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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 5 December 2006

Mardi 5 décembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 December 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 décembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I rise to commemorate the anniversary of the Ukrainian genocide of 1932, known as the Holodomor. This genocide was to be for Ukrainians what the Holocaust was for the Jews and the genocide of 1915 was for the Armenians: a tragedy of unfathomable proportions that traumatized the nation, leaving it with deep social, psychological, political and demographic scars that Ukraine bears to this day.

Stalin himself is reported to have said, "No one can deny that the total Ukrainian yield of grain in 1932 was larger than in 1931," and yet about 10 million Ukrainians died that year of a man-made famine as the Communist state made its failed attempt to crush the freedom-loving Ukrainian people.

On behalf of the leader of the official opposition, John Tory, and the entire PC caucus, I extend our sincere condolences to the Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko, whose own relatives were victims of that genocide. And I extend our deepest sympathies to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and to the worldwide Ukrainian community on this tragic anniversary.

May the memory of the victims of the Holodomor be eternal. Slava Ukraini.

CORNWALL AND AREA ECONOMY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): Around this time last year, I had the unfortunate duty of notifying this House of the closure of Domtar, the largest employer in the city of Cornwall in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. At the time, there were fears about what that would mean for the city.

One year later, it gives me pleasure to tell you that Cornwall and all the communities of my riding have risen to face their challenges. While there is certainly more to do, excellent progress has been made.

This government has been a constant partner in this time of transition, offering assistance ranging from strategic investments and one-time grants to the forgiveness of Cornwall's downtown loan. The downtown loan for-

givenness has resulted in incredible dividends. Up to the present, a total of about \$1.3 million in financial assistance has been offered, through the Heart of the City community improvement plan to help with repairs and enhancements in the downtown areas of the city. That assistance has gone towards revitalization projects with a combined value of \$6.7 million; in other words, a net return of more than \$5 of private sector investment for every dollar of public assistance.

Recently, it was announced that Marimac Inc., a Cornwall producer of bedding and accessories, is expanding its operation in my riding to Iroquois, another sign that things are starting to happen in eastern Ontario.

The city of Cornwall and the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, with the full support of this government, are providing businesses with the tools they need to succeed and are reshaping communities in the process. I am looking forward to continuing to assist them.

TOBACCO INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I encourage this McGuinty government to act quickly on a tobacco exit strategy, which they've been ignoring for far too long. Government interference has decimated the industry, and tobacco farmers can no longer produce a viable crop. Farmers are fed up with this government pointing its finger at the feds.

Recently, Ontario's ag minister said, "Ontario is prepared to be an active participant in a federally led process to fund a long-term solution for the tobacco-growing region."

Is Minister Dombrowsky meeting with Minister Strahl in Ottawa to discuss the 60-40 split? The question remains.

As I've told this House, there is an underground tobacco trade that deletes \$2.5 billion in taxes each and every year. This \$2.5-billion loss in taxes across Canada would go a very long way in tobacco country.

As the fight for a fair exit strategy continues, farmers in my riding are finding it increasingly difficult to hold their heads above water. Through no fault of their own, farm families have invested in infrastructure—infrastructure that is now worth very little.

In recent weeks, tobacco farmers have rallied outside not only federal but also provincial members' offices, and although I look forward to speaking with farmers this

Friday at my office, I'm disheartened that they have been reduced to nothing more than begging for action.

1340

FOODLAND ONTARIO RETAILER AWARDS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate Morello's Your Independent Grocer and owner David Morello for his 2006 Foodland Ontario Retailer Award.

Since 2000, Mr. Morello's grocery store in Peterborough has participated in the Foodland Ontario program, which works to increase public knowledge and consumption of produce grown in our province.

At this year's 19th annual Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards, Mr. Morello and his hard-working staff were presented the Platinum All Seasons Award. This award recognizes the commitment and dedication to merchandising excellence for Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables.

The Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards program recognizes grocery retailers for their innovative promotion of Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables. Every year, nearly 1,250 stores across our province take part in the promotion of Ontario-grown produce.

I'm pleased to learn that Morello's Your Independent Grocer has earned this prestigious award in the past, and I wish them continued success in the promotion of Ontario's high-quality foods in my community for many more years to come.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Today we heard from the Auditor General about widespread systemic waste in the McGuinty Liberal government: trips, luxury cars, gym memberships—all on the taxpayer's dime. It's just another day in the life of a McGuinty Liberal government that does not value the taxpayer's dollar; a Liberal government that measures progress in media releases and handouts to friends, not by real results; a Liberal government that is adrift without a plan for the province.

Today is another sad chapter in Dalton McGuinty's wasteful regime. We've already seen McGuinty and his entourage flush away our tax dollars on items like the \$6 million to remove the "C" from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.; \$219,000 to redesign the Ontario trillium logo; \$20 million to quietly give raises to appointees to government agencies and boards; \$2 million for an inaccurate, partisan advertisement about health care; \$91 million to fire nurses; \$16 million for Dalton McGuinty's "I won't raise your taxes" Liberal ad agency; \$40 million and counting for the illegal occupation at Caledonia; enormous hotel bills; eye-popping consultant bills; and the list goes on and on.

In the last election, Mr. McGuinty promised to respect the taxpayer's dollar. The people of Ontario made the mistake of taking him at his word.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Yet again, an example of how this provincial government, the McGuinty government, is not listening to the people of northern Ontario: We have today, yet again, another press release in northern Ontario where Tembec, in this case, has announced the permanent closure of the Tembec mill in Smooth Rock Falls, the only employer in the community. We have 185 unionized jobs, with almost 50 jobs in management, that are lost permanently. The community, the union and others have been after this government to work with them to find a way to assist in the restructuring that's necessary in the industry to save employers like Tembec's Smooth Rock Falls mill. Where are we at? There's hardly a whisper from this government and, yet again, in this case, over 200 jobs lost.

This government doesn't get it. You have to be full partners in doing what needs to be done in order to restructure this industry—no more platitudes about programs that nobody buys into. This government stands up and says, "We've given hundreds of millions of dollars in loan guarantees." All of these people have credit, they don't need more, and there's about a 3% take-up on that program. What we need you to do is to deal with the key issues, which are the cost issues for these particular employers that have basically closed down. In the case of Smooth Rock Falls, we need you to work with the workers through the union, with the community through the mayor's office and others in order to assist in figuring out what we do now that Tembec has said, "We are walking away from that mill," and helping us to restructure some sort of offer to take that mill back over and to put it back into production sometime in the future. Anything short is a sellout for those community members.

NESTLÉ WATERS CANADA

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): It gives me great pleasure to be able to rise in the House today to recognize a manufacturing plant in my riding that has shown a real commitment to environmentally aware manufacturing.

In recent years, the Nestlé Waters Canada plant in my riding of Guelph–Wellington has made great strides in reducing their plastic and paper consumption. In the first quarter of 2007, they will reduce the amount of plastic being used in bottles and caps by 19% and 10% respectively. The little plastic plugs that are blown into bottles will be one-fifth smaller come next year. They are also reducing the size of the labels, which leads to 20% less paper use. Last year, Nestlé reduced the height of their cardboard trays in which the bottles sit by 30%, therefore using less corrugate, as well as reducing the amount of shrink wrap that is wrapped around each case of water.

Nestlé has also partnered with transport companies to secure new lightweight equipment. This resulted in 7% less CO₂ emissions for their trucks in 2006, and they expect this number to go up to 15% less CO₂ emissions in 2007.

One of the three Rs of waste management is “reduce.” Nestlé Waters Canada is doing its share to reduce air emissions and packaging. Now we just—

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

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Last Wednesday, I attended a conservation fair hosted by the Ministry of Energy. As you know, conservation is a priority for the McGuinty government, and I was happy to participate and discuss the various methods of conserving energy right in your own home.

One of the methods promoted at the fair was the use of compact fluorescent light bulbs, or CFL bulbs. These light bulbs are very important for our environment because they use 75% less electricity than an incandescent light bulb and can save the consumer \$50 per light bulb in their electricity bill each year.

One of the many participants in the fair was a group called Project Porchlight. Their goal is to distribute 250,000 CFL bulbs in the Ottawa area, a task they took on early last month. I was happy to help them with their campaign back in November and hope that their initiative will be extended to other ridings in Ontario.

There is a culture of conservation in our province, the results of which are reflected in a report written by the Conservation Bureau’s chief energy conservation officer, Peter Love. In that report, Mr. Love notes that Ontario received a B-plus grade from the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance in its 2006 national report card on energy efficiency. This grade is up from a C-minus, which we inherited from the Tories, and since we have taken power, we’ve seen significant improvement.

We will see further improvements thanks to our energy efficient amendments to the Ontario building code, which will save Ontario forever into the future. The continuing co-operation between our government and groups like Project Porchlight will bring us even closer to receiving an A-plus on our next report card.

EMPLOYMENT IN PRINCE EDWARD–HASTINGS

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I want to share with the people of Ontario that my community has a problem—a good problem. It appears that the number of jobs available in the Quinte area is exceeding the number of people available to fill them. This situation was highlighted for me last week when the city of Belleville held a job fair to attract individuals and families to our area. I particularly want to applaud Karen Poste of the city of Belleville for organizing this event.

I would like to take this opportunity to do a commercial for my riding. Whether it be Quinte West, Prince Edward county, the city of Belleville, Tyendinaga township or the town of Deseronto, we offer a quality of life second to none. We have beautiful geography and great people, and we are particularly blessed with a large number of high-quality, high-level, progressive employers. But for local industry wishing to expand or new industry locating in our area, they are finding it increasingly difficult to attract new employees simply because of the current low unemployment rate in our immediate area. So I say to the people of Ontario or, indeed, of Canada: If you’re considering relocating, please consider Prince Edward–Hastings. It’s a great place to live and a great place to work. Visit us for a day but plan on staying for a lifetime.

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2006 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L’ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Mr. Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 168, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l’assurance contre les accidents du travail.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): This legislation, if it is passed, will go a long way to restoring fairness and balance to the workers’ compensation system by annually indexing workers’ benefits to the consumer price index, thus creating a cost-of-living increase for injured workers.

I appreciate the all-party support for this bill, and I want to particularly thank the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group for their perseverance in moving this legislation forward.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wonder if people might join me

in welcoming a fantastic group from Pathways to Education Canada, led by Carolyn Acker and these fantastic students who are revolutionizing the way we do education in the great community of Regent Park.

MOTIONS

ADDRESS BY LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): First of all, I do not have a motion for night sittings, just to be conciliatory and nice to the opposition at this time of the year. That's the only reason, of course.

But I do have another motion. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting an address from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

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

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, immediately preceding oral questions on Thursday, December 7, 2006, the House shall suspend during pleasure to receive a 10-minute address from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, and that, immediately following His Honour's retirement from the chamber, oral questions shall commence.

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

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): Our government fundamentally believes that children in need of protection must be better off as a result of involvement of our child protection system in their lives. This fundamental principle is the driving force behind the work we do on a daily basis to improve and strengthen the child protection system.

Our government has taken unprecedented action to strengthen the performance of Ontario's child protection system, and today we are taking still more action: a new, higher standard of increased scrutiny and greater accountability for children's aid societies in Ontario.

Our resolve for higher standards began the day we were elected. It began with the formation of a real Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Gone are the days of lip service to children with no money attached. Under this government, Ontario children and youth have a seat at the cabinet table.

Our drive for higher standards continued with a new Child and Family Services Act, now in effect. That new

legislation means more accountability for children's aid societies and protection for children. It means a standardized complaints process and an independent, neutral third party to hear them. The Child and Family Services Review Board will make timely and binding decisions, and the Ontario Ombudsman has jurisdiction to oversee complaints about that process.

We set higher standards by introducing a new regulation in February 2006 that requires children's aid societies to complete full criminal background checks for all placements, even where a child is placed with members of an extended family. Our higher-standards agenda has also led to the introduction of legislation that would make the child advocate an independent officer of the Legislature. With the will of this Legislature, the child advocate will never again be muzzled by the government of the day but will be a truly independent advocate, giving our most vulnerable children and youth the strong voice that they deserve.

Our commitment to higher standards is also found in this government's decision to shine the light on children's aid societies by expanding the mandate of the Auditor General to conduct value-for-money audits of the broader public sector. We gave the auditor this power so that, for the first time ever, he could conduct an audit with full access to CAS files and therefore be in the best position to identify areas that require further attention.

Today, the Auditor General has released his report, which includes the first value-for-money audit of CASs in Ontario's history. I would like to thank the Auditor General and his staff for their work.

While I have found the findings disappointing and disturbing, this report presents us with an opportunity to take further action to strengthen the child protection system and the children's services sector as a whole. Over the past several weeks, I have personally acquired a good understanding of the findings and given thoughtful consideration to the issues identified and the steps that must be taken.

I am pleased to announce today the steps our government is taking in response to the auditor's findings. It is an action plan for higher standards.

First, my ministry is implementing every single recommendation of the Auditor General. In fact, some of the ministry's action items were completed by November 30.

Second, I have directed all children's aid societies to implement every single recommendation of the Auditor General.

Third, all CASs are to provide a detailed report back to the ministry by the end of March to demonstrate their progress in this regard.

In addition to these steps, we are going further, because Ontarians' investment in protecting vulnerable children must be accounted for and must meet a higher standard.

We are creating a new accountability office that will monitor whether children's aid societies are meeting their legislated requirements for the care and protection of

children and ensure that corrective action is taken as needed. This office will assess and report on agency performance and provide my ministry's staff with the training and tools they need to provide better oversight and create a new culture of continuous improvement for CASs.

We are requiring children's aid societies to meet higher standards—as non-discretionary as those of the Ontario public service for its own employees and programs—in such areas as the procurement of goods and services; travel, meal and other expenses; hospitality; and the management of fleet vehicles.

We are conducting an independent assessment of the fleet requirements of children's aid societies, so that where less expensive alternatives exist, CASs will be directed to relinquish vehicles as quickly and economically as possible, with savings redirected into services for children and youth.

We are requiring regular audit reporting by all children's aid societies, and we are strengthening accountability and enforcement by including these higher standards in more detailed annual agreements with CASs and all other ministry-funded agencies.

I have already met with the executive director, board chair and treasurer of each of the four children's aid societies audited. I shared with them my disappointment in the auditor's findings and committed that my ministry would work with them to address the issues raised in the report.

My ministry has been working with these CASs to hold them accountable for the implementation of the Auditor General's recommendations that apply to each of them.

With the support of my ministry, each of the four CASs has already put into practice a number of policies and procedures that respond to the Auditor General's recommendations. Examples include tightening controls on travel reimbursement policies to ensure that detailed and accurate receipts accompany all reimbursement claims; reporting back to their boards of directors to track improvements in areas identified by the auditor; introducing new policies and reporting requirements for overtime, after-hours on-call service and mileage claims, which have already resulted in savings that are being redirected to front-line services; reviewing staffing structure in the context of the intake process to ensure that adequate resources are available to respond to referrals in order to ensure that children at risk are seen within mandated timelines; and introducing performance plans for staff that are aligned to improvement targets based on the findings of the auditor.

My ministry and I will continue to work with each of these CASs and with all other CASs to ensure that continuous improvements are made to address the auditor's recommendations.

I am also inviting the Auditor General to undertake a follow-up audit of these four CASs in 2007 to assess the progress that has been made.

The findings and recommendations in the Auditor General's report represent a real opportunity for everyone involved in the child well-being and protection system to work together to strengthen it.

There is an attitudinal change that is occurring. There is an understanding that it is a new day and there are higher standards to be met. It is about understanding that the almost 300,000 children and youth served by our protection system every year deserve the very best and that taxpayers deserve peace of mind in knowing that their hard-earned dollars are being invested wisely. When it comes to protecting our children, no standard can be too high.

1400

VOLUNTEERS

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Today, the province of Ontario is joining with jurisdictions around the world to recognize December 5 as International Volunteer Day.

This important day of recognition was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985 as a means to make visible the contribution of volunteers and to encourage committed volunteerism around the world. In that spirit, I acknowledge with great pride the more than five million Ontarians who volunteer each year selflessly and generously in communities across this province.

This morning I had the opportunity to thank Ontario's volunteers at the Baycrest Centre. Every year, more than 6,000 volunteers generously offer Baycrest their specialized skills and expertise to lend a helping hand. Baycrest is unique in its vision but is typical of the countless organizations that serve all of our communities across Ontario: the Yee Hong Community Wellness Foundation, Boys and Girls clubs, athletic associations, Victorian Order of Nurses and Special Olympics, just to name a few of so many of these wonderful organizations of volunteers. The success of all these programs depends greatly on the time that volunteers give.

As the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, it has been my pleasure to preside over many volunteer service award ceremonies during the past year. Many of you in this House have joined me at these events. This year alone, in our 20th anniversary, we presented more than 9,000 Volunteer Service Awards and 17 Outstanding Achievement Awards for Volunteerism in Ontario. Over the past 20 years, tens of thousands of Ontarians have been presented with the trillium pin and wear it proudly as they serve.

As we honour these individuals, we must also be mindful of the collective impact that volunteers have on our society. Their influence does not end at helping one person or group or cause; it also enhances the civil spirit that is at the heart of every strong community and strengthens Ontario as a whole.

International Volunteer Day also provides us with an important opportunity to thank and acknowledge the

45,000 non-profit organizations which are at work in every corner of this province.

This government is committed to its volunteers and to the newcomer community in Ontario. To engage our newcomer community in volunteerism further, I am pleased to say that we are working with three volunteer organizations—the Catholic Immigration Centre of Ottawa, the Maytree Foundation and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants—on projects that will focus on strengthening key aspects of volunteerism in Ontario's growing, diverse multicultural communities.

