Quebec had an opportunity to read. They had broad consultations after they put it out. They were really interested in getting reactions and getting suggested improvements. As they say, they wanted to make Quebec’s first pharmaceutical policy something that everybody in the province could support.

This is what they say in their executive summary:

“Considering the amount that the Quebec government spends on prescription drugs, their crucial place in the health and social services system, the unique nature of the product and its use (which should be optimal), and the great number of parties concerned such as patients, health professionals and pharmaceutical industry, it is important to have a coherent vision”—boy, was that lacking from Bill 102—“for pharmaceutical policy. The government has chosen this policy to give it a common vision and to guide its actions, in particular in finding an acceptable balance between increasing needs, vulnerable health care users who need protection and the ability of society to support such a system.

“The pharmaceutical policy contains four main themes: accessibility of medication, fair and reasonable prices, optimal drug use and a dynamic pharmaceutical industry in Quebec.

“This draft project contains 34 ministerial proposals based on these themes.” Unbelievable. Here’s a government that has a vision and wants to make sure that people have input, have an opportunity to respond to some of their recommendations. This government did nothing similar in any respect.

So I hold this up. I hope the Minister of Health in the province of Ontario, and the Premier, at some point have an opportunity to take a look at this document, because major legislation such as this overhaul of drug reform—if we had used the same method as they had here, we wouldn’t have had headlines like I read before, such as, “A Bill to Kill,” “Bad Drug Reaction,” “New Bill Will Hurt: Pharmacists,” and “Support for Smitherman Drug Law Turns Wobbly.”

If we had had the same type of consultation, we would, at the end of the day, have had a bill that responded to the needs of everybody in Ontario and that actually would have been of benefit to the people who it obviously matters to most: the patients. Instead, we had a very flawed process from start to finish, and the minister,

at the end of the day, had to back down to save face and embarrassment.

1630

Mr. Yakabuski: He should have withdrawn it.

Mrs. Witmer: My colleague says he should have withdrawn it. I would tend to agree. In fact, I read an article today that speaks exactly to that point. I can’t find it right now, but it says that the minister would have been best to have withdrawn the bill altogether. There is still a tremendous amount of concern about this bill.

This government failed to see the train wreck of the bill they introduced. I don’t know whether this was the result of the minister’s own making or whether it was based on poor advice. They didn’t achieve the savings they were going to achieve, and at the end of the day, we had a lot of people who were obviously extremely concerned.

I want to congratulate the Coalition of Ontario Pharmacy. I think these people had as much of an impact as anybody else on making some changes to the bill that were desperately needed. They were a non-partisan group of pharmacies, pharmacists, patient advocates and health care groups who were concerned about Bill 102’s threat to the sustainability of community pharmacy. I’ll tell you, they were able to mobilize in very short order. They were able to bring their members to Queen’s Park. They had a rally. They sent letters. They sent e-mails. This was a grass-roots organization. It shows you that when people are prepared to take action against something that obviously was going to have such a detrimental impact, they can make changes.

I applaud these individuals who got together. Billy Cheung was a key leader in all this, but there were a lot of people who played a very significant role.

What more can I say? In the Toronto Star, Thomas Walkom said, “Big Pharma Versus Ontario Government No Contest; Major Climbdown On Drug Reform Bill.” The government had poorly considered the impact of this bill on pharma. It was really an embarrassing drafting. Canadian Press: “Pharmacists Win Battle Over Ontario Drug Bill, Get To Keep Some Rebates.” I think you can see that the minister had to step down. I could go on and on. We have, from Command News, “Even after the amendments from the government, there are still serious concerns about the bill.”

I’m going to conclude—I have 30 seconds left—by saying that this was a good example of how not to introduce legislation, how not to involve people in Ontario in the introduction and major overhaul of drug legislation. The time allocation motion was unlike any I had ever seen. I hope that at the end of the day people in this province will remember how this government deals with them.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I will be using up all the time allocated today for New Democrats. I wanted to say that at the outset.

I want to begin by thanking a couple of people who were very instrumental in terms of dealing with this bill. First of all Ralph Armstrong at legislative counsel, who

drafted the amendments for the NDP, who had to do it in a very time-limited fashion. I appreciate the enormous efforts he made in that regard.

I want to thank Billy Cheung, Allan Rajesky and Rita Winn from the Coalition of Ontario Pharmacy. Frankly, those three people were instrumental in mobilizing a number of independent community-based pharmacists to make it to the public hearings and to come to a rally that was held at Convocation Hall and, as well, to send the government testimonials of their own personal situations with respect to how the bill was going to negatively impact their pharmacies. I can tell you that without that effort, I'm sure the government would not have understood at the end of the day the ramifications of the original drafting, and I'm sure the government would not have backed down, had it not been for the very real stories that came to the committee through the committee process about how the bill was really going to be detrimental and, in so many cases, actually shut down pharmacies in many rural and northern parts of the province.

I want to thank Marc Kealey as well, who is the CEO at the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, which provided amendments to the committee. We put some of those amendments forward and, regrettably, all except one were voted down.

I want to say, as I begin my debate on third reading, that the debate this afternoon really represents a bad ending to what has been a very bad process for this bill. I want to reiterate what my colleague the health critic from the Conservative Party has said in that regard.

Third reading debate here this afternoon is time allocated as a result of a government motion that was debated on May 9, which effectively shut down any further debate at second reading. The government motion unilaterally chose the limited three days that the committee would have for public hearings on the bill. The government motion unilaterally imposed a clause-by-clause process for amendments, which at best was a farce. That's the nicest word I can use to describe the process that took place last week. The government motion unilaterally imposed one day, this day, for third reading debate, which is going to come to an abrupt end at 5:50 this afternoon.