Finally, I would comment in particular on the contribution of youth to volunteerism in Ontario. Ontario's youth volunteered at a rate of 63% and accounts for 18% of all volunteering hours in our province. Ontario ranks above the national average of 55% and continues to rise. These remarkable young people not only contribute their time, but bring a fresh perspective to the organizations they serve. Youth are the future of volunteerism in Ontario and demonstrate how powerful young people can be in effecting change.

I am confident that all members of the House share this government's commitment to building a strong and vital community of volunteerism in Ontario. We continue to recognize the contributions of Ontario's volunteers through our awards programs. The Volunteer Service Awards, the Outstanding Achievement Awards for Volunteerism and the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers are just some of the ways the government of Ontario recognizes volunteers.

Volunteerism and the non-profit organizations they serve are leading Ontario into a much brighter future.

On behalf of all the people of Ontario and all members of this House, I would like to observe International Volunteer Day by congratulating all those who serve with dedication in communities across this province. It is my hope that their tireless efforts and considerable achievements will inspire all Ontarians to become involved and to make a difference in communities across this great province. Thank you so much, volunteers of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? Responses?

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I rise to respond to the statement by the Minister of Children and Youth Services today. When you listen to this kind of statement, adopting all the recommendations of the Auditor General, and they describe it as an action plan, it sounds good at face value until you look at the fact that oftentimes the best defence you can try to adopt to suggestions—indeed well-founded suggestions, in this case, of complete incompetence, complete negligence or both—is a good offence. In fact, when you look at the record here, what you see is a government and a minister that have not dealt with this, notwithstanding that a lot of

this material has been known to them for some considerable period of time.

If you go back to the first point in time when they knew—a question we have been trying to get the answer to for several days now—the deputy minister of this department had a briefing from the Auditor General in September, when a lot of this information was brought to the attention of the deputy minister in detail, which means the minister as well. Here we sit, in December 2006, finally hearing from the minister that there's going to be an action plan.

It gets worse: There were other communications, obviously, that took place between the children's aid societies, the Auditor General and the government, to the point where a senior official in the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services could write, for example, to one children's aid society congratulating them on what they had done as of April this year in addressing some of the shortcomings that had been identified.

But the worst thing of all is that the minister has not stood up in her place today and said that they've had quarterly reports—quarter in and quarter out—at the government and at the minister's office, detailing budgetary and other kinds of spending practices by the children's aid societies for a long period of time. This government, the McGuinty government, watered down those quarterly reports so they wouldn't contain the kind of detailed information on budget variances that would allow people to draw conclusions as to misspending that might be going on. Furthermore, the Auditor General found that “in two of the three regional offices we visited, there was little evidence that ministry staff reviewed the quarterly reports or followed up with societies to ensure any necessary corrective actions were taken.”

What did the Auditor General recommend in the wake of all of that? He recommended that we go back to the kind of quarterly reports that the McGuinty government and this minister abolished a year ago, which contained the detailed information on spending variances and so on. What they have done is abolish the detailed quarterly reports that were previously received—which, by the way, they didn't read anyway—and substituted less-detailed quarterly reports. That is what has allowed a culture to develop in the ministry and in the children's aid societies where they place Bermuda shorts for trips ahead of winter coats for the kids, Bermuda shorts for the people in this area ahead of winter coats for the kids.

For the minister to get up and talk about how she is accepting every single recommendation without fail and that it's all going to be wonderful and every problem is going to be solved completely ignores the fact that they've known for a long time and that their deputy minister knew in September—there's evidence that the children's aid societies and the ministries themselves knew a lot sooner than that; perhaps as far back as April. If they had been reading the original quarterly reports and hadn't decided to water them down to reduce accountability so that we've got more spending on SUVs, more spending

on trips, more spending on expensive restaurants and less spending available, therefore, for the vulnerable children of Ontario, then we wouldn't be in this mess, if they had been on the job and actually exercising any modicum of accountability whatsoever.

Far from deserving any congratulations for this, this government deserves to be condemned for the attitude, which has been allowed to seep through every ministry and every department, that the taxpayers' money is Monopoly money and this is some sort of game show we're playing here, when in fact this money is sorely and desperately needed for a variety of public services.

They only act when they're caught out. That's the only time they act to show any accountability. That is disappointing and a disgrace.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In recognition of International Volunteer Day, I want to say thank you to some outstanding organizations and their volunteers, who are representative of the volunteer spirit that contributes so much to the quality of life in this province.

Thank you to the 250 volunteers of the Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold program that provides beds, meals and clothing to over 1,200 individuals and their families each winter season throughout York region.

Thank you to the 1,200 volunteers of the Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association who deliver a full range of community support services to more than 6,000 senior, disabled and other clients annually throughout the GTA's Chinese community.

These organizations and many like them make Ontario the great province that it is, and we thank them.

1410

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To respond to the minister responsible for children and youth, the McGuinty government wants people to believe that problems with children's aid societies and more serious problems within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services didn't happen until the auditor's report was about to be released last week. The McGuinty government wants people to believe that this suddenly cropped up.

Reading the auditor's report is very instructive because he spends 24 pages of his report detailing the inaction and the misguided action that has been happening within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services under the McGuinty government. The auditor points out—and I want to quote him here, because the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the McGuinty government, was receiving quarterly reports that were indicating there were serious problems at children's aid societies. And what does the auditor say that the McGuinty government did with those reports? “[T]here was no evidence in most cases that ministry staff even reviewed

[quarterly] reports or followed them up with society staff to ensure the necessary corrective actions were taken.” The McGuinty government that wants to pretend that it's somehow looking after these vulnerable children was ignoring the very quarterly reports, not just for one year but for many years, that indicated there were serious problems and corrective action needed to be taken. That's what the auditor says.

But the auditor goes on. The auditor, in his year 2000 report, called for more effective monitoring of children's aid societies to make sure that children in need were being adequately protected. Is that what happened? In fact, that didn't happen. In 2003, the reviews of child protection files were cut. The very things which might give an indication of, “Is there something seriously going wrong here?” were cut—those kinds of reviews.

It doesn't end there. In 2005-06, the McGuinty government also cut the service and financial reviews. So the very things that the McGuinty government wants to boast about taking action on today—they actually cut those reviews a year and two years ago, the very reviews that again would have indicated that there are serious problems happening at children's aid societies, that some of the money isn't going to look after vulnerable children; it's going elsewhere. The McGuinty government didn't increase the reviews; they didn't pay attention to the reviews; they cut them.

It doesn't end there, because we know, unfortunately, from the deaths of some of these vulnerable children and the investigations that were conducted into these deaths, that there were other warnings given to the McGuinty government over the last three and a half years. What did they do with those warnings? They ignored them. And we know from the statements of the Provincial Ombudsman, who has said repeatedly, over more than the last year, that there are serious problems at children's aid societies, that he is receiving complaints from a number of parties about things that should be happening at CASs that are not happening and other things that are happening which shouldn't be happening. A repeated request by the Ombudsman to be given investigative and oversight authority as to what is happening at CASs, and what did the McGuinty government do? They ignored the Ombudsman as well; told the Ombudsman to mind his own business.

The McGuinty government should not be congratulated today. The McGuinty government should take a serious look in the mirror at itself, because what has happened here has also happened with autistic children, the way that they have been taken advantage of and manipulated. It has also happened with the national child benefit supplement, where the McGuinty government continues to take \$250 million of federal money out of the pockets of the lowest-income families and the lowest-income children in this province.

The McGuinty government should not be patting itself on the back today. It should be asking itself how it could be so terribly neglectful of vulnerable children.

DEFERRED VOTES

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS
DE LONGUE DURÉE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 140, An Act respecting long-term care homes / Projet de loi 140, Loi concernant les foyers de soins de longue durée.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1415 to 1420.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Matthews, Deborah	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	McGuinty, Dalton	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael	

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 28.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker: The bill is referred to the standing committee on social policy.

HUMAN RIGHTS CODE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2006LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 107, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code / Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1424 to 1434.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	McGuinty, Dalton	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peterson, Tim	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael	

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 29.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have our page Mackenzie Gunn from my riding of Durham, and with us today are her parents, Kim and Peter Gunn, grandparents Jim and Sherri Richards, uncle Scott Richards, and another guest. Welcome.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'd just like to take this opportunity to welcome students from Regina Mundi in London. I hope you enjoyed your day here at Queen's Park and the opportunity to have met the Premier.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CT SCANS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. It's hard to know where to begin with this shocking outline of waste and mismanagement on so many fronts from the Auditor General today, but I think it's best perhaps to start with the question of the CT scans.

We read in the Auditor General's writings that radiation levels in CTs are significantly higher than in X-rays, that physicians and staff seem unaware in many cases that CTs have higher radiation levels, and that proper settings are not used on the children of Ontario when they have CT scans. On page 14, the Auditor General says that "children exposed to radiation are at a greater risk of developing radiation-related cancer later in life."

He goes on to say that since children's organs are more sensitive to radiation than those of adults, the use of an adult setting for one CT examination of a child's abdomen and pelvis was estimated to be equivalent to over 4,000 X-rays, which is eight times the radiation an adult would be exposed to on the same setting.

My question is this: Parents across the province are asking themselves today how this could happen. I wonder if the Premier could tell us: How could your government allow CT scans to be used on children and adults in Ontario without proper training and without proper safety controls?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to start by saying that we're grateful for the work of the Auditor General. It gives us the opportunity, of course, to have a detailed focus on a number of areas.

1440

In this one in particular, I would note that CT scans are not something that has come to life in Ontario simply in the last three years. This challenge, which has been well presented by the auditor, is one that presumably has been in place for some time.

We have been working under the auspices of the auditor's advice and working with the Ontario Medical Association on the creation of a diagnostic imaging safety committee. This has been in place for several months now.

We're working very, very judiciously to bring forward recommendations that will allow us to do a more appro-

priate job of tracking all of the radiation associated with the advice on offer from the Auditor General, we accept it, and we're working very vigorously to ensure that we take appropriate and due advice from him.

Mr. Tory: This minister has more reviews going on than a movie magazine.

There are parents in Ontario who have one very simple question: If their child is going in for a CT scan today, tomorrow or the next day, they want to know, "Is my child going to be safe? Is my child going to be exposed to an unacceptably high level of radiation?"

As we've discussed with the Minister of Children and Youth Services, because of the way the system works, you have known about the auditor's findings for some period of time. You now say that you have a committee and a study and a review going on about this.

What we want to know and what I ask you is this: What specific steps have you taken now, for example, to tell all of the hospitals in Ontario that have a CT scanner that they should, at the very least, be making sure that the setting they use when a child is having a CT scan is a setting for a child, not what the Auditor General found in the hospitals he visited? Have you done even something as simple as that?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member seeks to draw a conclusion that is inappropriate for him to draw.

Indeed, related to the work of the Auditor General, we do receive benefit of the work that's ongoing. Accordingly, the ministry has been responsive, working, as I said earlier, through the auspices of our partnership with the Ontario Medical Association, on a diagnostic imaging safety committee. This is designed to ensure that people are following the appropriate guidelines across the broad platform of the provision of these services in the Ontario health care system.

I say again to the honourable member that if he turns to the member who sits beside him, he will know that this was a piece of business in which, if he draws the conclusion that I should have been more proactive, he then should draw the conclusion that his seatmate too should have been more proactive.

The point is that the Provincial Auditor has given us a very, very good piece of advice and direction; we're heeding it to a T and working very vigorously with our partnership in the hospitals and the Ontario Medical Association to ensure that radiation is being offered in a fashion that is—

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

Mr. Tory: I say with respect to the minister that there isn't one parent in Ontario who will take any heart or any comfort from your either blaming a previous government or failing to take responsibility yourself or failing to indicate what you've done now about this, because, I repeat, what the parents of Ontario want to know is, if their child is going to have a CT scan now or in the future or if they had one in the past, "Is it safe? Is my child going to be safe?"

You suggest that I made this up. I'm quoting the auditor, who says, "[I]n close to 50% of the selected cases, the appropriate equipment settings for children were not used."

All I asked you was whether you, having known about this for months, since you had the auditor's findings in your ministry's hands, have done anything to communicate with the hospitals of Ontario that, at the very least, they should make sure that the children's settings that are referred to here are used when CT scans are done on children so they can be safe? Have you done anything other than appoint another committee?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member likes to stand in his place and pretend that it is not necessary to work forward on issues like this in partnership with those who are providing the service on the front line, so he scoffs at the suggestion that a committee, as an example, is an appropriate way to respond to a circumstance that's occurring across a broad platform of service, involving hundreds and hundreds of different officials in a variety of self-governed institutions.

Accordingly, we have worked with our partners through the Ontario Medical Association and the Ontario Hospital Association to ensure that as we go forward, we're doing so in a fashion which heeds the very best advice of the Auditor General and which sees people who are responsible on the front line for operating the equipment in a fashion in accordance with its appropriate use.

This is work that has been ongoing as a result of the report and the information from the Auditor General. I say that we take that seriously and that we've been working vigorously since the information was made available. It is an example of the additional capacity that our government has offered.

We're grateful to the Auditor General for the work he has done in the hospital environment. We are, on behalf of Ontario's—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. For more than a year now, we have been questioning the government, the Premier, the minister and others on the data contained on the wait times website in the health care area. For that very same year, you've been telling us that all the data we have is up to date and accurate.

On the other hand, the auditor says today in his news conference that we should take this wait time data with a grain of salt. In fact, he referred to it as misleading, and he has raised serious doubts about the accuracy of that data. He says, "The starting point for measuring the wait time for tests was not sufficiently defined. As a result, the hospitals reported wait times differently."

My question is: Given that the hospitals are reporting waiting times differently, why should anybody rely on any of the data you have when the auditor himself has found that it should be taken with a grain of salt and

describes it as misleading? Why should anybody else in Ontario rely on it if he can't?

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think it's important to note that there will be, in response to this, a variety of views that are brought forward, including from those who are medical doctors who are advising in helping to develop strategies with respect to greater absorption of access to MRI and CT. We've increased access to MRIs by 78%. We've seen a notable reduction in the wait times, but we recognize that the Auditor General has determined distinctions with respect to in-hospital service and external. These are distinctions which the medical community is not presently operating around.

We will be responding on point to this, but I can assure Ontarians that through the work we have done we have made a priority of enhanced access—78% increase in access to MRIs—as a view of reducing wait times which were allowed to creep up in a very, very serious fashion. All of what the honourable member says may reflect work we have to do, but cannot separate the reality, which is that in Barrie, Ontario, you used to wait a year and now you wait six weeks.

Mr. Tory: The government managed to have such confidence in the data that the Auditor General now says should be taken with a grain of salt and in fact is misleading, that they bought millions of dollars of taxpayer-financed propaganda ad campaigns to say, "The doctor will see you now," and nobody has to wait; it's all wonderful.

But the fact is that people can't really find out how long they have to wait. One of the things the auditor points out is that you take the average waiting time of a patient who is in the hospital, which he says is one day, and average that with outpatients, who wait 30 days, and what do you report to the unsuspecting public? That the wait time is 16 days. In fact, that has nothing to do with the reality of most people out there who are outpatients. It's not an accurate picture. People can't find out how long they really have to wait. When are you going to fix this data so that you'll actually be able to keep your word and provide up-to-date, accurate information to people instead of this information that the auditor says is misleading and should be taken with a grain of salt, and he's right?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Far be it from me to challenge the Leader of the Opposition on this point. But in the work I do, I am also required to abide by the advice and direction offered by medical experts. The determination that the Auditor General has made with respect to the characterization of the data regrettably stands in contrast to that of the advisers who have provided this information. They do not believe it is appropriate to create a distinction between those who are in hospital and out of hospital, but rather that we should look at all patients together. If we do that—if we look at all patients as one

group—it is not appropriate to support the assertions the honourable member has made.

We believe we are collecting this information in an appropriate way. We believe we're doing that in a standardized fashion on the basis of the information that is offered to all Ontario hospitals that are in the provision of these services. If there are ways to improve this, we will look very, very carefully at those and make all members aware of distinctions and decision points—

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

Mr. Tory: Well, you know, when the McGuinty government resorts to the old “expert” defence—the Premier and the Minister of Energy: The coal decision was all based on the experts. Now we have what the Auditor General describes as misleading wait time information, and that's to be blamed on the experts.

I wonder if the experts are responsible for the two-tier wait times arrangement we have in place that the Auditor General talked about today. We have WSIB-funded patients receiving access to diagnostic services quicker than other patients. The auditor says it's happening at least in part, in the hospitals tested and visited, because the hospitals would be desperate without the revenue they get from the WSIB. So what we have is a WSIB patient waiting an average of five days while other patients—everybody else—wait 25 days. Of course, you then report the average number to the unsuspecting public.

When asked about this, the hospitals said the two-tier care was justified as long as other patients got their care within the benchmarks. What do you have to say about this, and again, what are you doing about this inaccurate data?

1450

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I find it interesting that the honourable member stands in his place and suggests that if he were the government of Ontario, he would act in health care without the benefit of experts. Here is a list of the experts we've worked with: Anne Keller, deputy chief of radiology, University Health Network; Leonard Avruch, assistant clinical professor, Ottawa Hospital Corp.; Paul—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the minister.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Would he guess at this work? Instead, we depended on Diane Barraffato, associate dean, medical radiation and rehabilitation sciences; Julian Chen, director, MR Centre, Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor; Julian Dobranowski, chief of diagnostic imaging, St. Joseph's Healthcare. We've worked with a panel of 30 people across the breadth of the province helping to develop the standards. We put those in place. If there's advice that's on offer from the auditor, we will look very, very carefully at that. But the honourable member's disdain for experts, doctors, who have schooled themselves in very expert ways—the disdain that the honourable member offers is much below him.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier: Today's auditor's report is a scathing indictment of the McGuinty government's failure to stand up for Ontario's children. The auditor's report confirms inadequate government oversight of \$1 billion spent at children's aid societies—vulnerable children left to suffer while executives waste money on luxury SUVs, exotic trips, high-priced meals and even \$150 car washes.