I want to reiterate to make sure that the point is reinforced that there was no negotiation amongst the House leaders about the government time allocation motion. There was no consensus among the House leaders about how Bill 102 would unfold with respect to how much debate on second reading, with respect to the public hearings, the clause-by-clause process or the debate on third reading.

The government dictated the process from the outset, the government dictated the whole process, and it was dropped on the opposition parties on May 8 as a time allocation motion, which we saw for the first time at about 5:15 that afternoon. It represented, in my opinion, the absolute worst way to deal with a bill. I think that what happened through that process is clear proof of that.

We are here today with a piece of legislation that, hopefully—hopefully, I say—will not shut down independent pharmacies in so many parts of Ontario, but we are only in that position because of the persistence and the efforts made by the Coalition of Ontario Pharmacy and so many pharmacists who came to the public hearings to convince the government that the bill, as originally drafted, was in effect going to destroy many community pharmacies.

I say to the government, it didn't have to be that way. It shouldn't have been that way. I hope that the government has learned a lesson through this process, that the way this was constructed, the way this was dealt with and the way it was rammed through is a recipe for disaster and can get the government into a lot of trouble. So I hope the government has learned something from the way this was handled.

In truth, many of the concerns I raised about the bill during second reading debate have not been resolved, so it will be no surprise to any member of the House that New Democrats are going to continue to oppose this legislation. I will put on the public record in the time that I have this afternoon the concerns that remain outstanding.

The first deals very specifically with the creation of the new executive officer for Ontario's drug programs that is set up under section 8 of the bill. This is an individual who is going to be appointed by order in council through the Lieutenant Governor, and this individual is going to have a broad array of new functions and new responsibilities that used to be overseen, used to be dealt with by the Minister of Health or the Lieutenant Governor and confirmed through regulation, so that there was an oversight and a process for the government to be accountable for the responsibilities that were being undertaken with respect to drug policy in the province.

1640

What is fascinating, and probably most troublesome, is that in the Ministry of Health now there already is a director of the drug programs branch. Her name is Susan Paetkau. She is a bureaucrat at the ministry and, as such, is accountable to the minister for decisions that she is party to. She is part and parcel, and that position is part and parcel, of an accountability mechanism which involves her being accountable to the minister for the roles and responsibilities and the decision-making that she undertakes. The minister, who is accountable for his responsibilities and decision-making with respect to drug policy, is accountable back to the public. And as part of this mechanism, the cabinet would have some responsibility for many of the approval processes that are now being transferred to the executive director, and that would be dealt with by regulation. So cabinet at the end of the day remains accountable back to the public because it assumes the final say with respect to those roles, responsibilities and decision-making. Frankly, I think that's the way it should be. It's good public policy to have those kinds of checks and balances and to ensure that important decisions that are going to be made, in this

case about drug policy, at the end of the day remain in the hands of the government, which is accountable to the people through the election process.

I very much regret that the government in this bill chooses instead to do an end run around an existing bureaucratic position and an end run around accountability mechanisms that involve the minister and the Lieutenant Governor, essentially cabinet, because I don't see that there is any good public policy reason to delegate important roles and responsibilities to someone who is not elected, who is not accountable and who is not a bureaucrat. I think that's very bad public policy.

I was intrigued by the efforts of the government to defend the appointment of the executive director through order in council. The defence that the government members put up was that this model that's being employed in Bill 102 is similar to what happens at OHIP these days. The title of the general manager of OHIP was used in this regard. This line of defence doesn't hold any water, because that's not how things work at OHIP. The OHIP personnel are ministry bureaucrats. I am not aware of personnel at OHIP who deal with day-to-day activities of OHIP who are appointed by order in council. If I am incorrect, somebody is going to correct me here this afternoon, but I am not aware of that situation. The personnel who deal with OHIP matters are ministry bureaucrats and they have the same type of accountability as I've already outlined with respect to the director of the drug programs branch currently at the Ministry of Health.

Secondly, no one at OHIP has the kind of decision-making ability that the new drug czar is going to have under this bill. For example, if at OHIP an insured service is going to be added to the schedule of benefits, that has to be done by regulation, that has to be passed by cabinet. If at OHIP an insured service is going to be delisted from the schedule of benefits, that has to be done through a regulation at cabinet; it cannot unilaterally be done by the general manager of OHIP.

But in this bill, the new executive director appointed by OIC can designate products as listed drug products, can remove these designations, and can do that by himself or herself. There may be a review committee that he or she will get consultation and advice from in doing that, but at the end of the day the executive officer has the authority to do that himself or herself. There is no requirement under the bill for those kinds of decisions to go back to the Minister of Health, or indeed to go to cabinet to be passed via regulation. That is a clear and very significant difference from what happens at OHIP.

The defence or the excuse that the government uses to justify the end run that's going on here around a current bureaucratic position is not one that holds water. It's not one, in fact, that's true. No one at OHIP has this kind of power. The personnel at OHIP, our ministry bureaucrats, are accountable. That's the way it should be at OHIP and that's the way it should be with respect to the drug program branch at the Ministry of Health.