Premier, when did you first learn about this misuse of public money, and why has your government waited until now to do anything at all about it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): This is my first opportunity to weigh in in an official capacity since the release of the report.

I want to thank the Auditor General and all those involved in this effort. I want to thank him, first of all, for taking full advantage of the new authorities that we extended to him through this Legislature. He is looking at our children's aid societies for the first time, our hospitals for the first time, our school boards for the first time, OPG and Hydro One for the first time, colleges for the first time, and we are grateful that he has taken a careful look at some of those areas and provided us with new and very important information.

I say to the leader of the NDP that because there is a new process in place—by that I mean the traditional audit of ministry direct spending involved the ministry officials in an on-going dialogue. When you have an audit of a children's aid society or a college etc., that is done in much of an arm's-length relationship. So we get notice of this much later than we would have—

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

Mr. Hampton: The question you have tried to avoid answering is: When did your government first learn about this? The auditor tells us that your government received in-year quarterly reports from children's aid societies, reports that highlight the problems. What did the McGuinty government do with these quarterly reports? Well, the auditor is instructive there. He says, “There was no evidence in most cases that ministry staff even reviewed [quarterly] reports or followed them up with society staff to ensure the necessary corrective actions were taken.”

You got the first quarterly report—you ignored it; the second quarterly report—ignored it; the third report—ignored it; the fourth report—ignored it. Premier, the auditor says you had lots of notice of problems at children's aid societies, yet the McGuinty government chose to do nothing about it. Why?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: My colleague is mistaken. The information presented today in the Auditor General's report was not found within those quarterly reports, and I think he knows that.

I think what's important here is the steps we have taken to date. Those include creating the first-ever Minis-

try of Children and Youth Services, passing legislation to allow the AG to look at the books of the children's aid societies—by “AG” I mean the Auditor General. We've passed legislation and created an independent appeals process for the children's aid society complaints. We've introduced independent child advocate legislation. Today we've announced specific steps we are taking to ensure that we have ever-higher standards. We are implementing every single recommendation of the Auditor General, and the minister has gone even further by announcing an action plan for higher standards, including setting up a new accountability office, directing children's aid societies to meet the Ontario public service standards for procurement, directing CASs to conduct a review of vehicles against OPS guidelines, and also requiring—

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: All of that is long after many of these issues should have been brought to your attention by the quarterly report.

But the auditor is even more instructive, because the year 2000 auditor's report called for more effective monitoring of children's aid societies to make sure that children in need are being adequately protected. Instead of more effective monitoring, the opposite has happened under the McGuinty government. In 2003, the review of child protection files was cut, and in 2005-06, the McGuinty government cut service reviews and financial reviews of children's aid societies.

Premier, how are our most vulnerable children to be protected and cared for if the McGuinty government ignores the reports that you get and you actually cut the very reviews that are supposed to indicate if something is right or wrong?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP will know that the only party that made cuts to the children's aid society in recent years was his party; he will know that.

Let me tell you a bit more about this action plan for higher standards that we've announced today. Firstly, there is a new accountability office for tougher enforcement. That will mean that we will monitor the children's aid societies to ensure that they are meeting the legislated requirements of service. Secondly, it will mean that we will be able to direct corrective action when that is necessary. We are also directing the children's aid societies to meet the Ontario public service standards for procurement, including vehicles and all expenses. Thirdly, we are directing the children's aid societies to conduct a review of vehicles against OPS guidelines, and they will be directed, where it makes economic sense to do so, to sell the cars that do not meet those higher standards. Finally, we are putting in place a system that requires regular, audited reporting of expenditures. This is much better than quarterly reports; these are audited reports.

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

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: Let's look at pages 64 and 65 of the auditor's report, because while you and

your minister were asleep at the switch, ignoring the quarterly reports and cutting the reviews that would have indicated where the problems were, this is what was happening: CAS executives drove around in high-end luxury vehicles, dined at high-end restaurants, enjoyed exotic Asian and South American vacations, and bought gym memberships and \$150 car washes with public money.

Premier, working families across Ontario want to see our vulnerable children looked after. I ask again: Why did the McGuinty government ignore the repeated quarterly reports that indicated there were problems at children's aid societies, and why did you cut the very financial and service reviews which would have further indicated where some of the problems were?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Does the leader of the NDP honestly think that children's aid society quarterly reports were going to disclose expenditures on SUVs, vacations and the like? Does he honestly think that those individuals were going to make that kind of information public? The only reason we have access to this information today is because we asked the Auditor General to take a look at what's happening in the children's aid societies. More than that, now that we have received that information, we are acting on that information.

I can say that the minister, when she received this information for the first time in the month of October, asked to meet with the individuals involved, as well as the treasurers and presidents of the voluntary boards, brought them into her office, said, “Let's talk about this; let's find out what's happening,” and directed them to take steps. I can assure you that on the basis of this action plan that we put in place today, every single children's aid society in the province is required to take notice and understand that if they are doing these kinds of things, they will no longer be tolerated.

Again, I thank the Auditor General for bringing this information to us here in Ontario for the first time.

Mr. Hampton: I will thank the Auditor General where he says, “[T]here was no evidence in most cases that ministry staff even reviewed [quarterly] reports or followed them up with society staff to ensure the necessary corrective actions were taken.” On page 70, the auditor says, “In approximately one third of the files reviewed ... caseworker visits were an average of three weeks late, with one being 165 days late. As a result, there is little assurance that all referrals are appropriately assessed and, if necessary, investigated in a timely manner....”

Premier, your government had lots of warnings that there were some big difficulties at the children's aid societies. Why did you wait until three and a half years into your government to finally take action on things that were evident a year and two years ago?

1500

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): The interesting thing is

that these issues really aren't new. What's really new is that we are addressing these issues. What's new is that we are the ones—it's our government that's shining the light on children's aid societies and not relying on children's aid societies to provide us with the information that they wanted us to see. It's as simple as that. In establishing an accountability office in our ministry specifically for this purpose, we are not even relying on regional offices that have a whole range of agencies to review. We are focusing specifically on this sector, and what we have learned from the auditor in this sector we will also expand to all other service providers within the children's sector.

Mr. Hampton: I say to the Premier, there's a reason why the auditor spends about 20 pages talking about CASs and about 26 pages talking about your Ministry of Children and Youth Services: because it's the Ministry of Children and Youth Services that has really dropped the ball.

Here's the McGuinty government's record when it comes to children: You've taken advantage of autistic children and their desperate parents; you continue to claw back \$250 million a year from the pockets of the poorest children in this province; you force parents to give up custody of their children in order to get them the social services they need; and you have ignored repeated reports and reviews that indicated there were serious problems at the children's aid societies. I ask the Premier, in view of that record, why should anyone believe any promise you make with respect to looking after our children now?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: It's obvious that the leader of the third party will say anything—anything. I guess that's the role of the opposition parties in this House, to say anything to attempt to suggest that they could do a better job. In fact, he made reference to custody and giving up custody of kids. That didn't happen in our term. What we did was return custody. What we did was to fix the problem that you speak about, just as we will continue to fix—let me give you an example of what I found when I arrived at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I got a report on crown wards which covered a two-year period, and when I asked how come I hadn't seen this before, they told me that the previous government did not want to see these reports of Ontario's most vulnerable children. That's what I was told—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. The auditor's report today contained additional—beyond the boondoggle of the children's aid societies and everything else—unbelievable allegations of \$163 million worth of goods and services being purchased by staff at Hydro One using corporate credit cards, all without paperwork to back up the spending. We have \$50,000, in the case of one executive, for personal items: gift certificates, flowers, wine,

dinner theatre, CDs and so on. At OPG, \$6.5 million was spent without proper documentation: \$300,000 on gifts, including 40 leather jackets worth \$8,000.

What we have here is an all-you-can-eat McGuinty Liberal spending buffet. Nothing is too much. It's the taxpayers who are paying so who cares?

My question is this: This is the kind of waste and spending that drives taxpayers and ratepayers absolutely crazy when they pay their bills and their taxes. How can you justify having this kind of misspending going on on your watch, and what are you doing about it?

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I too would like to thank the Auditor General for the information and recommendations relating to procurement practices at OPG and Hydro. It was this government that shone the light on OPG and Hydro, and we welcome the information he has brought forward today.

I am meeting with the chair of Hydro One and with the chair of OPG later this afternoon to review the recommendations and to look at courses of action to deal with the auditor's recommendations. It is important to remember that prior to this government coming to office, nobody would have had a look at this. We are also proud of the fact that we applied freedom of information to Hydro One and OPG, and now we're prepared to deal in a meaningful way with the—

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

Mr. Tory: I guess the answer to the question, "What you are doing about this gross spending?" is "Nothing." We kind of knew that before, but you hoped it might be different.

We have, in the same report, people in the education system spending \$52,000 over two years on a purchasing card, including \$4,000 on DVDs, eyeglasses and Christmas lights. Another person spent \$2,800 on candies, chocolates, household supplies, even flowers for their own anniversary. It is an all-you-can-eat-McGuinty Liberal spending buffet on your watch: in Hydro One, in the education system and in the children's aid societies. Anybody who wants to do anything can, can spend anything they want on anything they choose, and you do nothing about it because you don't care. You think it's monopoly money, you think it's a game show; it's the taxpayers' money.

I don't know why the Premier won't stand in his place, and why you won't, get up and say what it is you're going to do about this disgraceful, gross misspending of taxpayers' money.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I'll refer that to the Minister of Education. That was the original part of the supplementary.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): We want to put in place a higher standard. That's why the auditor has been asked to do his work, and I'm very grateful that he's done this work.

On October 19, I sent a set of draft guidelines that had been initiated by the previous Minister of Education,

Minister Pupatello, to all the trustee organizations. They had been worked on for a number of months before that. Today, I was able to send a final copy of expenditure guidelines to all 72 boards in the province, which will deal with the use of corporate credit cards, travel, meals, hospitality, advertising and advocacy—expenditure on those things.

I think the proof is in our actions, and what we are doing is cleaning up. We know we've got the co-operation in education; the school boards are co-operating with us. The Auditor General was very complimentary of the co-operation of the school boards. We are making it very clear—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. I want to return to the matter of wait times, because the Auditor General has seriously questioned the reliability of your wait times data.

He said the starting point for measuring the wait times for CT scans and MRIs are not well defined, so hospitals are reporting the data differently; 33 hospitals which have MRI and CT scan equipment are not required to provide wait time information at all; and thirdly, the practice of combining in-patient and outpatient wait times skews results. And, as the auditor showed, the median wait time for an outpatient CT scan was significantly higher than the median that was actually reported by the ministry.

Premier, your wait times website data can't be trusted. When can the public and patients get accurate information about wait times?

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): First I want to say, again, thank you to the Auditor General for the work that has been done here. We're proud to have been the government that unlocked the capacity to take a harder look at what's going on inside the hospital environment, and I rather suspect that there is much more that we can benefit from, without doubt.

We will take a very hard look at that. I must say that we have depended upon expert advice with respect to the establishment of these standards. I know that the official opposition scoffs at the idea that Dr. Alan Hudson and 25 others expert in the area would be responsible parties to provide advice, but they have indeed.

I want to acknowledge that there is a difference of opinion with respect to the issue of collection, distinguishing if you will, between those inside the hospital environment and those outside. That is not something, as best as I'm aware, that has been distinctly done in other environments.

1510

We're going to take a good hard look at it. We believe the information has been collected in a fashion that is

consistent. We'll take a look at the advice from the Auditor General, and one would anticipate that Dr. Alan Hudson and his team of people, who are experts in this field, would give us advice for—

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

Ms. Martel: My supplementary to the Premier is this: It's interesting that the government wanted the Auditor General to do value-for-money audits at hospitals and now they don't want to accept his recommendations. The Auditor General said that "at one hospital the ministry reported wait time for a CT was 13 days, but out-patients actually waited about 30 days." He said that at one hospital "median wait times for out-patient CT exams ranged from six days to 35 days," depending on the site, but the ministry reported this as an average of around 21 days. At his press conference today, he also said that if the website says 60 days, you should take that information "with a grain of salt."

I say again to the government: You wanted the auditor to do the audit. He has; he has made recommendations. When are you going to implement those recommendations so the public can get reliable information on wait times?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Firstly, I would say that the information has been collected in a consistent way. If there's a difference of opinion between an auditor, who is an accountant, and clinical advisers, who are doctors and specialists in radiology, then we should seek to take the advice that is on offer from the auditor and compare and offer that to the experts who have developed our system here. Dr. Alan Hudson is the person I will be holding accountable to work through these issues. As I had an opportunity to say last week in a private meeting with the Auditor General, we most certainly will be taking the advice he offers.

All I suggest to the honourable member is that we differ on one small point, which is that we see a patient is a patient. We haven't, as other jurisdictions have not either, made a distinction between those patients who are in the hospital environment and those who are external. This is an opinion that is on offer from the auditor that I'll be asking the experts, a group of about 25 people led by Dr. Alan Hudson, to take a look at. They will take a good look at this, and we will make amendments, as required, to the way we're collecting information.

WORLD JUNIOR BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. My community of Thunder Bay has a long history and is thought of primarily as a hockey community. Given what the Staal family has been doing recently, I imagine that reputation has been further cemented. However, we do have a long and rich baseball tradition as well, and we in Thunder Bay are very fortunate to have a terrific

volunteer, non-profit-driven organization called the Thunder Bay International Baseball Association. The executive director of that association is here today in the members' east gallery, an old friend and old teammate, Warren Philp, whom I'd like to recognize today.

This group has been doing terrific work around baseball in Thunder Bay and has been trying for some time to host an international event. Minister, can you tell me what your ministry has been doing to support this group in acquiring the 2010 world junior baseball championship?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): That's certainly not a softball question from my friend from Thunder Bay. First of all, I would like to thank Mike Gravelle and Bill Mauro for their continuous advocating for support of the international baseball championship, which Thunder Bay has been awarded for 2010, something we can all be very proud of.

I also want to say, as a result of our international sport hosting policy, that the McGuinty government is pleased to support this wonderful opportunity for baseball players from around the world, and particularly the host community of Thunder Bay, by providing \$200,000 to help host these wonderful games. This funding will go a long way to providing some of the logistics that people like Warren Philp, Larry Herbert and other great community stalwarts in Thunder Bay are going to have to do to make sure Thunder Bay is ready for 2010.

The McGuinty government was proud to be there at the beginning, providing that money. I believe that one of the determining factors in the international sport hosting body decision was that there was great provincial support, and the games were awarded to Thunder Bay.

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

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): There's no question that our commitment of provincial support went a long way toward securing the games for our community. May I say, that also included a significant contribution from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. We're thrilled about that. We know that not only will the world juniors be a great sporting spectacle, but they will also contribute millions to Thunder Bay's economy, as well as showcasing the region as a tourist destination, while significantly improving the community's baseball facilities.

Minister, the international sport hosting policy is clearly and significantly helping our community, but can you please provide this Legislature with details on how other communities can benefit from this process? Also, can you speak to the needed, but still uncommitted, federal contribution that's needed to the World Junior Baseball Championships in Thunder Bay?

Hon. Mr. Watson: As part of the international sport hosting policy, I was pleased to go to Calgary to support both Toronto's and Ottawa's bids for the World Junior Hockey Championships in 2009, and was very pleased that as a result of a \$2-million contribution to the World

Junior Hockey Championships, Ottawa will host this internationally renowned competition in 2009.

I'm very proud of the McGuinty government's commitment to amateur sport. We've actually seen a 137% increase in funding for amateur sport. That compares with the previous government's cut of 42% of their funding to amateur sport, which was really quite sad.

The other point is that the province has been there in Thunder Bay since day one, thanks to the intervention of Mike Gravelle and Bill Mauro. Once again, the federal government is missing in action. We call on the new sports minister to come to the table and bring resources and goodwill to make sure that the Thunder Bay championships in 2010 are the best ever held in this country.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): To the Minister of Children and Youth Services: We now have the Auditor General's report, and it's even worse than we thought last week: a \$60,000 luxury car, all-inclusive stays at Caribbean resorts, \$150 car washes, \$2,000 gym memberships, \$2,400 personal trainers and car allowances on top of company vehicles. All the while, children at risk are waiting months for someone to check up on them. What the auditor makes clear is not that these are problems that were only recently identified, but that these are serious problems that are hurting at-risk children and that she ought to have known about all along. Why was this minister so negligent on this file?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): Does the member from Nepean–Carleton really believe that these things started with our government? Where was your government when these things were happening?

As a result of our government expanding the powers of the Auditor General, we now have this information, and our government is not afraid of having this information revealed, because it's only through knowing that information that we'll be able to implement the higher standards that we are implementing as we speak, some of which have already been implemented. So I welcome the Auditor General's findings, and I don't think the previous government served the children of this province well by hiding these kinds of things.

Ms. MacLeod: Today's not a day for patting themselves on the back. It was she who cancelled the reviews. It was she who ignored the reports. The minister's answers are devoid of all credibility. She didn't care what was happening to the money.

The Auditor General writes that the McGuinty Liberals "discontinued reviews of service and financial data in the 2005-06 fiscal year." That's on page 36, if she wants to read it. The government stops reviewing spending, and we end up with managers getting \$60,000 cars; \$60,000 would pay for foster care for six children for one year, just to put that into perspective. That is what's so heartbreaking about this utter failure on your part. You've traded kids for cars. Why did you stand by and

ignore your responsibilities, why did you abandon the reviews and why didn't you review the reports?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: It is very obvious from the opposition's reaction to the auditor's report that they would have been preferred to continue to hide this kind of information. Well, we are establishing an accountability office, because we are working towards higher standards in protecting taxpayer dollars but also in protecting our most vulnerable kids.