I think it's worth putting on the record again some of the powers that the executive officer, who is appointed

by OIC, is now going to have. This is in section 8, that added subsection 1.1(2):

“(a) to administer the Ontario public drug programs;

“(b) to keep, maintain and publish the formulary;

“(c) to make this act apply in respect of the supplying of drugs that are not listed drug products as provided for in section 16;

“(d) to designate products as listed drug products, listed substances and designated pharmaceutical products for the purposes of this act, and to remove or modify those designations;

“(e) to designate products as interchangeable with other products under the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act, and to remove or modify those designations;

“(f) to negotiate agreements with manufacturers of drug products, agree with manufacturers as to the drug benefit price of listed drug products, negotiate drug benefit prices for listed substances with suppliers, and set drug benefit prices for designated pharmaceutical products;

“(g) to require any information that may or must be provided to the executive officer under this act or the regulations or any other act or regulation to be in a format that is satisfactory to the executive officer;

“(h) to make payments under the Ontario public drug programs;

“(i) to establish clinical criteria under section 23; and

“(j) to pay operators of pharmacies for professional services, and to determine the amount of such payments subject to the prescribed conditions, if any.”

I point out again that these are quite exceptional powers and, in many of the cases, they represent powers that previously would have had to be confirmed by the minister or by the Lieutenant Governor through regulation, passed by cabinet. Those requirements no longer are in place, and I think that is wrong.

I just want to read from a presentation that was made to the committee by the Police Pensioners Association of Ontario with respect to this particular provision in the bill. Their submission said as follows:

“Committee members, in our view, the creation of an executive officer generates two important concerns:

“The first is that this person has far too much authority for such an important piece of legislation, and secondly, we feel the responsibility to manage and make decisions affecting so many vulnerable people should rest with an elected official, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We don't understand why the minister would want to divest himself of such significant power to a non-elected individual. Perhaps valid reasons exist for the creation of an executive officer, but a more detailed explanation would be helpful for a better and more focused understanding of why this part of the legislation was introduced. There is also a worry of the costs associated to setting up another layer of bureaucracy which, in turn, could drain valuable resources from an already strained budget.”

The third thing they said in this regard:

"It is also our understanding at this point in time that the Statutory Powers Procedure Act will not apply to the executive officer's orders, meaning that the executive officer need not follow statutory rules of due process other Ontario proceedings must apply. So should a drug manufacturer disagree with the executive officer's decision, they will not be afforded the right to appeal, but only apply for judicial review, which is available on only limited grounds. It is worrisome to us that the executive officer can manage outside established protocols."

It is worrisome to the New Democratic Party as well, which is why, during the course of the clause-by-clause, I moved amendments that would have done away with the government's provision to have an executive officer appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and instead have the roles and responsibilities outlined in the bill under the mandate of the current director of the drug program branch, who is a bureaucrat in that ministry; and secondly, moved amendments that would have restored the checks and balances which were in place in the current legislation for oversight by both the minister and cabinet through regulation-making processes.

1650

I regret that all of those amendments in that regard were defeated by the government. We continue to oppose the structure of the executive officer, the power that he or she will have and the fact that there are not in place the checks and balances that should be in place when important decisions on drug policy are going to be made.

The second concern that I want to raise is that the bill does nothing to guarantee that Ontario patients will get the drugs they need when they need them for the price they need them, and that is certainly true in the case of cancer patients who need intravenous drugs. So I completely disagree with the final comments made by the member for Mississauga South that this bill is going to ensure that people get the right drug for the right patient at the right time at the right price. I might be paraphrasing, but I think that's essentially what he had to say.

I have raised before in this Legislature my concerns regarding cases involving cancer patients, for example, who have multiple myeloma who need Velcade and can't get Velcade. I have raised cases in this House about colorectal cancer patients who need Avastin and who can't get access to Avastin. I have raised cases about people who have colon cancer and need access to Erbitux and can't get that.

The reality is that if the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee is still reviewing a cancer drug, or if the DQTC, and I'll use that short form from here on in, has turned down funding for an intravenous cancer drug, then there is no mechanism for cancer patients in the province of Ontario to access intravenous cancer drugs unless they go to a clinic in the United States and they pay a fortune to get these treatments in a clinic there, or they buy the drugs in the United States and they come to Ontario and they pay a fortune at the Provis clinic here to have these drugs administered. Either way, very few people have the cash to do this. We have set up in the province a two-

tiered system with respect to access to drugs, because if you need access to oral medication, you can use a section 8 or a conditional listing process, and that continues in this bill, but if you need access to intravenous cancer drugs, there is no special mechanism, no conditional mechanism, for you to get them if the drugs are under review or if the drugs have been denied, and there's something wrong with that process.

I want to read into the record a letter from one of my constituents which I think gives the whole picture. This was sent to me by Joe Bourque in November 2005.

"I am writing this letter to bring a great injustice to your attention. My wife, Patricia, was diagnosed with colon cancer in March 2003, she had surgery, and by June 2003, it had metastasized to the liver. Since then, she has undergone all the therapies and trials that were recommended to her by her oncologist and has done well, up until now. In the last two months her tumours have doubled in number and size. The only treatment is a drug that has been approved in Canada but not yet made available, nor has it been approved to be funded if received elsewhere. The drug is Erbitux and has proven to be life-sustaining in patients with colon cancer with metastases.

"In Canada, there are many patients in my wife's situation who are basically being denied treatment which can help them. Cancer is not curable, but when there's an option to extend your loved one's life and there is nothing you can do to get it, what does that say about our health care system....

"Unlike some situations, ours does not have the luxury of time. We are fighting for every moment and urgently need your help to push for funding in Canada. We need to have this drug available and covered. To tell someone who is in the last stage of their life that they can get this drug in the United States or at a private clinic at a cost of \$10,000 or \$15,000 per month is cruel. Is health care only for the rich?"

I raise this very particular issue because I was hoping that during the course of Bill 102 I would see, somewhere in the bill, provisions for cancer patients who need intravenous cancer drugs. I think this was brought home to us in a presentation that was made on June 5 by the Multiple Myeloma Support Groups of Hamilton, Toronto and London. Their presentation was very short and sweet, so I'm going to read it into the record:

"Key points

"(1) We urge you, as members of this committee, to ensure that the following features are clearly defined in the final legislation for the benefit of cancer patients in Ontario:

"—A conditional listing that allows access to new drugs during their evaluation for formal listing.

"—Rapid funding decisions for breakthrough drugs for life-threatening conditions.

"—A quick response, exceptional access mechanism that patients can utilize when they have no other method of obtaining lifesaving or life-extending drugs.

"Please make these features work.

“(2) Allow oncologists, at their sole discretion, to decide which drugs will effectively treat cancer patients and provide those drugs through the health system.

“(3) Protect Ontarians from crushing debt that may be a reality under a two-tier system where cancer patients must fund their own drug treatments.

“(4) Time is the enemy. Cancer patients with serious illnesses cannot wait.”

The reality is that Bill 102 is going to do nothing for these multiple myeloma cancer patients and other patients who need intravenous cancer drugs. Cancer Care Ontario made that point when Terry Sullivan, their representative, came to the committee and made a presentation on May 30. He said that “the amendments proposed in Bill 102 do not directly affect the reimbursement of intravenous cancer drugs through the new drug funding program, as IV drugs are primarily infused in hospital to outpatients.” It’s very clear that there’s nothing in the bill that’s going to help the folks whose concerns I have been raising.

The new drug funding program is essentially the formulary for Ontario’s intravenous cancer drugs. It is administered by Cancer Care Ontario on behalf of the Ministry of Health. The program reimburses about 90-plus hospitals for the costs of new intravenous cancer drugs after they have been approved by the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee.

In February 2005, however, a new wrinkle was added to this approval process. The new wrinkle is that there is now a joint committee that involves representatives from Cancer Care Ontario and the Drug Quality and Therapeutic Committee, who review and make recommendations with respect to intravenous cancer drugs to the broader Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee, but it is that joint committee that essentially makes the recommendations, and it’s important to note that there are no patient representatives on that committee. That’s a huge concern because so many intravenous cancer drugs are being turned down for approval and for funding.

I raise that because in March 2006 we got a response from a freedom of information request I had made about intravenous cancer drugs, how many were being approved and how many were being denied. Since January 2006 there have been eight products or indications that have been recommended for funding through Cancer Care Ontario’s new drug funding program. Five were approved through a section 8 program because they were oral medications for cancer, and one ODB product was reviewed, but it was maintained under the ODB through a section 8 process. Fourteen products or indications were reviewed and were not recommended for funding under the new drug benefit program. Those included: Velcade; Avastin; Taxotere; Retaxin; all as examples.

There is no mechanism under Bill 102 to have cancer patients have representation on the joint Cancer Care Ontario DQTC subcommittee.

I moved an amendment during the course of the clause-by-clause and that was voted down. The amendment was very simple. It said as follows: “The minister

shall ensure that at least two patient representatives with voting rights are added to joint Committee to Evaluate Drugs/Cancer Care Ontario subcommittee which reviews and makes recommendations on intravenous drug therapies.”

I regret that the government voted this down, because the government said during the course of these hearings that they wanted more patient representation in how drugs were approved and in drug policy in the province. This would have been an ideal opportunity for the government to put patients on a committee that is actually making recommendations about intravenous cancer drugs. This was voted down.

1700

Worse than that: I tried to put into the bill an amendment that would allow for a section 8 process to be applied to intravenous cancer drugs as well, because I think it is unacceptable in the province that there is a provision for pharmacists to make an appeal to get a drug covered through a section 8 process, and this can be done if we’re talking about oral medication, but there is no mechanism in this province for an oncologist to make a request to get an intravenous cancer drug applied to a cancer patient where that may be the last choice and the last drug that can be applied. There is no mechanism for an oncologist to approach the ministry and get a drug covered under an exceptional circumstance or a conditional circumstance.

I think that’s wrong. That is why, during the course of clause-by-clause, I moved a motion that followed after section 16 of the bill which would have done the following:

Point number 4, intravenous cancer drugs: “If an oncologist informs the director of the drug program branch that the proper treatment of a patient requires the administration of an intravenous cancer drug which is not covered under the new drug funding program, the director may make the new drug funding program apply in respect of the supplying of the intravenous cancer drug by notifying the oncologist and by notifying Cancer Care Ontario.

“Same

“5. If an oncologist informs the director of the drug program branch that the proper treatment of a patient requires the administration of an intravenous cancer drug which is covered under the new drug funding program but not for the indications needed by the patient, the director”—that is, the director of the drug program branch—“may make the new drug funding program apply in respect of supplying the intravenous cancer drug by notifying the oncologist and Cancer Care Ontario.”

What that would have done, had it been accepted by the government, would allow cancer patients who need intravenous cancer drugs that are being reviewed by the DQTC at a time when they need them and the review is still under way or who have been denied those where an oncologist knows it is the only form of treatment left that might extend the life of that cancer patient—this process in place would have allowed that oncologist to make an

appeal to the director to try and get those intravenous drugs covered.

I really regret that the government could not accept this amendment. I don't know why the government wouldn't accept this amendment. We have read, for the last number of months, of so many patients who are forced to go to the United States, out of country, to try and get access to cancer drugs that are not being covered here or that are under review in Ontario. They are spending a fortune trying to do that. The reality is, while some have the money to do that or are borrowing from family or have some ways to do that, so many others can't and are dying without getting the cancer treatment that could sustain them or that, in some cases, could cure them.