We are using this opportunity to go even further than the auditor has gone, in introducing administrative policies that a transfer payment agency in this province has never, ever had to adhere to before. So what we're doing is removing the discretion from boards of governments, removing the discretion from executive directors and having them abide by these higher standards which will better protect our children and better utilize taxpayer dollars.

1520

ONTARIO POWER GENERATION AND HYDRO ONE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, people who are paying more for hydroelectricity across Ontario and workers who are worried because they've lost their jobs as a result of skyrocketing hydro rates would be shocked to read the auditor's report, because on pages 162 and 163 it red-flags Conrad Black-style abuse of credit cards, millions of dollars charged without receipts, cash advances received and charged, all without proper documentation. Premier, how could this still be going on in year four of the McGuinty government?

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I am delighted that this government had the courage to move forward with allowing the auditor to look at Hydro One and OPG. I'm quite proud of the fact that we applied freedom of information and salary disclosure to both corporations as well.

I have seen the auditor's recommendations. They are a cause for concern; no question about it. I will be meeting with the chairs of the board and considering what options we have to address them in due course. Again, I want to applaud and thank the auditor for the fine piece of work he has done and to assure the ratepayers of Ontario that the reason we let the light shine in is so we could identify challenges and, yes, address them in a meaningful way that will hopefully give people more confidence in the future.

Mr. Hampton: I say to the Premier: In too many communities across this province, low- and fixed-income people have their hydro shut off because they can't afford to pay the hydro bill. But under the McGuinty government and Hydro One, executives hid \$18 million worth of mystery expenses using a business expenses procurement credit card, with no documentation to back up the

purchases. At OPG, the auditor was unable to verify the existence and whereabouts of computer printers, computer monitors, fax machines and digital cameras purchased with OPG credit cards, and "OPG could not provide evidence" that these articles were in their possession.

I just say to the McGuinty government: You say you've shone the spotlight on OPG and Hydro One. How could these misuses of public money continue if you've shone the spotlight on OPG and Hydro One?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The member would be aware that this is the first time the auditor has reported on these corporations. We welcome that and we'll continue to welcome it. The reason we needed this information is so that we could see these challenges. There's no doubt that we can address these problems. We will address these problems, and we'll address them in a timely and responsible fashion. That's why we brought this legislation in. This is the first report of the auditor. I welcome that report and I welcome this kind of scrutiny in the future because the ratepayers of Ontario deserve to know this information. This government will respond in a meaningful and timely fashion to the challenges that the auditor has pointed out.

CONSERVATION

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you were recently in my riding and made an announcement between our government and the Nature Conservancy of Canada, an organization committed to conservation, renewing a long-term partnership. It seemed to me that at that particular time, about a week ago or two weeks ago, you were talking about 22,000 hectares of ecologically sensitive land. I think the members of this House would like to know: What does that really mean for us and how does this fit into our conservation plan overall in Ontario?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa Centre, who has always had an interest in conservation and preservation issues in this province. I'd like to reinforce that, by working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, we have ensured that some of the most ecologically significant areas of Ontario are now being conserved for future generations.

After working together for many years, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Nature Conservancy of Canada have renewed their partnership through a five-year agreement to secure ecologically sensitive private lands in Ontario. Under the agreement, the province will invest an additional \$3.1 million in the first year and the Nature Conservancy of Canada will at least match the province's contribution. The partnership builds on a shared commitment to identify, secure and care for significant natural areas in Ontario.

Combining MNR's stewardship mandate with NCC's science, securement and management expertise will

result in the efficient and effective identification, securement and stewardship of more than 50,000 acres of ecologically significant lands—

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

Mr. Patten: Thank you, Minister, for that. I think the members will really appreciate the statement that you just gave.

There are other initiatives, as you well know, that are being taken in Ontario, so my question is: With this significant one of protecting ecologically important and valuable parts of Ontario, how does this complement some of the other initiatives that are taking place?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: This area that I just spoke about is bigger than Killarney park altogether, and this complements the other government initiatives such as the greenbelt and the natural spaces program of the MNR to protect critical ecological systems and habitats.

The partnership supports several programs with a range of conservation goals, including expanding Ontario's system of parks and protected areas, supporting the securement of significant natural heritage lands by other Ontario partners, and conserving important wetland habitats. It has secured a wide variety of habitat types and landscapes, from 17,000 acres of globally rare alvar habitat on Manitoulin Island—which I know, Mr. Speaker, you're very supportive of—to 32 acres of rare habitat at Turkey Point in southwestern Ontario. The partnership has also protected critical habitat for threatened and endangered species such as the globally rare lakeside daisy and the Acadian flycatcher, an endangered bird.

I'd like the member to know that the MNR is committed to the conservation of biodiversity and the use of natural resources in a sustainable manner.

HEALTH CARDS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. In the Auditor General's report, it is indicated that there are 305,000 more OHIP cards in circulation than there are people in the province of Ontario. It's indicated that there are 11,000 cardholders having claims in all three regions of the province in one nine-month period in 2005.

Meanwhile, over at the ministry of studies and reviews, inaction and bullying, Health and Long-Term Care, what we have there is the ministry indicating, "We'll review our options." That's what they're going to do.

I ask the Premier this question: Mightn't it have been better to reassure the people of Ontario that their health tax dollars you made them pay are going to be spent better by saying, "We are going to get rid of half of that backlog and half of those extra cards in the next 12 months and the other half the year after that"? Why wouldn't you try something accountable like that?

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

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I believe that the ministry's response was a desire to give me the opportunity to offer to the Legislature the appropriate explanation. So, on point to the honourable member's question: Obviously we've been under active consideration by the auditor on this report for about a year. In the year since that began, I'm very pleased to be able to tell the member this: As of October 1, 2006, the total number of valid and active health cards in the province of Ontario is 12.52 million, while Ontario's population is 12.69 million. So I do think that this is an area—I appreciate the question from the honourable member—where we've taken very seriously the concerns that have been raised by the Auditor General. We're working to further strengthen our procedures to ensure the valid nature of all of those cards. We have more work to do for sure, but I'm very pleased to be able to report progress on this matter to all members of the Legislature.

Mr. Tory: It's a shame we hadn't heard about this good news before today. Isn't it interesting that just today we find out? It would be helpful if the minister would table in the Legislature what steps were taken and how—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The government House leader. The Attorney General.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: If we could see the detail of what happened and how this was done and make sure we can confirm these numbers, I'd be the first to stand up and say that that's good progress.

We then have, in the same Auditor General's report—and hopefully you'll stand up and tell me that this one has been dealt with as well—that we have a backlog of 255,000 cases where citizenship information has not been authenticated and people have health cards that they're out there with. This is a number, the Auditor General says, that has doubled since 2004.

So my question is this. The ministry, in the case of that instance, said, "We will complete a review of the options." You're big on reviewing options over there. My question is this: You had 305,000 cards that were out there, and you say you've got rid of them all. Show us the data. Bring it in here and table it. Maybe tomorrow would be soon enough.

Secondly, what are you doing about these 255,000 cards that are unverified and where you have a backlog that has doubled on your watch?

1530

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Your arrogance and condescension are really quite startling.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: When we had the first report, when the Auditor General initiated his report, there were 12.9 million OHIP cards; today there are 12.5 million. This is evidence, I think, that the ministry has worked very hard. I appreciate that there's always more work to

do. The honourable member suggests that that means we review things. Of course, these are matters which do require some consideration before one moves forward.

In addition, I can tell the honourable member that we've worked to dramatically enhance our capabilities to confirm information, to the second question that the honourable member asked. I'll be very happy to send some more information along to him that outlines the steps we've taken to improve the circumstances, and other things we have ongoing to continue to improve the circumstances, related to OHIP cards in Ontario.

CT SCANS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the health minister. One of the very serious concerns the auditor reported on today involved radiation exposure of Ontario children to CT scans. In 50% of the cases he reviewed, it was adult settings on CT scans that were used on children, and the result of that is a level of exposure in the order of about 4,000 X-rays, or eight times the exposure that an adult would receive. Britain and the US have radiation dose levels to guide professionals in establishing CT radiation exposures for patients. Why can't Ontario use these guidelines now so that we can protect children right away?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As I had a chance to answer an earlier question to the Leader of the Opposition, we've been working through the formation of a diagnostic imaging safety committee to move forward across the platform of services where radiation is an issue, to be able to do exactly what is on offer. This is an example of a very good piece of advice that has been made available as a result of the decision point that this Legislature took to give enhanced powers to the Auditor General.

We've moved quickly in response to the information. We'll be working with experts—I know that meets with disdain on some sides of this House—to inform all of those who are providing these important services of the most appropriate way to do so. I take the request, the advice that is on offer from the honourable member, as direction, in a sense, that our committee is already working to establish with the OMA and the OHA in partnership.

Ms. Martel: Experts in other jurisdictions, mainly the US and Britain, have looked at this issue and have issued guidelines with respect to appropriate levels of radiation, and I'm wondering why we can't do the same in Ontario now to protect children. You see, the auditor pointed out that physicians and staff at hospitals weren't aware that CT scans exposed patients to significantly more radiation than conventional X-rays. The auditor also pointed out that in a recent survey of pediatricians in the Toronto area, 94% of them underestimated the level of radiation children are exposed to when they have a CT scan. This is critical because exposure can also lead to long-term cancers related to radiation.

I say to the minister again, we have experts in other jurisdictions who have effectively dealt with this matter. Why can't Ontario put in place these guidelines here and now to protect our children here and now?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm sorry if I didn't say this clearly enough for the honourable member, but that is exactly what is under way. I'll be pleased to take a future opportunity to inform all members of the House about the specific nature of the steps that have been taken.

REAL ESTATE FRAUD

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Media reports over the summer made constituents in my riding of London North Centre aware of what is called real estate fraud. People are wondering if their homes are safe and what protection the government can provide. For many Ontarians, their home is their largest single investment and it's only natural that they should be worried about some fraudster stealing something so valuable. I've received calls from people in my riding demanding that the government take action to help prevent this despicable crime.

Minister, my question to you is this: How widespread is real estate fraud, and what action have you taken to safeguard people's investments in their homes?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I appreciate the question from the member from London North Centre. I must say to the Legislature that all three parties are working co-operatively on this issue. We have a piece of legislation before a committee today that we're working on.

The first part of your question was about the size of the problem. I would say that real estate fraud consists of two things: title fraud and mortgage fraud. Title fraud has not changed significantly. We get about 10 cases a year, and that hasn't changed significantly. It's on the mortgage side where we've seen an increase, and it looks like, to the best of our knowledge, it's about a \$15-million problem. So we must deal with it.

The Legislature has a piece of legislation at committee. I think the most significant part of it is that if someone loses their title fraudulently, it will be restored, and if a document is registered against that title fraudulently, that document will be null and void. That's the first, very significant step.

Ms. Matthews: I look forward to hearing more about that. But clearly, Bill 152 does take strong and necessary steps to make sure that no homeowner in Ontario will lose their largest investment, their home, because of title or mortgage fraud. That, I can tell you, will be very welcome news to people in my riding, many of whom have contacted me through my office or when I've met them on the street or in the grocery store. They're concerned about it. They're just wondering whether they're a potential victim of it. I understand that completely.

I look forward to this bill moving forward through the Legislature. I had the honour of sitting in committee

yesterday, where I heard some people make presentations on it. And I look forward to third reading debate starting very, very soon.

But despite the new protections for homeowners under Bill 152 that will guarantee that they don't lose their home, a fraud attempt can still occur and a victim may incur costs such as hiring a lawyer. I understand—

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

Hon. Mr. Phillips: A part of dealing with it is what we call the land titles assurance fund; LTAF is the jargon. I think it's fair to say that I don't think the fund has been as responsive to the public as it should have been and as the public has a right to expect. It's been seen as the fund of last resort, and there is some merit in that. But I think, as my colleague said, there's nothing quite as traumatic as this issue, other than your health. So what we've done with the fund is move it to a fund that you can access quickly—and I mean quickly. Within 60 days of your application, provided you have some evidence that a fraud actually has taken place, we will make a decision. Within 30 days, your title will be restored. And within another 30 days, we will ensure that the issue the member raised—that is, individuals having to put up money to deal with the issue—is dealt with. So within 120 days, we will have dealt with this. I think that's a very significant step forward in making this a responsive fund.

PETITIONS

PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm receiving more and more petitions to do with the Mary Lake dam, and I have one here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the dam at Mary Lake has historically provided a pedestrian walkway for use by the community and visitors since the dam's construction; and

"Whereas the walkway provides a vital link and a tourist attraction for the community of Port Sydney; and

"Whereas restricting access to the walkway would result in pedestrian use of the roadway where motor vehicle traffic poses a danger to pedestrians; and

"Whereas closure of the pedestrian walkway across the dam is inconsistent with other provincial government programs, including Ontario's action plan for healthy eating and active living and the Trails for Life program, both of which promote active lifestyles; and

"Whereas all ministries should strive to encourage and support healthy lifestyles;

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

"That the Ministry of Natural Resources continue to permit the use of the pedestrian walkway over Mary Lake dam indefinitely."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

1540

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition that comes from the Consumer Federation of Canada and is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, especially the Minister of Government Services. It reads as follows:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed unanimously on November 30, 2005, be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information such as SIN and loan account numbers.

"(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

"(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

"(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it and send it to you with page Arianne.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): "Whereas Longfields and Davidson Heights in south Nepean are some of the fastest-growing communities in Ottawa and Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board has voted to authorize the final design phases for a grade 7 to 12 school to serve the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has lifted a three-year moratorium on school closings in order to make way for new educational facilities;

"We, residents of Nepean–Carleton, petition the Parliament of Ontario to ensure that the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board continues with plans to build a new grade 7 to 12 school no later than autumn of 2008 to serve the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities."

I have affixed my signature to this.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Northwestern Ontario Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) Diagnostic Clinic has been operating as a demonstration project since December 2004 with funds received through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

“Whereas this funding expired July 31, 2006;

“Whereas there is an enormous need in northwestern Ontario for regional access and accurate diagnosis of FASD;

“Whereas, without the northwestern Ontario FASD clinic, services are only accessible through a clinic in Winnipeg, Manitoba, or St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto, for which there is a four-year wait;

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

“Be it resolved that the provincial government commit to provide ongoing funding for the maintenance of the regional FASD diagnostic clinic, with two sites in northwestern Ontario.”

I have affixed my signature to this, which has been signed by many residents of northwestern Ontario.

LAKEVIEW GENERATING STATION

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas there should be no decisions on the future development of the Lakeview generating station grounds until a full, independent environmental assessment, including air, water, soil samples and a health study of long-term residents, is completed to determine the historical, current and accumulative impact of industrial pollutants on the existing environment of Lakeview, southeast Mississauga, and its citizens; and

“Government includes this assessment and gives its findings equal weight in all mandatory environmental reports regarding the future development of the Lakeview generating grounds.”

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

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

“Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada’s first Nobel Prize recipient; and

“Whereas this great Canadian’s original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth”—Alliston—“is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

“Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

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

“That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson’s private member’s bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come.”

I agree with that petition, obviously, and I’ve signed it.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition here from the Canadian Federation of University Women Ontario Council, Toronto branch. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

“Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan;

“Whereas Premier McGuinty decried the discriminatory nature of the NCBS clawback and vowed to end this practice in his first mandate;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on OW or ODSP;

“We, the undersigned from CFUW Ontario Council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement.”

I’m in accordance and would affix my signature thereto.

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I have a petition signed by a number of members of the Cornwall Township Historical Society. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

“Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

“Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

"Now therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 25, an Act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario."

Since I approve of this, I shall affix my signature and send it to the Clerk's table.

HIGHWAY 417

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been dealing with the planning and design of the extension of Highway 417 for several years; and

"Whereas the previous Conservative government followed through with their commitment to extend Highway 417 to Arnprior; and

"Whereas Highway 417/17 is part of the Trans-Canada Highway system; and

"Whereas local municipal governments, the county of Renfrew and MPP John Yakabuski have continued to press the Liberal government on this issue;

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

"That the Liberal government move as swiftly as possible to approve the extension of Highway 417 through Arnprior to Renfrew and beyond and that this be included in their next five-year plan."

Of course, I affix my name to this, as I support it.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I again have a petition from the Canadian Federation of University Women, this time from the branch in Aurora-Newmarket. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

"Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan;

"Whereas Premier McGuinty decried the discriminatory nature of the NCBS clawback and vowed to end this practice in his first mandate;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on OW or ODSP;

"We, the undersigned from CFUW Ontario Council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement."

I'm in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario. I'd like to thank the Moje family of Credit Pointe Drive in Mississauga for sending it to me. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

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"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas action by Ontario's trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario's trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

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

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition, and will ask page Philip to carry it for me.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with hydro in Parry Sound–Muskoka. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. provides hydro to many communities in the region of Parry Sound–Muskoka; and

"Whereas there have recently been several lengthy power outages in this region affecting both private residences, schools and businesses; and

"Whereas rural customers pay among the highest distribution and delivery charges for electricity;

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

"That the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Energy Board require Hydro One Networks Inc. to make im-

provements in line maintenance and forestry management in the region of Parry Sound–Muskoka to ensure reliable energy for its customers.”

I support this petition.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have another petition, again from the Canadian Federation of University Women, this time the Peterborough branch. They write to the Legislature as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

“Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan;

“Whereas Premier McGuinty decried the discriminatory nature of the NCBS clawback and vowed to end this practice in his first mandate;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on OW or ODSP;

“We, the undersigned from CFUW Ontario Council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement.”

I’m in agreement and would again affix my signature thereto.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have another petition in support of skilled immigrants. I especially want to thank Johnny Tang and Bing Gong for collecting the signatures to it. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

“Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; 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, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature.”

An excellent petition, and a strong sentiment. I’m pleased to affix my signature in support of it and to ask page Sarah to carry it for me.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2006 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2006 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (NO 2)

Mr. Sorbara moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant diverses mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Finance for his leadoff speech.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I’m delighted to lead off, one hopes, final consideration of this bill, and would encourage members to give it their enthusiastic support. I might note that I am going to be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge. In mentioning him, I might give him due credit for the measures in this bill and indeed the budget upon which it arises. At the same time, I want to pay public tribute to my predecessor as Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, the member for Windsor–Riverside—I’m not sure I’m getting that right—and Minister of Energy, because in this bill we are putting into law, with various amendments, enactments and repeals, the legislative work that actually brings into law the measures that were in the budget my predecessor Mr. Duncan presented to this Legislature in late March. I think it was a tremendous budget. In fact, I wished at that time that I was not on sabbatical and could take a little bit of public credit for the budget. But it was really my friend Mr. Duncan and, of course, my parliamentary assistant whose signatures are on this budget and the bill that enacts various measures to bring it to life.

I want to say that that budget was really all about building better infrastructure in this province. Just as our budget in 2005 was about creating a better post-secondary education system and our first budget was about bringing the historic reforms to public education and to our health care system, Mr. Duncan’s budget was about beginning to rebuild this province’s infrastructure in a very significant way. When we have accomplished everything in that budget, we’ll have new rapid transit going into the greater Toronto area by way of a subway extension up to the city of Vaughan, into York region, serving all of the northwest. We’ll have a brand new transit system in Mississauga and one in Brampton—I see my friend from Mississauga West throwing up his arms in excitement.

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That budget invests some \$400 million in new roads, new bridges and new highway systems throughout the province of Ontario, and in particular in the north. There are other infrastructure initiatives in the budget that I won't touch on, but will just say that I think the fact that the Premier actually created a Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal as our government took office—my friend David Caplan from Don Valley East is the minister in charge—was a very wise move. I think that even more, having now spent three years plus in the administration of this government, hearing over and over again wherever I travel that our economic vitality is dependent in large measure on how quickly we can build infrastructure. It really touches every part of infrastructure, whether it's new water systems, large water systems that bring clean, fresh water to new communities, or the replacement of water systems, replacing pipes that have been in the ground, if you dig here in the city of Toronto, for some 100 years; renewing those systems. I think that's why the Premier said it's got to be called public infrastructure renewal: water systems, systems of electricity. I think the fact that the Minister of Energy a few months ago put forward a comprehensive 25-year plan to ensure the availability, the supply of electricity, the affordability, the cost of electricity, and the reliability of the electricity system is one of the things that adds great confidence to our economic future.

I should tell you that wherever I go, people tell me, "You guys have got it right on energy. You haven't played politics with the system. You've got it right." So now there are plans—the Minister of Energy would correct me or give me specific numbers, but I think some 3,000 megawatts of new generating capacity are already in the system.

There are lower prices because of the conservation initiatives that we've taken and the fact that we've brought on supply, so prices are going down. And certainty of supply, the fact that we made the very tough decisions that we're going to begin now the process of preparing to build a new generation of nuclear power so that 10 years from now, 15 years from now, as we're retiring old plants, that new capacity will be there, which will be even more reliable, even safer and even more affordable: That's another part of infrastructure that is so important to the economic future of the province.

But around where my parliamentary assistant and I live, it's all about transportation. It's all about gridlock. It's all about getting on with building that next generation of public transit. It's new GO trains; it's new GO stations; it's new subway lines; it's new transit systems for Mississauga, Brampton and, indeed, Durham. I know my friend and parliamentary assistant would be interested in those as well. The budget that my predecessor presented really went a long way towards that agenda.

Have we finished yet? Of course not. There is so much more to build, but the important thing about this budget is that it gets us started in a very big way. People have asked me repeatedly, "Have you heard yet from the fed-

eral government about their contribution to these projects?" And I have to say, here in this House, "Not yet." Not yet, but we had better, because there will be a terrible political price for the Harper government if they continue to ignore the infrastructure needs and, in particular, the transit and transportation needs of this province; in particular, the greater Toronto area. I fully expect that ultimately Mr. Flaherty will say, "I want in. I want to be part of that partnership. I know it's important. Let's put political differences aside. Let's get building in Ontario." I hope that's what he's going to say, because if he doesn't, there will be a terrible political price to pay.

In these remarks, as we wind up the consideration of what we call the second budget bill—budget bill number two, the fall budget bill—I want to pay tribute both to my predecessor, the now Minister of Energy, and my parliamentary assistant for the work they have done. I think it's going to serve the people of Ontario very well. I think that when these projects are ultimately built, people will look back to the work that both of them did, and the government and the caucus did, and say, "Oh, yes. We got that project started in Dwight Duncan's budget in 2006." And they'll say that that was a good initiative.

I just want to mention a number of things in the time remaining that are also accomplished within this fall budget bill.

We've created a new and enhanced dividend tax credit to encourage greater investment in Ontario corporations. What's that all about? The federal government in its budget made some changes to the dividend tax credit to enhance the environment for investment in Canadian corporations. Setting aside all the politics, we said to Mr. Flaherty, "We're going to mirror that in our own corporate tax legislation," and this does it.

We're increasing our tax credit to the whole world of digital media. Part of the future of this province's economy is in that whole area of digital media and the entertainment cluster, and this budget bill, I say to my friend the member from Erie—Lincoln, my critic, does what needs to be done to strengthen us in that area.

We're giving municipalities across the province more flexibility and additional provincial support in funding brownfield redevelopments and public infrastructure through the use of tax increment financing for two pilot projects. What's that about? In the case of brownfields, it's about strengthening the mechanisms to encourage development in areas that have suffered environmental degradation. If you talk to Dave Levac, the member from Brantford, he'll say that this is incredibly important for his communities. And we're using the mechanism of tax increment financing—a mechanism that's been used in a variety of jurisdictions across North America—on a pilot basis to help fund subway construction and waterfront development in the province of Ontario.

I could go on at length about what this bill achieves, but I want to leave it to my parliamentary assistant, who has done the important work of carrying this bill through the Legislature and through committee. He'll have further comment on it.

I simply want to end by encouraging all members of this House to pass this bill as expeditiously as possible so that the public policy initiatives in it can come into law.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise in response to my colleague the Minister of Finance on Bill 151. I'm going to ask Ian for a couple of glasses of water, if I could. Ian, the hard-working page from the community of West Lincoln, by the way, in the riding of Erie–Lincoln, has done an outstanding job.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: A very good Liberal family.

Mr. Hudak: I'm not so sure.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: We've done our research.

Mr. Hudak: They've done their research.

This is third reading of Bill 151. I was listening to my colleague the Minister of Finance closely there. I do want to say that while we did enjoy Bill 65, the mortgage brokers act, and working with Arthur Lofsky and Sarah Hanafy from his office—they're very good to work with—and while we did have a chance to bring forward amendments and the minister was good enough to share in advance proposed draft regulations on Bill 65, which are now out in circulation, Bill 151, unfortunately, was an experience in the complete opposite. In fact, I know my colleague for Beaches–East York was similarly hard-pressed to come up with amendments in the mere half an hour that was allotted to us. We had some very interesting delegations from groups like the Ontario Bar Association, for example, and by the time the committee had completed its interviews of interested parties and stakeholders, we had but 30 minutes to bring forward proposed amendments to the bill.

This is highly unfortunate, particularly with a bill that has so many schedules that in fact the government ran out of letters with which to name the schedules. Usually each schedule in a bill will be named after a letter in alphabetical order: schedule A, B and so on. There were so many schedules in this omnibus bill that they had to go to schedule Z, and then Z.1, Z.2, all the way to Z.9. So you can understand it was extremely difficult for any member of that committee, be it opposition member or government member, to bring forward an amendment within half an hour, considering—there is Z.9, so that what would be 35—no, actually 36—schedules in the bill.

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Nonetheless, we did our best to bring forward some amendments—not as many as we would have under the circumstances. Also, because of the guillotine motion that had been brought forward by the government, many of our amendments didn't even get a chance to be debated in committee. Not only did they restrict our time to half an hour to bring forward amendments in committee, but if we didn't get our amendments debated or introduced by 5 p.m.—which was maybe a half hour or so, maybe an hour into the committee approximately; again, remember this is a very thick piece of legislation—then there was no debate whatsoever on those amendments. That is highly regrettable because there was

good advice given to us, hard work by staff in our offices and by legislative counsel, and the amendments were not even read into the record for debate. So I'm going to use some time today to talk about the amendments that we did bring forward and the reason behind them, since we were denied that opportunity at committee because of the McGuinty government's time allocation, or guillotine, motion.

I do want to note, as I always like to do as we debate a finance measure, that the Progressive Conservative Party, the official opposition, continues to reject the government's fiscal policies, which are based on high levels of taxation. In fact, one of the first bills this government brought forward imposed the biggest tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario on working families, on seniors and on businesses. As a result, tax rates are highly uncompetitive in our province for individuals and, particularly, for businesses, among the most uncompetitive tax rates in all of North America.

Coupled with the government's high taxation policies is a high spending policy. The government increased taxes substantially in order to fulfill their appetite for runaway spending. If you look at the government's books closely, you will see approximately an 8% program spending increase per annum under the Dalton McGuinty government. This rate of growth of spending, as the Canadian Taxpayers Federation pointed out, is in excess of the Bob Rae government. Bob Rae at the time was an NDP member, most recently was a federal Liberal member, and now, having lost the leadership race, we're not sure where he is going to end up in his next adventure.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Are you going to take him, Tim?

Mr. Hudak: They suggest he'll be coming to the Progressive Conservative Party. Well, if Joe Clark can win—no, I'm sorry, I won't dwell on the history of the party. They've thrown me off track.

The rate of growth of spending has been extraordinary. You have seen some of those excesses and inefficient uses of taxpayer funds brought forward by our leader, John Tory, and Bob Runciman, the member for Leeds–Grenville, who is our lead on the waste-busters initiative at www.wastebusters.ca. We certainly saw evidence of that in the shocking auditor's report that was tabled with the assembly this afternoon.

The third pillar of the McGuinty government's harmful fiscal policies would be high hydro rates. The Dalton McGuinty government has increased hydro rates some 55%, and don't forget that there was a promise by Dalton McGuinty during the election campaign to freeze hydro rates. That was one of the first promises thrown out the window once the Premier successfully had in his hand the keys to the Premier's limousine. Since then we've seen hydro rates go up significantly. We have as well seen a plan—if you can call it that—that has gone back and forth in a number of areas, that at the end of the day created instability in our hydro sector, a lack of predictability, a shifting promise on the coal-fired plants, for example, which has undermined the confidence of busi-

ness investment in Ontario and at the same time has imposed a significant financial penalty, particularly on seniors and those who have fixed incomes.

At any rate, the damage can clearly be seen in the loss of well-paying manufacturing jobs in the province. Manufacturing has always been the bread and butter of the Ontario economy. We're always first in Canada, and first in North America in many respects. I remember in the late 1990s under the Mike Harris government when Ontario led all others in North America in job creation. Sadly, with runaway spending, high taxes and the high hydro policy of the McGuinty government, the opposite has been true when it comes to manufacturing jobs.

I know my colleague Mr. Chudleigh, the member for Halton, has done extensive work in following the number of manufacturing jobs lost. The member for Halton, just on Friday, following the latest Stats Canada data, pointed out that Ontario lost another 4,400 manufacturing jobs in the month of November. "The blood-letting continues while the McGuinty Liberals do nothing," said Ted Chudleigh, because in total, since the beginning of 2005, according to the member for Halton's press release, "Ontario has lost 111,100 manufacturing jobs." Growth in Ontario has been hindered by declines in manufacturing—63,000 jobs.

Government members will try to point out that overall job growth is up, but they always neglect to tell you that what is masking the loss in jobs in manufacturing is the significant growth in government jobs. This is not a sustainable policy. We all know that the best way to finance improvements in health care, education, transportation or other key provincial services is to have a strong economy. You cannot simply grow the size of government while the manufacturing base contracts. That's a recipe for disaster of the kind that we saw under David Peterson, inherited by the NDP government when it took over in 1990. The bottom fell out of the economy and the runaway spending was simply unsustainable, resulting in substantial deficits.

So I think, at the very least, we reject Bill 151 because it does not reverse the harmful McGuinty economic policies. It does nothing to increase the supply of electricity in Ontario or to control hydro rates. It does nothing to reduce the burden of taxation on working families or businesses in Ontario and it does nothing to hold the line on the runaway spending of the McGuinty government, which, I will say again, has been approximately 8% per year on program spending.

I had hoped that we would have seen some better news in a budget bill to help reverse the job loss in the manufacturing sector. My colleague the critic for natural resources, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, has brought forward time and time again in this Legislature the devastation caused by the loss of some 6,000 jobs in the forestry sector as a result of the McGuinty government's lack of action. In fact, they have taken action that has just exacerbated the flight of jobs from Ontario. This is particularly harmful to small communities that depend on a large, major manufacturer for employment, for

taxation revenue and for the support of worthy causes in the community.

I think it's always important to set that tone and our regret that steps were not taken in Bill 151 to reverse those harmful decisions.

Speaking of Mr. Miller, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and our critic for natural resources, he was kind enough to send me an important letter with respect to provincial land tax reform. PLT reform is part of this bill. If I recall, it was in the Z schedules of Bill 151—Z.1 and Z.2—anyway, at the very back, or close to it, that the government slipped in reform to the provincial land tax. There were consultations on provincial land tax reform; I will grant the government that. However, what is in this bill, I would argue, does not reflect what they heard during their consultations on provincial land tax reform. To be specific, while this bill, if passed as it is, effectively will make the Minister of Finance the mayor and council of the unorganized territories of northern Ontario, meaning that the Minister of Finance could set, at his or her discretion, simply via regulation, if I recall—he does not have to come back here to the assembly—the tax rate on unorganized areas. This is a significant amount of power to entrust to a finance minister, particularly in a government that has broken so many promises and shown no reluctance whatsoever to jack up tax rates whenever they have that opportunity.

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We had brought forward, actually, some suggestions to amend that section of the act. In a general sense, if the government were going to reform the provincial land tax, they should at least ensure that that money is returned for services in northern Ontario. I think Mr. Miller has spoken about this.

I mentioned the letter that he had passed on to me that makes a similar point. It's from the Loring-Restoule Business Association, dated October 31, 2006. The letter says, in part, "We are very concerned about the impact that this reform may have on the economy of the area"—the Loring-Restoule area—"and are also concerned about how any additional money raised will be distributed and accounted for."

It's obvious. You're asking people in the unorganized territories, asking people in the Loring-Restoule area, with no vote and no council meeting, to pay higher taxes at the discretion of the minister's office at the Frost building at Queen's Park and set rates at whatever he or she deems fit—no consultation necessary—and the funds would just flow into the coffers in the Frost building.

The folks here and others across northern Ontario will tell you that if they're paying more in taxes, they would like to see it reinvested in those communities, or at least in the general area, for services that people depend upon.

The letter goes on to say:

"As you are aware, tourism is the industry that drives the fragile economies of most small communities in the north, and anything which has the potential to jeopardize this will have severe negative consequences in these communities. I, therefore, have outlined below some questions, and concerns that this notice has raised.

“Is this PLT reform intended to be revenue neutral or will it raise additional tax money for the province?”

Well, if it is Dalton McGuinty pulling the levers, I think the answer is obvious: It’s to increase revenue to the province of Ontario—hopefully not, but there’s reason to be suspicious—for things like dropping the “C” in the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. or investing in more middle-manager bureaucrats like the LHINs, as opposed to investing in front-line health care services.

Another question that they pose: “The notice states ‘any new revenues that may result from the PLT reform will be used to support services in the north.’ What services and to whom, which stakeholders will benefit, and in what proportion?”

Well, a Dalton McGuinty promise is really not worth the paper it’s printed on. We’ve learned that the hard way in the province of Ontario, with some 50 broken promises to date. If he had at least put in legislation that this money would be reinvested in services in the north, folks like those who have written on behalf of the Loring-Restoule Business Association would be mollified in some sense. Sadly, however, the government refused to include those types of provisions in their legislation.

They raise a number of other questions but I won’t, in the interest of time, read them all. Here’s one more: “There is also some concern that additional tax money raised through PLT reform, administered by the Ministry of Finance, will be targeted to MNR itself to cover budget shortfalls.” So the concern is that this is a bit of a shell game. “MNR, at one time, was a thriving and vital ministry and partner in the north, respected for their knowledge and expertise to simultaneously tackle both economic and environmental issues unique to the north, but they now have been reduced in both manpower and influence....”

The concern here is that because of the reduced spending that has been experienced at MNR to deliver services, this money will simply replace that. That’s not good enough. I don’t think that voters in northern Ontario will be fooled by another Dalton McGuinty shell game.

I thank my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka for bringing that to my attention. In fact, he and his colleague the member for Oshawa, Jerry Ouellette, who is our northern affairs critic and a former Minister of Natural Resources himself, had advocated and given me advice on a couple of the amendments to bring forward in that respect.

We had, for example, brought forward an amendment to schedule Z.2 that read as follows:

“I move that section 2 of the Provincial Land Tax Act, 2006, as set out in schedule Z.2 of the bill, be amended by adding the follow subsection:

“Use of provincial land taxes

“(4) All taxes levied under this act shall be used only for the purpose of providing improved services to residents in non-municipal territory.”