I thought this was a reasonable proposal, and I remain, frankly, very angry and very frustrated that the government is just so unwilling to find a way to give cancer patients who need a drug of last resort a mechanism to allow an oncologist to apply for that. I do not understand the rationale for not doing that, and I certainly don't accept the two-tiered drug policy that we now have in place where some cancer patients, through luck or good fortune, can afford to go to the States and pay for intravenous drug treatments there, and so many can't and are, frankly, dying as a result. So that was turned down, and I was extremely unhappy to see that that was the situation.

There are a number of things left out of the bill that continue to concern me. New section 8 process: The government promised dramatically reducing paperwork for physicians and pharmacists, promised faster decisions in this regard, promised to have more open communication about decisions with respect to section 8, and it's worth noting that there is nothing in the bill, no provision that establishes that new process.

Secondly, the government promises a rapid review for breakthrough drugs. The government specifically said, and I quote, "... significantly speed up the review process for breakthrough drugs, by starting the review prior to the drug being marketed in Canada." It's worth noting that there is nothing in the bill about this process. There's not even a definition of "breakthrough drug" in the bill.

Thirdly, the government promised, "We intend to improve access to drugs by entering into partnership agreements with manufacturers. We aim to secure more competitive prices in Ontario's marketplace." It's worth noting that there is nothing in the bill that defines these partnership agreements, the framework for them, the extent of them, the potential terms and conditions—zero.

The government promised to pay pharmacists for professional services. I quote, "We intend to introduce a new payment for specific services that pharmacists provide for patients." It's worth noting that there is nothing in the bill with respect to the new payment scheme for pharmacists for professional services.

Fifth, the innovation fund: The government said, "We recognize the importance of innovation to our health system, and will fund innovative research projects that

will show the value of drugs within the health care system." It's worth noting that the establishment of the innovation fund wasn't in the bill. I moved an amendment to put it in the bill, and the government voted that amendment down.

Sixth, the Committee to Evaluate Drugs: The government said, "We will include two patient representatives as full members in the Committee to Evaluate Drugs (formerly the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee). These patients will be involved in individual drug funding decisions." It's worth noting that the government had no provisions in the bill for this, and it's worth noting that the government voted down my amendment to put this provision in the bill.

Seventh, the government said savings will be reinvested in Ontario's drug program. The member from Mississauga South gave a figure today: It was over \$200 million that will be reinvested in the drug program. It's worth noting that there is no provision in the bill that guarantees that any savings from this exercise will go back into the drug program—no provision at all. So there's no guarantee it's going to go back into the drug program; it's just as likely to go right into the consolidated revenue fund.

Public interest: There is no definition of "public interest" in the bill, even though the executive officer is going to make a number of critical decisions about drugs listing and delisting "in the public interest." There was no definition of public interest in the bill. It's worth noting that I moved a definition for public interest for the bill, and the government voted that down too.

So there was an effort that was made by a number of us to move forward amendments to try and improve the bill. This is the package of amendments that I moved. The only one that was accepted at the end of the day with respect to the Citizens' Council is frankly an amendment that the government should have had in the original draft of the bill. The original draft of the bill should have clearly stated there was going to be a Citizens' Council, that there was going to be a Pharmacy Council. It was silly that it was not in the bill. The one amendment that the government accepted from me in that regard was the citizens' committee, which frankly should have been in the bill in the first case. None of my other amendments were accepted.

I want to raise concerns about how much of the bill still appears in regulation. Essentially what we are dealing with is a framework here, and we are asked to trust the government with respect to the promises that it has made about how things are going to be improved in the drug system. Let me just run through some of the regulations that appear in the bill, because these provisions were not in the legislation, so we are left to hope that this will work out and that these will be good situations.

In regulations we have:

- (1) The definition of what is not a rebate.

(2) The drug benefit price for the purpose of the section pertaining to rebates as including the price submitted by the manufacturer under the regulation.

(3) Definitions for words, expressions in the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act.

(4) The designation of a product as interchangeable with one or more other products between royal assent to the bill and October 1, 2006.

(5) Section 5.4, giving cabinet the power to make a regulation that can be applied retroactively so that its provisions may be effective from a date before the date that the regulation is filed.

(6) The Lieutenant Governor in Council can make regulations to clarify, modify, restrict the functions and the powers of the executive officer.

(7) Under subsection 10(5), set out in regulations: the conditions pertaining to the acquisition costs of a listed drug product.

(8) Set out in section 11(2): the creation of alternative payment mechanisms for pharmacy operators for certain classes of eligible persons such as long-term-care facility operators.

(9) Section 12.4(3), set out in regulations again: the conditions on the acquisition cost of a listed drug product for an operator of a pharmacy.

(10) or (11)—I'm not sure where we are anymore—the drug benefit price for the supply of a drug which the executive officer has agreed should be supplied as a special case will be determined by a regulation.

Section 27(1), defining any word or expression used in the Ontario Drug Benefit Act—that has not been defined in this act.

Defining professional services for the purpose of clause 1.1(2)(j) governing the payments that may be made for professional services and conditions to which the executive officer is subject in making payments for professional services.

Under section 27(4), under regulations again: those conditions that will pertain to the acquisition costs of a drug product.

Under section 27(5): establishing the alternative payment mechanisms between the executive officer and pharmacy operators for certain classes of eligible persons as specified.

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Section 27(9): Regulations that will set a maximum markup of the drug benefit price, not just a percentage.

Section 27(11): The Lieutenant Governor in Council will regulate not only the dispensing fee but also set out the conditions for payment of dispensing fees to operators of pharmacies.

Section 27(15): The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make a regulation respecting how the drug benefit prices are to be calculated for the purposes of the exceptional access program under the Ontario Drug Benefit Act.