The government didn’t like that. We had one that was based on a similar principle of reinvestment in northern

Ontario. It reads as the last one did, with the exception of this aspect:

“Use of provincial land taxes:

“(4) All taxes levied under this act shall be used only for the purpose of providing improved services to residents in northern Ontario.”

So there you have two sensible amendments that the government claims they’re going to do anyway. I’m not sure if they’ll really follow through. My colleagues here in the Legislature supported it. Groups like the Loring-Restoule Business Association would obviously be supportive, because they bring this forward in their letter. Unfortunately, the government refused to approve these amendments, to make them part of the bill. It would have—because it would be the law, if passed—forced the government to reinvest those dollars in northern Ontario or to the unorganized territories. I can only judge by the fact that the government did not pass these amendments that they have no intention to do so. I do fear it may go as far as some sort of shell game to replace funding they’ve cut elsewhere, or go into more wasteful funding that has become the hallmark of the Dalton McGuinty government.

The other area I wanted to highlight was schedule A. Schedule A, of course, deals with the Assessment Act. I still have not heard a single member of the government benches—maybe the parliamentary assistant will address this when he has the opportunity, or maybe the member from Scarborough Southwest will have a chance to do so as well—deal with the triple-whammy of assessment conveniently scheduled to take place after the next provincial election. Members will well know that assessments under the Dalton McGuinty government have, I think accurately, been described as “skyrocketing.” I had more calls on the most recent assessment than I did in my previous years as an MPP combined. Initially, Dalton McGuinty said he was not going to do anything about skyrocketing assessments, because he didn’t run on it. You remember, he said that he wasn’t going to do anything about assessments because he didn’t run on it. Although I don’t remember him running on pit bull bans, for example, either. Nonetheless, that was one of his hallmark justice legislations: to ban certain breeds of dogs.

Interjections.

Mr. Hudak: I hear a lot of members now suddenly talking about MPAC and assessments, but I haven’t heard one of them yet stand in the House and justify schedule A of the act.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): We actually believe in current value assessment.

Mr. Hudak: The member says, “We actually believe in current value assessment,” and I guess is satisfied with schedule A of the act. If the member actually believes in current value assessment in the pure form, then I expect him to vote against this act because there’s actually an assessment freeze, which takes you away from current value assessment. This is the direct opposite of what the member from Mississauga is suggesting.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): You have nerve.

Mr. Hudak: Well, it would take nerve for the members of the Liberal caucus to stand up in the House and talk about this, because not a single one has had the courage to get up and say, “Yes, we are freezing assessments until conveniently after the next election. But if Dalton McGuinty is re-elected, we will then hit you with three years of assessments all at once.” If you think of some of the seniors on fixed incomes who may have a modest home and a fixed income and who have experienced skyrocketing property assessments, well, you ain’t seen nothing yet. If this bill were to pass and Dalton McGuinty were re-elected, you would see three years of assessment increases hitting simultaneously, with no protections for these taxpayers whatsoever.

The Speaker will know that I, as the opposition critic, had brought forward the Homestead Act. The Homestead Act had a number of powerful protections for taxpayers, including capping assessment increases at 5% per year, as long as home ownership was maintained.

Mr. Delaney: You’re subsidizing the rich.

Mr. Hudak: The member for Mississauga says, “You’re subsidizing the rich.” Well, if there’s a senior citizen—a widow—on a fixed income who has paid for a home and who sees her assessments going up 20%, 30%, 40% per year, as I know he has seen in his constituency office no doubt, my bill would protect them. My colleague describes that as subsidizing the rich. I think it is simply rewarding the value of home ownership and helping seniors stay in their homes, instead of having to sell them, which schedule A of the act will do beginning in 2009.

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As a matter of fact, I need to remind my colleagues that the vast majority of the Liberal members actually rose in the House and supported the Homestead Act. I think the member from Oakville was one of those who supported the Homestead Act upon second reading. Unfortunately, the government has refused to call that act for third reading. I would suggest that if they had the guts to do so, it would pass. I know that my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus are supportive, we’ve had the support of the New Democrat caucus on second reading, and there were a number of Liberal members who stood up to the Premier and the finance minister at the time to say that they disagreed.

You will recall that the finance minister at the time, Mr. Duncan, rejected the act and the Premier rejected the act. They were against it. Nonetheless, because of the outcry of taxpayers in communities across the province, we did succeed in getting a number of Liberal members to support it, hence it passed on second reading.

Another powerful protection in the Homestead Act, you will recall, is that it would allow up to \$25,000 in home repairs to take place without triggering another assessment. The third aspect was modest but helpful property tax breaks for seniors and the disabled, which effectively meant that the first \$10,000 of the home’s value would not face property tax. There would be an

exemption for the first \$10,000, which give a modest but valuable tax break to those individuals.

With those powerful protections for taxpayers, the Homestead Act carried on second reading. I regret that the government has not called it for the third reading vote. I still hold out some mild hope that they will before the end of this session. Nonetheless, we had brought forward in committee a number of amendments that had similar principles to the Homestead Act because we are worried about the triple whammy of assessment increases that Dalton McGuinty has sneakily scheduled for after the next election. They were at a 5% cap, as I had suggested in the Homestead Act. Also, if the government didn’t like 5%, if they liked 4% or 6% or something like that, another amendment gave them the ability through the Lieutenant Governor in Council to set that cap rate. Nonetheless, caps would prevail at whatever level the government of the day thought was appropriate. Unfortunately, despite the fact that Liberal members supported the Homestead Act at second reading, they shot it down at the committee and those amendments failed to pass.

My colleague the member from Beaches–East York has done extensive work on assessment reform and has brought forward his own suggestions for debate as well. He should be commended for that hard work. We don’t have the exact same approaches, but similar principles to give protection in support of the value of home ownership in an era of skyrocketing assessments. My colleague from Beaches–East York will probably use some time during his remarks to discuss this. I did appreciate the fact that he did support our motions because they’re based on similar principles. Unfortunately, Liberal members as one voted them down.

We as well had considerable debate on schedule D, which would bring in CPAB, an entity that exists but for the first time will have standing in the laws of the province of Ontario. We had a number of groups, including the Ontario Bar Association, which suggested that there need to be greater provisions to protect solicitor-client privilege. We listened and appreciated the response of the civil servants at the ministry who attempted to address some of the concerns. Ultimately, though, I and Mr. Barrett, who was my colleague at committee, felt that they did not go far enough in trying to protect solicitor-client privilege under schedule D of the Canadian Public Accountability Board Act. We voted against the amendments the government had brought forward. The opposition did bring forward its own amendments, which we believe would have allowed CPAB to do its important work in checking closely audit firms who function in the province of Ontario, while achieving the balance of protecting the solicitor-client privilege. Unfortunately, though, our amendment to that section of the act was rejected by the government members.

We also expressed concern—I’m jumping ahead to schedule L—about the fact that the government now was proposing to tax ethanol in Ontario. I believe that there has been, over the last number of years, some consensus among parties here in the Ontario Legislature on the

value of ethanol in gasoline as an environmental measure. We had moved in that direction. The current government is similarly moving in that direction. Both the previous Harris and Eves governments and the McGuinty government are making investments in ethanol production.

What's puzzling and seems to run against current practice, however, is that the McGuinty government has decided to tax ethanol—to tax it at the exact same rate, if I followed the bill appropriately, as gasoline is taxed. Certainly, if you're trying to encourage an environmental initiative through a market mechanism, it runs against the grain to put a higher tax on it. The Speaker well knows that if you tax something, you'll end up with less of it at the end of the day. So we had brought forward this concern. There seemed to be some government members who didn't fully realize that the McGuinty government, in its appetite for higher taxes, was proposing taxing ethanol. So we had brought forward—and I appreciate the support of my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk, Mr. Barrett, on this to ensure that ethanol remained exempt from taxation when mixed with gasoline, but, sadly, the government members chose to vote in favour of taxing ethanol.

We had suggested that the ethanol growth fund could simply be supported through the consolidated revenue fund. There is no mandate that says you'd have to tax ethanol in order to support an ethanol growth fund, so we rejected the notion that it would be appropriate to increase taxes on gasoline and increase taxes on ethanol, as it does in schedule L.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Why would we subsidize foreign ethanol?

Mr. Hudak: The Minister of Labour asks a question. But you're taxing all ethanol, no matter where it's created. If it's domestic ethanol, it would be subject to tax.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Right now, foreign ethanol is coming into this province tax-free.

Mr. Hudak: But I guess what I'm saying to the minister—and hopefully this will help and maybe he'll vote against the bill; I know he's concerned about it because of the riding he represents—is that schedule L of the bill, if passed, will mean that ethanol, no matter where it's manufactured, will be subject to full tax as if it were gasoline. This runs against the grain of what previous Conservative governments have done and what the McGuinty government had done its first couple of years, strangely, in schedule L. Maybe it's just a habit: In each bill that they bring forward, they have to have a tax increase of some kind. Unfortunately, this one will be a tax increase on ethanol.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: When schedule N—I didn't even mean the pun, actually. Thank you. That comes from the powerhouse member, by the way, for Hamilton East—and a very nice column recently by Andrew Dreschel in the *Spectator*, for those following along at home.

Schedule N opened up the so-called health tax. We all know that's just a name; it's an income tax increase on the backs of seniors and working families. We took that opportunity to put forward an amendment that would eliminate the Dalton McGuinty income tax increases. John Tory has committed to doing so within the first mandate of the John Tory government. We had suggested this, but the McGuinty government continues to prefer tax increases as opposed to tax reductions and were not supportive of the elimination of the Dalton McGuinty income tax increases by December 31, 2011.

I had also brought forward some suggestions with respect to the proposed changes to the LCBO. There is an important role that the chair of the LCBO plays in ensuring that the LCBO achieves the right balance in what can sometimes be two competing mandates. They don't always compete, but sometimes they do.

There's no doubt the LCBO has been charged with the responsibility of maximizing revenue to the province of Ontario. When you see a government of this nature that likes to spend and spend and spend, they've definitely taken the whip out and told the LCBO to increase revenues substantially to help fill that appetite.

The other mandate that the LCBO has, quite frankly, in my view, is to support domestic production, particularly supporting small businesses like our craft wineries in the province of Ontario, our microbreweries, for example, and those in the spirits industry that employ a lot of Ontario residents.

I think it's important for the LCBO to try to maintain that balance of supporting a domestic industry as opposed to always going for the highest rate of return. We all know that there's a significant wine glut, for example, in parts of Europe and parts of Australia. There are organizations that are funded through European or Australian tax dollars to help promote these products in markets like the province of Ontario. I think we need to be very, very careful about accepting those dollars in order to pad the bottom line at the LCBO in these types of promotions at the expense of our domestic industry.

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Therefore, I have a significant number of qualms with the notion that this bill has of reducing the role of the chair and creating a new high-paid position in the administration at the LCBO. We've brought forward concerns already with a number of the agencies under the government's control and ownership, and I worry that the LCBO may forget about its mandate to support domestic industry in order to generate greater revenue for the government's spending proclivities.

I had brought forward an amendment to reject the notion of downsizing the role of the chair. Unfortunately, I lost that argument in committee, and the government seems to be down that path. I think Andy Brandt as chair had done a very strong job. It was a pleasure to work with Andy, who, we should note, is a rare individual in that he worked for three different governments, three different political parties, which I think showed the respect that people had for him. People aren't always

happy with the chair's decisions at the end of the day, but I believe that Mr. Brandt—in his heart we saw evidence of it—wanted to ensure that balance was achieved between revenue and supporting domestic industries. When you take away the role of the chair to keep the pressure on, so to speak, I worry that we will lose sight of the importance of the domestic industry and had hoped that they would not go forward with schedule Q.

The minister, currently the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Renewal—the LCBO has had various masters under the McGuinty government, has been moved around on a couple of occasions—is also taking it upon himself or herself, as the case may be, to set the pay rates for those who are outside of the collective bargaining unit. The current schedule Q, for example, would state that the board may appoint staff “subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor” previously, but salary ranges and conditions of employment of officers, inspectors, employees etc. who are not members of the bargaining unit must be approved by the minister, rather than the Lieutenant Governor. I reject that approach. I think it's important that cabinet, as a level of sober second thought—not to use another pun there when we talk about the LCBO—would say, “Is the minister making the appropriate decision?” if he or she were proposing that the administrators outside of the collective bargaining unit would have an increase in their wages or their incentives or their benefits.

Any minister will have a close working relationship with the chairs and CEOs of the agencies underneath them. I think proposals should be taken back to cabinet for final approval. Just by way of example, if the minister had decided the new CEO position, in order to have the best-qualified individual, should have an increase of 10% in pay, I think the minister should make that case at cabinet, for cabinet approval, rather than making it of his or her own volition. We had brought forward an amendment to change that, but unfortunately that amendment failed to pass as well.

I know when you have a bill of this length amending this many acts, you never really have enough time to address all aspects of the act. I have tried to highlight a number of our concerns, but we will watch closely in the time ahead to see how others develop. I know the minister and his staff will be looking at the next wave of budget bills or finance legislation. I will take this time to give some advice to them. Working families and seniors are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. We're seeing higher taxes, higher user fees, higher utility rates and not the increase in income to keep pace. I do hope that this government will move forward with tax reductions to help in those areas.

Secondly, the flight of well-paying manufacturing jobs has now reached an alarming rate. We have not seen a strategy by this government to recover those manufacturing jobs. I know my colleague for Waterloo–Wellington had just brought forward an important motion in the assembly that passed, during private members' business,

to try to address the loss of manufacturing jobs in the economic decline in Ontario. I hope the government will now follow what the member for Waterloo–Wellington brought forward in his motion.

Lastly, I hope the government can be more clear—maybe the parliamentary assistant will be in his remarks—with respect to matching the proposed income splitting for pension income. I've asked the question twice in the House but have not yet received a clear answer whether the government would pass on the savings to taxpayers or try to claw them back.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I listened intently to the member from Erie–Lincoln, who spoke before me. We're going to touch on many of the same aspects, but not exactly in the same way, because he and I are obviously with different parties and see the world from very different viewpoints. But much of what he had to say had a certain ring of truth about it, in terms that he earmarked some of the problematic sections of this particular bill.

I listened intently as well, before that, to the Minister of Finance. He, I think tongue-in-cheek, told all parties to pass this bill expeditiously, as if we had a choice. This bill, of course, is subject to a closure motion. The debate is confined to one day, and that day is today. I think that at about 10 to 6 or at 6 o'clock the vote will be called, although I understand it may be put over to another time.

This is a huge bill. It has so many sections. And with all the sections in the bill, this government, in its wisdom, invoked closure. They confined the committee process to a morning of two hours and an afternoon of two hours. In the morning we got to hear some eight or nine deputants. We heard from many cities, from home-building groups and from a few others who were able to squeeze into that very short time frame. In the afternoon, with closure invoked even on the committee process, we worked our way through some of the amendments that were put forward. In the end, in the last half hour or so, we literally dealt without debate with everything that was to be done. I did not, nor do I, hold out much hope for this bill, nor did I hold out much hope for the committee process, that actual changes could have been made.

There are three areas—maybe four, if time permits—that I need to key in on what is contained in this bill and why what is contained in this bill is not going to be beneficial to the people of Ontario.

The first one, hidden in schedule A, is the great Liberal election hope: the property tax freeze. It's hidden in here. The minister has not spoken about it. I don't know whether the parliamentary assistant will speak about this great Liberal hope. This is like the ostrich putting its head in the sand: the great hope that if you don't do anything about it, if you hide from it, if you don't say anything about it, after two years it may just go away. But this great hope, this ostrich in the sand, this two years to study the proposals of MPAC and of the Ombudsman conveniently takes you to a couple of months after that famous day—October 4, 2007—that

politicians both look forward to and dread, being election day.

The Liberals are hoping, by passage of this bill, to do absolutely nothing for two years and hope this does not surface as an election issue. If it does, they can say, "What's your beef? We froze your taxes." But the reality at the end of this do-nothing period of Liberal intransigence on what is a very contentious issue out on the streets of Ontario is potentially to put people at risk of not one year of increases, not two years of increases but three years of increases as properties in certain sections of certain cities and properties in certain parts of the province escalate in value faster than in other places.

This is a do-nothing policy until after the next election—

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Wasn't it your suggestion to delay it indefinitely?

Mr. Prue: —that I think the member from Essex wants to talk about it, but I don't think his party will let him.

Mr. Crozier: Your suggestion was to delay it indefinitely.

Mr. Prue: Oh, no. Never would I do such a thing as he suggests: delay it indefinitely. You see, their policy is to do nothing for two years and then potentially resurrect it after they hope to be safely re-elected.

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On the contrary, the New Democratic Party—I shouldn't say "the party," because the party has not yet decided. But the leader of the party did ask me to chair a task force, to travel across the province to hear from ordinary people, to study taxes and to look at what possible solutions there were. We did not have the ostrich mentality. We did not go and bury our heads in the sand. We did not say, "Wait and find out in two years, and after the election, what we might do or what we might say." In fact, we prepared a report. That report outlines seven different things that need to be done in order for property taxes to be fair, for them to work for all Ontarians. We're not saying that we're going to freeze taxes for two years and do nothing about it, to study for two years the 22 recommendations that were made by the Ombudsman about MPAC, because there is absolutely no study that is needed on those 22 recommendations.