There's more, but I think you understand my concern. So much of this bill is in regulation. So little of it, in terms of government promises, actually found its way

into the legislation itself. Important provisions of the bill, important principles that the government wants to focus on, that the government makes—and the government made a lot of promises during the debate on this bill and certainly in its draft documents to stakeholders. Those provisions should have been included in the bill. Many were easy to be included in the bill and that's the way it should have been done. I regret that so much of this bill is now left to regulation.

Finally, the last concern I want to raise really involves how much the government missed the mark when it came to understanding the impact that this bill, before it was amended, was going to have on small, independent community pharmacies. Frankly, it would be an understatement to say that the government totally misunderstood and did not comprehend the impact that the original draft of the bill was going to have on so many small pharmacies.

It's interesting that on second reading, when I read into the record two letters that expressed concerns that I had received from pharmacists, the member from Mississauga South, at the end of my remarks, asked me to send him a copy of the concerns. He also said, in his two-minute response to my remarks, "The intent in the consultations is not to impact upon pharmacists, whom we are putting as front-line health care workers in this bill. We are going to give them dispensing fees, we're actually going to increase their fixed fee, and we're hoping that this will all be neutral, if not positive. The alarmist nature of her comments"—my comments—"I think, is overstating the case."

I think the member from Mississauga South and his Liberal colleagues found out, as we went through the public hearings, that the bill was not revenue-neutral, that I was not overstating the case, and that in fact there were alarm bells that went off all over the public hearings and during the course of the public hearings from many pharmacists who knew they were going to be impacted, given the bill as it was drafted.

I want to read into the record a couple of presentations in that regard so you get a flavour of what was said by pharmacists during the course of the public hearings. This is from Rosanne Currie, who is a pharmacist and an owner of two rural pharmacies in southwestern Ontario, Pellow Pharmasave in Walkerton and Lucknow Pharmasave in Lucknow. She says as follows:

"The compensation by the Ontario government to pharmacies has been flat over the last 16 years. There is no doubt in my mind that the funding that we have received from manufacturers has enabled my pharmacies to provide the patient care services over these last number of years I am able to have staff in place to support my patient care initiatives.

"At my pharmacies we offer valuable clinics throughout the year on topics such as diabetes, arthritis, heart health and osteoporosis. We have held very successful flu shot clinics at both of our stores with over 400 people attending this past fall. I might add that I lose money on

these clinics because it costs me more to provide the service than what the government reimburses....

“Another aspect of my business is that we provide extensive services to our nursing homes and residential lodges within our communities. In addition to supplying these facilities with medications, we are active members of multidisciplinary teams and make recommendations to drug therapy, we perform quality assurance audits, we are an active member of infection control and prepare so that flu outbreak plans are in place, we provide in-services to staff and families on health-related issues and offer after-hours emergency services, just to name a few....

“Small-town pharmacies rely on a large percentage of their business to be generated from prescriptions. We do not have a large front-shop (retail) sales volume or corporate drug plans to generate viable business....

“Please be careful in the full consideration of Bill 102. If passed in its present form, community pharmacy services will change drastically. The pharmacy retail business, especially in rural communities, will be decimated.”

Let me read, as well, from a presentation that was made to the committee by another pharmacist. His name is Glenn Coon.

“My wife Pat and I own Port Rowan Pharmasave in the town of Port Rowan, Ontario, which is in Norfolk county in the southwest part of our province....”

“You have heard it for weeks now. Bill 102 will take non-taxpayer money (the so-called generic rebate) and replace it with taxpayer money at a much reduced rate to the pharmacist.

“No expert would have ever come up with that.

“Bill 102’s expert had me actually losing money providing high-cost medication to my cancer and HIV-infected patients until the Minister of Health removed the \$25 cap. How did that get into the act in the first place?

“If this bill passes without the amendments proposed by the various pharmacy associations, at fiscal year-end 2007, I will not be paying any corporate income tax. Given the new bill’s income sources, less the old outlawed income sources, I expect to lose between \$120,000 and \$150,000 in revenue. I fully expect to operate at a loss in fiscal 2007. That kind of loss may be able to be withstood in busy urban pharmacies or in pharmacies with big front shops.

“I provide more than a dozen community seminars annually. I’ve partnered with the Ontario Provincial Police and the Grand Erie District School Board for more than 15 years in the values, influences and peers ... program given grade 6 students ... outlining the importance and dangers of prescription, non-prescription and illicit drugs. Lions, Lionesses, women’s institutes, men’s groups, church groups and our own five-times-a-year Pharmasave community wellness seminars and clinics held at the Community Fellowship Church ... are all a part of giving back.” He also went on to describe how Pharmasave even supports missions overseas.

He was very clear what the proposed legislation meant. It was because of him and because of many other

community pharmacists who came to the committee to outline their personal situations, given what was in the original bill, that the government was forced to back down and make changes to the bill, which hopefully will not now significantly impact on pharmacists and pharmacies. But had the process been different, we could have avoided all of that.

I hope Ontario pharmacists are going to have a greater role in Ontario’s health care system, but so many of them must be wondering about the real government intentions, given the original drafting of this bill. I hope the section 8 process and the rapid review process will be put into effect, but since there’s nothing in the bill, it’s hard to know what we’re moving to. I remain very frustrated that cancer patients will not have access to conditional listings for intravenous cancer drugs and I remain very much opposed to the creation of the executive officer, whose functions I think should be part of the role of the current director of the Ontario drug program branch.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I’m very happy to weigh in on Bill 102. I spoke once to the bill earlier and I’ve been through the committee process now. I want to acknowledge both the member for Kitchener–Waterloo and the member for Nickel Belt as being really very articulate and wise on the health care issues, and they were very helpful on committee.

I’m really very proud of our government’s record on committee process, so I want to talk about process just for a couple of minutes. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo made a number of comments about process that I think need to be addressed. I understand that time allocation is not something that everyone in this House thinks is a great idea. It’s not something that any government should choose to do frequently or unadvisedly. In fact, we don’t take time allocation lightly at all. It’s not our first choice in any instance, after eight years of basically having legislation thrust down their throats. I think the member for Kitchener–Waterloo has to acknowledge that the record of the previous government on time allocation and allowing full debate on bills and sending bills to committee so they can be debated and amendments can be brought forward is really very thin.

I just want to read some numbers into the record. Our government has introduced 94 government bills, passed 72 bills and only time-allocated 14 bills.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): A great record.

Ms. Wynne: That’s a very good record, considering that we’ve time-allocated fewer bills than any government since 1990 and considerably fewer than the government of which the member for Kitchener–Waterloo was a member. They time-allocated 102 bills. In fact, in the last session, the Eves government used time allocation on 83% of government bills that received royal assent. So far, we have time-allocated about 10% of our bills. So I think we need to put that in context. It’s not our first choice, it’s not what we want to do, but in the context of what’s come before, we are doing very well in terms of debate in this House.

1720

The other piece of this in terms of the provision of opportunities for debate is the committee process. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo and the member for Nickel Belt are two members with whom I have worked on committee on a number of bills now, and they are extremely helpful to the process. They're extremely helpful in terms of getting people to the committee to bring their points of view. They're extremely helpful in terms of analyzing the merits of pieces of legislation. That's why committee works, because all parties engage in that debate.

In 2003, the then Progressive Conservative government allowed for no committee time, and no third reading debate was used when time allocation motions were in place. Again, that's a piece of the context that we have to have on the record so that people who are listening to this debate this afternoon can understand that we are working very hard to provide full opportunity for debate in this Legislature and in the committee process. I don't know if any of our bills haven't gone to committee. We have had full debate and full committee hearings on our legislation.

Having said that, I want to make a few comments on the legislation. I know that the parliamentary assistant talked about the legislation and the impact that it's going to have. I want to draw the Legislature's attention to some of the comments that were made during committee, but I want to just follow up on what the member for Nickel Belt was talking about in terms of the impact on pharmacy and the impact on the transparency. The fact that we went through the committee hearings and the fact that we had delegations come to us and bring their concerns—that was the process that led us to amend the bill in the way that we did.

The member for Kitchen–Waterloo talked about secret meetings with stakeholders. Well, in fact, what happens when a government takes a bill to committee is people come, speak to the legislation and bring their concerns. There has been an ongoing dialogue with many of the stakeholders before the legislation comes to the House, because that's how legislation gets drafted. Once the committee hearings are in place, then that discussion goes on and the amendments are refined in consultation with the stakeholders. The reality is that many of the amendments that come forward, especially from the opposition benches, are amendments that have been brought to the committee by the delegates, by the people who come to committee to speak to the bill. That is the way it should work. There should be meetings with stakeholders. There should be conversation about what the amendments should be. In fact, those conversations lead to a better piece of legislation.

I can tell you, when I was a parent activist and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo was the Minister of Education, there were no secret meetings, there were no public meetings—there were no meetings. There was no discussion about amending legislation, there was no discussion about policy, because the Minister of Education

at the time wasn't interested in what the community had to say about the government's actions. So the fact that we have had discussion before the bill is drafted, committee hearings and debate in the House and meetings in order to help us draft the amendments speaks to the openness of our process.

The amendments that we put forward that have now been made to the bill mean that Bill 102 continues to ban rebates, but proposes to narrow the scope of the legislation to permit pharmacists to receive defined professional allowances. That will mean that within a code of conduct, pharmacists will be able to receive those professional allowances and will be able to carry on many of the programs that the member for Nickel Belt was talking about. The kinds of public education and specific age group, people who are taking specific medications—it allows pharmacists to provide those services. We've refined that professional allowance piece and we will put a new code of conduct in place.

We're including the Pharmacy Council and the Citizens' Council in the legislation to support the government's intent regarding the formation and need for these groups. Those groups were going to be formed, but people came to us and said, "You should put them in the legislation." We're putting them in the legislation.

We are going to further improve transparency by requiring the executive officer to prepare an annual report. I know the member for Nickel Belt is concerned about the executive officer. There will be a requirement to have an annual report, and we're reinforcing the government's intent that the act does not permit therapeutic substitution. A number of people came forward with the concern that therapeutic substitution could happen. We're making it clear that it can't, and we're also leaving in place the ability of physicians to specify "no substitutions."

So we listened to what people said, we made those changes, and that is exactly what should happen in a committee process.

I want to spend just a few minutes going through some of the material that was provided by one of our presenters. She didn't actually speak to each of these issues, but she gave us written material afterwards. Her name is Armine Yalnizyan, and she's an economist and research associate at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. I have heard Armine speak on a number of issues regarding health care policy, and she's very articulate, very intelligent and, I think, very analytical. The document that she left with us following her presentation on Bill 102 on June 5 is divided into three parts. The first part is, "Why you should do this," speaking to us as the government, why we should go ahead with Bill 102. The second part she talks about is why we need to do it now and not later, and the third piece is why this is a model for the nation, and the leadership role this province can play. I just want to make a few of her points. In speaking to us about why we should do this, why we should go ahead with Bill 102, she says this:

"Everyone on this committee, everyone in every party, every consumer should stand behind" this bill because of,

first, “the efficiencies gained”—and the vernacular there is, “don’t waste my money as a taxpayer”—and secondly, the “potential for improving equity”—in other words, “don’t leave the ill behind, based on the size of their wallets.”