If I could talk about those 22 recommendations just for a minute, at the time they were made by the Ombudsman, the Minister of Finance stood up in his place and said that 17 of them were already approved, were already going to be dealt with, which left only five. Of those five, two are related to MPAC itself and the other ones are government programs that are very marginal. Of the two that are contentious, that I suppose are going to take two years to study, number one is whether or not there should be a reverse onus. The onus right now is on a person who owns property, when they are challenging MPAC's decision on the value of their property, to prove that MPAC is wrong. All the Ombudsman said is that we should adopt a system that has already been adopted in Manitoba, where their equivalent of MPAC has to prove

that they are right, so that the ordinary taxpayer doesn't have the whole burden of proof, coming up against lawyers and governments and bureaucracy and computer systems, like they do in Ontario. All the lawyers and government and bureaucratic systems have to prove to the contrary, that they are not wrong and that the taxpayer—that's a pretty simple thing, and we think that needs to be adopted.

The other one is whether or not MPAC has to divulge its proprietary secrets, its computer plan and how it works. The Ombudsman said that they need to do that so that it can be clear and transparent to ordinary taxpayers what is happening. We think that needs to be done, and no government needs to study that for two years. Clearly, every government should want its citizens, its citizenry, to know what is contained within government bills, government procedures, government programs. The light needs to shine. I heard I don't know how many times today in question period that the light needs to shine. But this is a government obviously, on this issue at least—

Ms. Horwath: On most issues.

Mr. Prue: On most issues, yes—that does not want the light to shine until it is advantageous for them or after which they cannot be held to account.

We also went on in our program to talk about the need for tenants to be protected, because tenants quite often pay far more in property taxes through their rent, as a proportion of what the value of their homes is, than people who live in houses. We also want to look at business property taxes, whether they are too high and whether they can be reduced. The education portion of taxes that are paid, for example, in the city of Toronto is out of whack with the education portions in other parts of the province.

We want to look at seasonal rates. We say that government should be looking—or at least I have said or suggested to my party that we should be looking at the seasonal rates that cottagers have to pay in much of Ontario when they do not get value for their taxes. Where they do not have roads ploughed in the winter or do not have garbage pickup in many places, where their kids are not eligible to go to school, where they do not get the full range of municipal services, we need to look to see whether or not taxing them at the full rate of someone who lives there year-round and has access to all of the services is fair. We've given alternatives for municipalities to look at.

We've looked at the whole thing about rebating to seniors, a fair rebate program, not necessarily that all people get it but that those seniors, those disabled and those on fixed incomes who most need the help, would get it. We think that's an important thing to look at.

We're looking at encouraging people to renovate and fix up their homes. We have a \$40,000 homestead provision that is absolutely essential to allow people to upgrade their homes without fear that, in upgrading them, their taxes will go up. We've modelled this after some of the programs in the United States. Perhaps the two most contentious issues, to members opposite—maybe the first

one is that we have advocated that assessments on properties be frozen until the time of sale.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Perhaps this is what the member from Essex is nattering on about. This is done in most of Europe. It is done in some states in the United States and seems—

Mr. Crozier: It's wacky.

Mr. Prue: He thinks it's a wacky idea. The wacky idea is to do nothing.

Mr. Crozier: What a wack.

Mr. Prue: No, it's no wack. There is no wack at all. It is done throughout the world and is quite commonplace in Europe, and it works far better.

The month of October, which is Halloween month, is when you think, "Oh my God, I'm going to be scared by little ghosts and goblins coming to my door." Actually, the most frightening thing that most people who own property in Ontario get in October is the MPAC report telling them how much their property has gone up and how much they are likely to be taxed as a result of that. That is the most frightful thing people get each and every October. We want to take the volatility out, and we believe the volatility can be taken out.

Last but not least, this government has done a very shoddy job. They keep talking about being around the edges, but what needs to be done is to upload the download. The previous government downloaded everything to the municipalities. I tell you that this \$3.2 billion that AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, has said is improperly downloaded ought not to be on the property tax. I have recommended, through the committee, that that should be uploaded and that it should take no longer than eight to 10 years. We think it is doable, over time; that all that money, \$3.2 billion, needs to be taken off the property tax. If it were, property taxes might be reflective of what they are supposed to do: pay for local services such as roads, sewers, water, police and fire departments, libraries and everything else that a municipality is supposed to do, and not things they are not supposed to do, like public housing and welfare, and what they are not supposed to do in terms of public health, and what they are not supposed to do in terms of day care services, and what they are not supposed to do in terms of land ambulance and air ambulance. All those things ought not to be paid for by the property tax. Those things need to be discussed.

But what does this bill do instead? This bill hides it all away. This bill says we're going to do nothing about it. We're going to study it. We're going to set up a website. We're going to do whatever we're going to do, and we're going to make sure that no decision and no discussion whatsoever take place until that magic day six months after the next provincial election.

I do have to give the Conservatives and Mr. Hudak from Erie-Lincoln some credit. He has put forward his own ideas. I do not necessarily agree with those ideas. He is talking about a 5% cap that would be indefinite. We do not believe that a 5% cap will work; we studied that. That

is what has happened in California over a number of years, although it's 2% and not 5%. I tell you that there were some problems inherent in that. We looked at it. It is a possibility. At least it is an idea. At least it's better than doing absolutely nothing.

He also used a \$25,000 homestead improvement provision and wanted to give disabled and seniors a \$10,000 reduction on the assessment of their houses. We don't agree with that provision, but at least he is thinking about it; at least he is putting forward some ideas. Would that the government did so. Instead, this government chooses in this particular bill, buried deep in schedule A, to put in a freeze until after the next election. Some solution.

I then went on to schedule L, which is the gas tax on ethanol. This from a government that says it is concerned with the environment; this from a government, or a Liberal Party, that says they want to be a green party, that just federally elected a new leader who is supposedly a green candidate. This is a party that wants to tax ethanol at the same rate as gasoline. This is a party that wants to tax something which costs more money to produce—i.e., ethanol—than gasoline, thus rendering it more difficult and perhaps impossible for ethanol to compete in the same way petroleum-based products like gasoline already compete. If you're going to tax them at the same rate and you know that at the current time with current technologies it costs more to produce ethanol than gasoline, then I have some very real doubts about whether this government is committed to the greening of our environment, to the use of ethanol, and to getting rid of our dependence on gasoline and petroleum-based products.

1700

This past spring, at my own expense, I went to a country I had never visited before on my vacation: Brazil. I was quite impressed with the Brazilian economy and how they have got around their dependency on gasoline. Brazil has almost no natural oil reserves in a very large country, the fifth-largest country in the world, and they import literally all of their gasoline and petroleum products.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Even in that country, they have decided that they are going to use ethanol, and they have gone into it in a really big way. It is a much warmer country than ours, and so the percentage of ethanol that they can put into their gasoline is of course a higher proportion than would likely work in the wintertime in Canada. They use something like a 40-60 split, with 40% being ethanol and 60% being gasoline. I found the cost of automobile fuel in that country to be quite favourable with that in Canada; it was about the same price and perhaps slightly less than what we pay per litre in Canada. They know that they have non-existent resources, but they are also smart enough to know that the world has depleting resources, and they are putting their energies into ethanol production and are not taxing it beyond people's ability to pay. They know that they need to do it. Unfortunately, I don't believe this government has done anything of that type.

We need cost-effective alternatives and we should all the time be looking for cost-effective alternatives to pollution, to depletion of our natural gas reserves, to depletion of our oil and gas reserves, our coal reserves and every other reserve that we have on this planet. We need to do it cleaner, we need to do it more effectively and we need to make those resources last, because once they're gone, they're gone. And I don't see that this particular section in this particular bill is going to do anything to help promote the use of ethanol. It is going to make it cost-prohibitive and it's going to make sure, of course, that this government has more money.

I listened to the Minister of Labour and his comment when he was yelling back and forth saying that it's all imported. Well, perhaps at this point much of the ethanol production is imported. But we're under a free trade agreement, if the Liberals haven't forgotten that, and the stuff passes back and forth. And when and if our ethanol production actually gets going, it will pass freely across the border as well. I don't think this is a particularly good argument for the Minister of Labour to have been making.

I'd like to deviate just for a moment, if I could, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, about a wonderful event I attended last week in my own riding of Beaches—East York, and which I saw in the *Globe and Mail* just a couple of days ago—perhaps it was the *Toronto Star*. It talked about Mr. Alex Winch, Mondial developments and the Cecilia Murphy building at 11 Coatsworth Avenue, and how the tenants and the owners of that building, Senior Link, have worked with Mondial and actually put in a system which heats the hot water by a combination of glycol—they heat the water and then have to use less natural gas. This is entirely without subsidy from the province of Ontario. Mr. Winch told me that he got not one penny when he requested anything from the province of Ontario, even though this is going to save tremendous amounts of natural gas reserves. The people in this particular building are going to use the hot water heated by glycol, by the sun's energy, through rotating hot water through solar panels. The cost to the building will be identical to what it would have been to use natural gas.

What I'm trying to get at is that this was done by a private individual and it's being done at the same cost as natural gas, but this government seems not to have been even the slightest bit interested in helping finance it, in working with Mondial, in working with some of the other projects they want to do in Toronto. I guess they just want to spend the money on natural gas.

I'm only going to talk about one other aspect, because I want to leave some time for my colleague from Hamilton East, who also wishes to speak to this. The last aspect I wish to speak to—the third one—is the provision in Z.2. This involves the unincorporated territories in Ontario; these are mostly in northern Ontario, although some of them will be found in central Ontario. These are places that have not been incorporated—that do not have towns, villages, cities or counties—where people often live. Not a lot of people live there. Until this time, they

have not had to pay municipal taxes. They've not had to pay municipal taxes for good reason, because the majority of these places, the majority of these homes, the majority of people who live in these homes, do not receive any municipal services. In a place like Toronto, Ottawa, North Bay, Thornhill—I'm looking at members opposite—London or all the places you come from and all the farming communities or cities or towns, you can expect that your taxes pay for roads, sewers, libraries, water, sidewalks, police, parks, fire services, social services, planning, health, garbage and everything else that the town, village, city, county, regional government—whatever place you happen to live in, they do all of these things. But if you live in an unincorporated territory, if you live where there are no towns or villages or people—you simply have a house—you do not get any of those services.

But along comes Z.2—and this, I think, is one of the strangest tax grabs in the history of this province. In 1776 in the United States, the people rebelled because the king, who was far away, King George, decided to impose taxes. The rallying cry was, "No taxation without representation." The people were arguing that if they were going to pay taxes, they needed to have local representatives and the services that would derive from those taxes. When they weren't getting those and all the moneys were flowing back to the king in England, the people rebelled.

Today we have King Greg. Through Z.2—I invite all members to look at it—King Greg, the finance minister in the province of Ontario, can now levy taxes in all the unincorporated areas and charge them whatever tax rate he wants, on his own volition, not through the Legislature, not through the committee, not even through cabinet; this is all going to be done by ministerial fiat. King Greg can charge and levy a property tax under the Assessment Act, and there is no way around it.

So if you live in an unincorporated area and you don't receive any municipal services whatsoever, the Minister of Finance can levy a tax on your property—and will, I tell you, levy a tax on your property—as if you got those services, if we pass this bill today. The money will not flow to the municipality, because there isn't one. The money will flow to the province of Ontario and be used as part of general revenue. That's where the money will go. The money will come to the province of Ontario and not to the municipality, because, of course, there isn't one.

I would think the people in northern Ontario and in these unincorporated territories, who do not get any service, who do not have any vote and who do not have any municipality to which they can go, will be very resentful of King Greg, just as the people 230 years ago in 1776 were resentful of King George. I think people in those unincorporated territories are going to have a new king whom they're going to be resentful of. I'm looking forward to what they have to say—they probably don't know much about this—come the next election when they find out for the first time that their property is being

taxed for services they can never expect to get. They'll be paying for roads, sewers and water; they'll be paying for police and fire departments; they'll be paying for every service that most of us take for granted. There won't be any services like that for them, but they'll be taxed anyway. King Greg will be responsible for that and so will the members here in the Liberal caucus when they—I'm sure—vote for this bill when it comes up for a vote sometime either later today or tomorrow. Remember what you're voting for, because it's right here.

I promised to leave my colleague from Hamilton East a few minutes. I see I have just under 12 minutes left, so I'm going to cede the floor to my colleague from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge because I'd really like to hear the government's defence of these three aspects, plus whatever else is in the legislation: how they can justify not having a policy, no policy at all, on assessments on properties and waiting for three years; how they can justify Z.2 with the unincorporated territories; how they can justify forcing people to pay the same taxes on ethanol as on gasoline when we know that we need to go down that road and that we need to make it cheaper so it's cost-effective. I don't know how they can, but I'm looking forward to hearing my good friend from Pickering talk about that. With that, I will cede the floor.

1710

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I look forward to the opportunity to enter into the debate this afternoon on Bill 151 during third reading. Since this is not the normal bill debate structure where we have questions and comments, I won't lead off my comments by responding to the member from Beaches–East York on his three very specific points, but I may or may not touch upon some of them during the time allocated to me.

It gives me pleasure, though, to be able to rise in the House today and participate in this particular debate around Bill 151. I've had the unique pleasure during my time here to have served not once but twice with Minister Sorbara. I had the opportunity starting at the end of June 2005 to move from a parliamentary assistant's role with Minister Phillips over to finance with Minister Sorbara. As he indicated, shortly after that, he chose a self-imposed sabbatical from that role. Fortunately, he's back. It certainly was unnecessary for a particular reason, but he did the right, responsible and honourable thing at that point in time until such time as he was able to return to that role, the Premier making a wise and judicious decision to return him to the role he fills so effectively here in this Legislature. I also had the opportunity in the interim to serve with Minister Duncan as he prepared this particular budget and had the opportunity to have some input on the budget process earlier on that was delivered this past spring before the return of Mr. Sorbara, and I was honoured to have that opportunity as well.

This particular budget measures bill, the fall budget bill, gives us an opportunity to deliver on some of those commitments that were made during the budget and that traditionally become encompassed in a bill of this nature as one moves through a fiscal year, since not everything

can be done, obviously, at the time of the budget, and the timing in this place doesn't necessarily allow for a variety of measures to be put in place instantaneously. The budget certainly lays out a framework, but this bill allows for a lot of that to be approved, ideally, by the Legislature and then subsequently implemented by the public service and those who have the responsibility for the distribution of provincial dollars once they're transferred to them, as often is the case, whether it's education, social services or health, as the case might be.

We had a chance last night—it seems to be finance week—to deal with the supply motion and had the opportunity to speak to that, as others did, and the need to ensure that the business of government goes on and also an opportunity then—and I want to do the same thing today—to celebrate and thank the staff, the folks who work for the province, both internally within the assembly here and within all the ministries, for the good work they do and continue to do in helping to develop this particular legislation. Certainly, it couldn't be done by political staffers alone. They can provide insights into what's needed, the decision-making by the minister, but we certainly need the expertise and good work and long hours put in by the bureaucracy in developing and formalizing the legislation and making sure that it works.

The member from Erie–Lincoln spoke about our budget process and complimented the staff, legislative counsel in particular, in assisting them in the drafting of amendments during that process of debate as it was ongoing.

Bill 151 allows us to continue this steady progress that we've been making since the fall of 2003 in strengthening the province, in building where we can on its economy, in encouraging, supporting and leveraging private sector investment as one way to build the economy. I heard members opposite talking earlier about manufacturing jobs and the current state of the manufacturing economy, but they didn't speak to it in the broadest context, where it's an issue across North America, if not internationally, that we're in yet another changing economic environment. We have to, as a province, stay ahead of that curve in part, but also to recognize the strong manufacturing base that exists here in the province.

That's why during our first budget we included the auto strategy and a commitment to some \$500 million under then-Minister Joe Cordiano to support and leverage the private sector auto industry in this province, and it's why we continue again this year to lead—I believe we're the top jurisdiction in North America, ahead of Michigan, in auto development. Our investment in that, as a portion of the dollars that are being expended by the likes of General Motors, Ford and DaimlerChrysler, the Big Three traditional North American automakers, has assisted them in being able to have the confidence in this jurisdiction to continue and expand development opportunities and plan for the future. This was not investment in putting a new widget on the line; this was investment in research and development of new product, new strategies and new ways of them doing their business, not

only today but certainly in the years ahead, so we can stay ahead of the curve in the auto sector. The absence of that type of investment, in my view, could very well have meant the loss of significant jobs in the province well beyond those that we've seen as the result of the general manufacturing decline.

I want to do a little more about Bill 151, if passed, and those investments in Ontario and how we're building on accomplishments. As I said, we've made some steady progress along the way. During the second reading debate I had the opportunity to talk more about the measures that arise from the bill that Minister Duncan presented in March of this year and spoke then about the infrastructure nature of this particular legislation, of this budget. Minister Sorbara, in his comments, spoke about how we continue to deal with some key deficit areas that were part and parcel of what we found when we came to government. We certainly found a fiscal deficit, and we're working through that over time. We also found some other things, and we have taken strategic positionings on each of those in each of the subsequent budget years, including this, which is also reflected in this budget measures bill.

Certainly in that first budget, health was a primary focus. To meet the health needs in the province of Ontario and move us forward to where we need and should be, it required the imposition of a new tax. That tax is being reinvested above and beyond all the other dollars in health care in the province of Ontario. It was a significant deficit and we're making clear progress on that, whether it's anything from reductions in wait times to new physicians to new university opportunities, a new medical school, the establishment of family health teams, or the structures of the local integrated health networks that are now getting up and running so that communities—although it be broad communities; not local neighbourhoods, but broad communities—have the chance, the opportunity and the financial responsibility to make decisions about health care within these broader communities, these broader networks. That process is ongoing.

1720

In our second budget, the opportunity then presented itself to deal with education in a more focused fashion. The Rae report: I want to thank Bob Rae for his work in doing that at the behest of the Premier, for delivering to us a report that focused our attention on post-secondary education and training, some \$6.2 billion in planned expenditures over and above what's currently there, as a way to meet the needs of a new economy and another generation of opportunity, not simply continuing doing the same or putting a one-off band-aid on an issue. We chose instead to make a very comprehensive commitment to post-secondary education for those who are currently there, for those who will be there shortly, but more importantly, so that all of those folks and those young people—or adults—who are about to follow will contribute to a new economy in the years ahead.