She goes on to say, “As elected officials of three separate parties, your interests should be firmly behind this initiative.” She says the “Conservatives tried to introduce price-volume controls in 1998,” the “NDP stand for preserving and enhancing access to basic services,” and, to her mind, “the measures in this bill meet both tests.” So her approach was that this should receive all-party support, for those reasons.

She talks about the major strokes in the bill that address the real issues. She says, “We pay too much for generics, only price control legislation is the 70% rule on their price vis-à-vis brand name products. That’s being brought down to 50%,” and she thought that was a very good thing. Her contention is, “We pay too much for patent drugs,” and she’s talking about the government being able to leverage their buying power and that we shouldn’t be paying premium prices because of our buying power.

She makes the sustainability arguments that health care costs are rising faster than revenues, that pharma growth rates are the biggest cost drivers, that we, as elected officials, all of us, wrap ourselves in the values of universal health care and accessible health care, and in order to sustain—

Interjection: Sustainable.

Ms. Wynne: Exactly. In order to sustain our health care system and make those values live, we have to control costs.

She goes on to say that we, “Can’t hang on to principles of access for all citizens without admitting will have to pay more over time.” So we have to acknowledge that and we have to find ways to control those costs in order to make the system sustainable.

She makes a number of points about why we have to do this now, why the timing is important. She makes the point that there is much more aggressive marketing on the horizon and we need to be aware of that, but she says, “You need to find efficiencies to preserve and enhance equity. There is only one true solution for making citizens—all the citizens you serve, the people who elect you—get the care they need, which includes pharmaceutical,” and that is “through the publicly funded system.” The only way for us to do it is through our publicly funded health care system. No matter which party is in charge at this point, she’s saying, this is what we have to do.

Finally, she talks about, “Why this could be a model for the nation, a nation-building exercise.” She says, “This is a model of governance that talks about what governments can do for people—save money in a way that people/businesses can’t because of economies of scale, set rules in a way that private sector players can’t, and make sure the benefits are distributed to all citizens,

not just some subset who have insurance or a bigger wallet.”

I think Yalnizyan’s arguments are very compelling. They are the reasons that underlie why we’re doing this at this point.

1730

The final thing I’d like to do is go through a whole sheaf of papers here. I’m not going to read from each of these, but these are some of the people who are supporting this legislation. I think it’s important to know the broad range of groups and individuals who are willing to work with us on this and are happy that we’re bringing this forward.

The Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens’ Organizations, which brings together about 150 seniors’ organizations throughout the province, came to us and said, “On the whole, we are supportive of the aims of this bill.” They were a little worried about the pharmacy, and at that point we hasn’t made the amendments to the professional allowances. We have done that, and I think they will be pleased but even at that point they were supportive.

Daniella Bernard came forward. She’s a volunteer with the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Ontario division, and she said, “Overall the MS Society is pleased with many aspects of the proposed changes to the drug system as outlined by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care,” George Smitherman. “We believe the views of the MS Society have been heard on many aspects of the proposed changes.”

They were particularly pleased about people—patients—being part of the process. They support the creation of a Citizens’ Council and they believe that’s going to give the public a say in drug policy development, and they thought that was a very good thing.

Canadian Pensioners Concerned: “We’re strong supporters of Bill 102 and believe that it will be a step forward in preserving the viability and sustainability of our public and private health care system in Ontario. We realize there will be groups opposing this legislation, but we hope the government will move forward after careful consideration with all parties in the Legislature and the public. The time to act is now, not a year from now.”

The Ontario Health Coalition: “We believe that the government, through this proposed legislation, attempts to balance the need for drug cost control with protection of patient access to needed drugs and safety issues.”

“The Mood Disorders Association supports the government’s decision to reform the Ontario drug program to ensure its sustainability and we have been involved in consultations with the Drug System Secretariat from the start.” That’s very important to us, that groups that are going to have a huge impact on them have been part of this discussion from the beginning.

The CAW: “We commend the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and his government for the introduction of this proposed legislation, both the significant and timely initiative that accepts the public responsibility and

challenge to address the fastest growing component of both public and private health spending in Ontario.”

And the—who’s this?

Mr. Fonseca: There are so many.

Ms. Wynne: There are so many to choose from. The last one I’ll speak to is the Alliance of Seniors. They said, “We also recognize that prescription drug costs constitute the fastest-rising component of health care costs in Canada and seriously threaten the sustainability of existing provincial drug plans.” They were supportive of the legislation.

We heard a wide range of opinions at the committee hearings. We made amendments based on what we heard at the committee hearings. The accessibility to medication in this province is going to be more transparent and more open for patients in this province. The pharmacists in the province are going to be able to continue doing what they do in their businesses. They’re going to be validated by being able to be paid for many of the services they haven’t been paid for before.

I am very happy we’re moving forward on this, and I think that it’s a bold and necessary move, one of the many things we’re doing that previous governments have not taken on.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mr. Peterson has moved third reading of the Bill 102, An Act to amend the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act and the Ontario Drug Benefit Act. 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 ayes have it.

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

This is signed by the chief government whip: “Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request the vote on the motion by Mr. Peterson for the third reading of Bill 102, An Act to amend the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act and the Ontario Drug Benefit Act, be deferred until deferred votes, Monday, June 19, 2006.”

Orders of the day.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

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

This House is adjourned until Monday, June 19, 2006, at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1736.

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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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