As Minister Sorbara made reference to, in this past budget Minister Duncan, in his capacity at the time as Minister of Finance, chose to focus our attention on

infrastructure in the province. Clearly, there was a huge infrastructure deficit, not unlike the other deficits. He put his attention to that, for two principal reasons, in my view. One is because there was an immediate need, an immediately identifiable need that we had to address. That, again, was to build partnerships and leverage some quick activity as well as to keep the momentum going on infrastructure. During the course of the budget, there was a \$400-million allocation to municipalities on a one-time-only basis for the likes of road building. Those monies were available to them in this budget year so there would be economic activity in their communities, but also as a signal of how strongly we feel infrastructure redevelopment—and new development—is. We wanted our municipal partners to engage in that as quickly as possible, and the way to do that was to partner with them. In this case it wasn't a COMRIF-type application that has a longer process and has to be vetted because there are multiple partners. This was a one-time-only investment in municipalities for them to invest in their communities with the confidence and the knowledge that they would use those monies in a wise and judicious fashion, as they have done.

Clearly, the transportation and transit part of the agenda has been important to us this year, whether it's the commitment to the subway in Toronto through to York region, spanning the 416 area code into the 905 area code—a first-ever endeavour. Those monies are being set aside in trust as we await a couple of other things to happen, not the least of which is for our counterparts in Ottawa to firmly commit to that agenda. I think we all believe that will ultimately be the case as they work through their own decision-making, but we're confident that the federal finance minister, who sat in this Legislature for some time as a provincial finance minister in the last government, understands what the needs are in the greater Toronto area, the Golden Horseshoe area, and how important the economy of this area is and how important the development of a subway system as a way to move people effectively and efficiently and develop along a subway line is to the health and the economy of the great area in which we live. We're confident he'll be there to do that with us.

We're also providing positions within the Budget Measures Act that will help the municipalities of York and Toronto to achieve those ends. There are some very specific provisions that deal with development charges bylaws that are in the legislation, as well as tax incentive zones within the legislation, that will assist those jurisdictions in planning for the development of and financing and supporting the development of that much-needed piece of infrastructure, one that has been long awaited. Certainly, the many thousands, tens of thousands of students who attend York University, at the very least, among others, will find that to be a valuable asset in the future as it unfolds. Nonetheless, the money is being set aside. The provincial money is on the table. It's not a wish list type of endeavour. We're sure that that's a strong enough signal to our federal counterparts to also engage in that.

We've certainly been dealing with the fiscal situation, health and the education and infrastructure part of what's happening in the province of Ontario, but this particular piece of legislation doesn't deal with just those things. It deals with a variety, a number of measures that are much broader, that reflect more effectively on the broader economy of the province and the needs of the citizens of this great province.

As a matter of fact, my view is that we have so much good news in the budget that we couldn't possibly propose it all in one bill. That's why we have to be back here today with Bill 151, because there's just more good news that we wanted to ensure that the people of the province of Ontario have the opportunity to share in. Constituents throughout Ontario will benefit from the bill, not just a few but many.

In this legislation, there are proposals for changes to the Corporations Tax Act that are going to allow for corporate entities who are making donations, either charitable or donations regarding ecologically sensitive lands, to be able to see some capital gains exemption. It's a strategy to find means by which people can invest in charitable causes, can be philanthropic in a corporate way that will benefit those in the community. Most often, those philanthropic initiatives benefit those who are maybe in a less prestigious position, who need to have some support. We can't do it all as government, but we can find ways to leverage that as well. Clearly, at a time when the environment is becoming a matter of increasing interest to the people of Ontario—I'd suggest across the country—the capacity to donate ecologically sensitive lands and get some capital tax benefit from that will encourage corporate entities to engage in that.

I was saying to some folks over the weekend, while I was in Montreal as well as elsewhere, as we watched the leadership of the federal Liberal Party unfold, that I was watching the municipal elections with interest. I noticed the changes that did occur, particularly in the broader jurisdiction that I'm more familiar with around the Golden Horseshoe, the greater Toronto area in particular. The changes that occurred in some of those councils tended to lead to new candidates, new members of council who have a stronger interest in the environment than maybe the incumbents, a greater focus there, whether it was mayors or councillors.

I watched the outcome of the federal by-election in London, as I'm sure many of us did, and I saw the leader of the Green Party placing second in that particular race, clearly a strong indication from that community that the environment is on their political agenda. It's not just on their feel-good agenda. It's not just on their taking-the-recycling-out-to-the-curb agenda. It's on their political agenda on a policy front. This weekend, with the election by delegates on the floor—I must say the delegates spoke strongly on the floor, electing a new leader of the federal Liberal Party who is seen and known as a more green candidate, one who has a strong environmental bent.

As important, during the debates and during the discussion at that particular venue, there were two or three things that had delegates on their feet. In each case, when

the environment was being raised in speeches by all the candidates or during discussion, it had delegates on their feet. You heard clearly from across the country, let alone in this province, that people are engaging politically in that agenda. What might seem as simple as providing some capital gains benefit for ecologically sensitive land being turned over to government is a clear symbol of the types of things that the public wants to have happen, and we're responding to what we understand to be the public's agenda—not our agenda for them but their agenda, and how we effectively implement the agenda that they feel is important.

1730

We're proposing a number of other measures to create a more competitive and fair tax system. When Minister Sorbara spoke, he mentioned the digital tax media credit. It is to allow for more intensive media products to be eligible for tax credits and provide an enhanced credit for smaller corporations developing original pieces of media. We've heard from that part of the industry. We've heard about the growth going on in Ontario in the digital media industry. Clearly, places like Sheridan College have been leaders in the development of digital technology for media. It's important for us to continue to support what comes of that initiative, not just to support the post-secondary education but to find mechanisms, when there is success, to be able to support through a tax credit system those industries, those small industries, but yet those who are known across North America. Our province is the third-largest employer in this creative industries field after only California and New York within North America. That's an important place for us to be, and it's an important industry too for us to support, because with its growth this type of industry offsets, maybe only in a small way, some of the loss we'll see with a changing economy in manufacturing or elsewhere. But if we can grow industries that are forward-thinking, industries where new skill sets are needed, industries that are next-generation industries, it will augur well for the province for years and years to come.

So the digital media tax credit is just one of those little elements that affect a smaller portion of the overall provincial economy and a smaller portion of its overall employment base, but nonetheless one that's important because of its growth, one we want to encourage to see its growth continue. As a matter of fact, those industries in the province contribute almost \$10 billion to the economy when it's all in. It's not a small number, in spite of the fact that it might be seen as a relatively small industry. So that's just a little bit of some of the good news, I think, on the entertainment front in regard to this particular piece of legislation.

We haven't forgotten about seniors, those who are on fixed incomes and those particularly of more modest means, seniors who, in a lower income range, need to have our continued vigilance when activities are going on. We want to ensure that their contribution to the economy is not forgotten, because they have made the commitments to this province that allow us the opportunity to have and do what we do today. Without their con-

tribution over the last generations, you and I probably wouldn't have the opportunity to be here serving the people of Ontario in the way that we do.

Bill 151 is about fairness to lower-income senior couples in Ontario, and we've proposed some changes to the Income Tax Act that would ensure that seniors keep more of their income. We're proposing that we increase the income threshold for senior couples for the Ontario property and sales tax credit. So we wanted to make sure that, as they have some modest growth in their old age security, we're not clawing that back in some fashion by having their income threshold rise such that they're not eligible for tax credits. So we're making adjustments to that, and that will result in the seniors in Ontario, those low-income seniors in particular, having a few more dollars in their pocket at the end of each month for the purposes of their needs. As a matter of fact, if this piece of legislation is passed, that enhancement alone will leave some \$7 million in benefits available to some 220,000 senior couples in Ontario. Those are not huge dollars in the context of a provincial budget, but it means a lot to a low-income senior couples to know that the government of Ontario is considering their circumstance as it deals with the bigger issues within the province.

I know that some of the members opposite didn't support some earlier measures regarding seniors' property tax credits, but I'm hopeful today that in this particular piece of legislation they will see that as such a priority that they can find themselves in a position to be able to support Bill 151.

I want to make a few comments, in the couple of minutes that are remaining, about the process so far as this particular bill has moved through the Legislature. During second reading debate, some of the members of the official opposition spoke about the gas tax, and during debate here in third reading we talked a little bit about the ethanol situation. They tried to make an argument that, in their mind, we should be taxing ethanol. I don't know why we would want to do that at this point. I drive my car. I think if I have the privilege of being able to drive my vehicle, then I should be sharing not only my gas tax portion with municipalities—installed as of October 1, the final phase of the gas tax; two cents a litre in municipalities—but it would involve the obligation, then, to also ensure that a new ethanol industry in this province is supported. The taxation that's proposed within your gas-ethanol purchase will go toward the ethanol production fund, because we want to build an industry in which we can not only use ethanol locally but in which we also have the opportunity to sell ethanol outside of our own boundaries. We want it to be economically viable but also an economic growth opportunity as well.

We're confident that the inclusion of tax on ethanol included in gas is the appropriate and responsible thing to do. I'm sure those of us who have the opportunity to use our vehicles in that way will not object to ensuring that we grow that industry and support the industry. Otherwise, it means that those seniors I just talked about, as they pay their modest income tax, will be paying for

ethanol production, and I don't think that's the right thing to do. I don't think that a senior who's using the TTC, who's paying a modest amount of income tax, who has a low income, should also be expected, within that context, to be paying for me to drive my car because I don't want to pay the ethanol tax. I'd much rather pay that myself; I'm in a much better position to do that.

I see that we're just about running out of time. I'm optimistic that the members of the opposition as well as our own members will see that Bill 151 is clearly intended to enhance the lives of the people of the province of Ontario and that when the vote is called it will be unanimous.

Ms. Horwath: I'm pleased to have a chance to make a few remarks on the bill that's before us today.

During second reading debate of this bill, I was privileged to be able to sit in this place and listen to the comments that were coming from the government members, who in bringing this bill forward support it wholeheartedly, and the opposition members—the Conservatives and my own caucus colleagues—talking about some of the concerns that we have with the bill, because, of course, that's the way this place works. We try to enlighten each other with our various perspectives, and at the end of the day, the government will do what it does with its majority. That's the way it works.

I have to say, interestingly enough, that when I was reviewing the remarks of my friend from Beaches–East York, our critic in the area of finance—therefore, a budget bill falls under his portfolio—I got to chuckling, because I can recall him talking about how arcane this bill is and how it's 192 pages of very technical, very dry language and how it covered so many different areas and how he found it extremely difficult to get through. In fact, he even confessed to nodding off at his desk while he was reading the bill. I thought, well, good for you to admit that the bill is so dry in content that it doesn't keep you titillated, in terms of being engaged in the reading of it.

Having said that, my friend from Beaches–East York, as most members of this House would agree, certainly does his homework and does a good job of looking at the various pieces of legislation that he's required to review for us as critic, and he has come up with a number of significant issues that are at least noteworthy to be put forward.

I do have to say, though, that the one thing that we are very cognizant of in this debate this afternoon is that of course this is the last day of debate. There's no doubt about the fact that this is the last day of debate. The reason why it's the last day of the debate is because the government has invoked closure on the debate on this particular bill. What that means is that the government has decided that the bill has had enough debate, enough discussion, and it's time to get the bill passed through third reading and move on.

I can recall when I first got here about two and a half years ago and I went through my first experience of a closure bill—I think it was the actual budget bill back then—the House was just in an uproar about the govern-

ment having invoked closure on the debate. I, of course, was brand new. I had no idea what the heck that meant, as I was learning all the terms and trying to figure out the procedures of what goes on here. I still have a lot to learn. I don't think I'm quite an expert yet, and I probably won't be for quite some time. I have to thank the members and the various Speakers and the clerks who help me whenever I ask questions about procedural issues.

1740

Nonetheless, the reason why this side of the House had a bit of an uproar is because apparently when the current government was sitting on this side—in other words, in opposition—they uproariously complained about the previous government's habit of closing off debate for the purpose of moving bills along. So I find it kind of ironic every time I see closure motions come and I see bills being debated under a closure motion. That was one of my first recollections of being here and initially not understanding what all the uproar was about, and it was exactly because of the government's desire to close down debate on a bill.

I'm going to briefly talk about some of the issues, because I don't have very much time this afternoon, that have already been raised by our critic from Beaches—East York. I think it's important to reiterate them, because at the end of today, as you know, in about 10 or 15 minutes, that will be the end of the opportunity to say anything about Bill 151.

The first thing that members may recall being brought to light by our critic is the issue of the property tax freeze that is stuck inside this bill. Interestingly enough, I say "stuck inside this bill" because the bill is, as I indicated initially, quite long and quite detailed and affects a number of different pieces of legislation. In fact, it's considered a housekeeping bill—a bill that tidies up and messes about with a number of different things, but that doesn't have a huge, substantial rewriting of any particular piece of legislation or existing law in the province. So in this housekeeping bill, with all of these various little pieces, the one thing that was put in there by the government was the implementation of their property tax freeze. This is their way of holding off, until after the next election, on making any decisions or any real movement or change in the property tax problem that we have. I think it's actually unfair for the people of Ontario to have to wait until after the next election to get an understanding of the extent to which the government they have elected and are currently dealing with even acknowledges that there are massive changes that need to be made.

I spent some time over the summer reviewing what our critic, Michael Prue, was doing from our perspective as New Democrats in going to communities—in fact, he came to my community; he went to many communities across the province to simply talk to people about what their experience of the property tax system was and what they could recommend for change in that system.

Interestingly enough, in Hamilton we had people who raised a number of different issues. In fact, we had

people come to our public meeting who used to work for MPAC, who used to work for the assessment corporation—or for the government before there was an assessment corporation per se—and they brought some extremely interesting issues to the table. As a result of not only that particular input but of the input of many people in my community and in several other communities, we do have a solution or a program of solutions that includes not only the assessment system as it sits but also opportunities for taking responsibility for the fact, or acknowledging the fact and thereafter taking responsibility, that there were mistakes made in previous years in terms of what was provided for at the municipal level versus the provincial level in terms of paying for services. It's commonly called the download, the service realignment that the Conservative government undertook.

I remember that my community got realigned; in fact, my community got realigned in a couple of big ways. One was the download scenario and the other, of course, was amalgamation. We were dealing with both of those difficult situations all at once. It was quite challenging for me as a municipal councillor at the time, being fairly new to the job, to try to figure out exactly what the impacts of all of these things were going to be. Of course, we now know that the impacts were severe and significant, and in fact the few tools that were given to municipalities over the years to try to adjust to all of these pressures have simply failed—and they've failed miserably. I'm talking here tonight in Toronto when I know that on Friday, just a couple of days ago, we had massive flooding in the east end of Hamilton, on the edge of Stoney Creek. That flooding, some would say, was the direct result of the lack of capacity of our waste water treatment plant, which has a lack of capacity because of the inability of the municipality to invest to the levels they need to.

I'm not raising that as a way of blaming anybody, but only to reflect on the fact that one of the results, if you will, one of the consequences of the download, was that municipalities had to begin to undertake a number of different initiatives and responsibilities and fund those, and, as a result, the pressure to reduce budgets in other areas was great. So there were perhaps reduced amounts of investment in infrastructure, for example, or at least flatlining of those kinds of investments, for the purposes of making sure that other services that were now the municipalities' responsibility, like social housing, child care, land ambulance, welfare, social assistance, ODSP—

Mr. Prue: Public housing.

Ms. Horwath: I've already said public housing. It's not only the funding that came, but it's the greater responsibility for the administration of these programs that was significant as well. It put a big pressure on those municipalities.

So if there's one thing that I find specifically odious about Bill 151, it is that piece in there that's basically—the member for Beaches—East York called it the head-in-the-sand clause or the head-in-the-sand move or the ostrich move. Basically, this government, by having that section in this bill, is saying, "No, people of Ontario.

Yes, we know there's a problem. Yes, we know it's a concern. Yes, we know there's an issue here, but we won't give you any understanding of where we're going to go with this. We won't take responsibility for fixing it, even though we knew going in four years ago when we were first elected that it was a problem. But we're not going to tell you anything. In fact, we're going to set a date, conveniently, about three or four months after the next election, and then the freeze on your property taxes will come off and then maybe, if you're lucky, we'll begin to even discuss a solution." That's unacceptable, and the people of Ontario deserve better.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. That concludes the time allocated for third reading of Bill 151. Therefore, pursuant to the order of the House dated November 14, 2006, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Sorbara has moved third reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I wish to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 28(h), I have received a deferral notice from the acting government whip asking that this vote be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

It being close enough to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1748.

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Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Millroy, John (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement	Lanark-Carleton	Werling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Eglington-Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Erie-Lincoln Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Nepean-Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
		Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)

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

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

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

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Garfield Dunlop, Andrea Horwath,
Tim Hudak, Linda Jeffrey, Phil McNeely,
Jim Wilson, David Zimmer
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Finances et affaires économiques**

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General government / Affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Jim Brownell
Jim Brownell, Vic Dhillon, Brad Duguid,
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Michael Gravelle, John Milloy, Carol Mitchell,
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Ted McMeekin, Norm Miller, Jennifer F. Mossop,
Tim Peterson, Shafiq Qaadri, Mario G. Racco
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**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Andrea Horwath
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vacant
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Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch,
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
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Social Policy / Politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Parsons
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Michael Prue, Monique M. Smith,
Norman W. Sterling, Kathleen O. Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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