

No. 161A



N° 161A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

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

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 23 April 2007

Lundi 23 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 avril 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): We've discovered that the McGuinty government has reached new highs of arrogance and new lows of integrity. They are trying to keep their promise-breaking government afloat by handing out millions of taxpayers' dollars from their political slush fund without even bothering to ask for an application. There is no fair, open process. It is all backroom dealings and vague conversations. Many of the people who need the money never even know it exists, let alone actually get a chance to apply. Apparently, the price of admission to this political slush fund is a tie to the Liberal Party. Twice last week, the Minister of Citizenship publicly promised to release the criteria for these grants. If he has it, where is it? We can only assume they haven't produced it because it doesn't exist.

On Friday, our leader, John Tory, called for the Auditor General to look into the suspicious year-end slush fund spending by the McGuinty government. Today, the Globe and Mail supported that call and said the Provincial Auditor should take a tough look at where these millions have gone. If the McGuinty government has nothing to hide, they should support our call for that investigation. We will be filing a motion in the public accounts committee to have all the documents tabled and begin an investigation. If the McGuinty government has nothing to hide, they should support this motion. As Vice-Chair of the committee, I can tell you that we are ready to look for and find the truth. We believe that Ontarians deserve to know what happened to their money. We are ready to investigate and reveal the truth, because Dalton McGuinty won't.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Disabled adult children in Nipissing will now have the benefit of a new learning centre in our community thanks to our government's investment in a new, exciting, parent-driven initiative.

I had the privilege on Friday to join members of the Providing Adults with Developmental Disabilities Life-long Education, or PADDLE, program, and the Nipissing Association for Disabled Youth, NADY, to announce funding of \$138,000 through the Ministry of Community and Social Services for a new learning centre. The funding is being provided to this group of dedicated parents to help create a learning centre that will assist disabled adult children in Nipissing. The parents, who officially formed their organization two years ago, recognized a real need in the community for this kind of program. As members of this Legislature know, adult disabled children can only participate in the school system until the age of 21. At that time, they are no longer able to attend school, and are often left without activities or any meaningful form of programming.

The programming in Nipissing is modelled after a program that parents started in Brantford called Crossing All Bridges. The learning centre, which will be located at Chippewa Secondary School, will provide a program where disabled adult children will be able to continue to thrive socially, physically, emotionally and intellectually once they transition from school to the community.

There are various facets to this program, including a classroom facet, a life skills facet and physical fitness, as well as other outings for these students.

I'm convinced that this program will be a huge benefit to our community. These families struggle to provide a quality of life for their adult disabled children, and I think it's so important that we assist them.

I want to congratulate Cam Cepetelli, Sharon Walker, Lori Venasse and the whole team at PADDLE and wish them well with this wonderful program.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise today as the integrity of Premier Dalton McGuinty and his ministers continues to be under fire:

Minister Takhar was reprimanded by the Integrity Commissioner for breaching the Members' Integrity Act, and still sits at the cabinet table;

Minister Chambers, who allows SUVs and fancy vacations to go ahead of the needs of vulnerable children and only acted after she was caught by the Ombudsman, is once again inked into the bad books of the Ombudsman for ignoring the needs of the children of our dedicated military men and women. They say the third time is the charm, so I'm sure Minister Chambers isn't done yet;

Minister Smitherman, who approved a \$2-million Ad-scram on medical wait times that the Ombudsman referred to as misleading and Advertising Standards Canada said made false claims;

Minister Caplan, who covers up a \$100-million lottery scandal by pulling in Liberal spin surgeons;

Dalton McGuinty continues to verge on the Ontario Liberal version of the Gomery inquiry, we see Minister Colle has set up a slush fund to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars to organizations with Liberal ties. To try to diminish the importance of this situation, Dalton McGuinty refers to \$250,000 as “a pittance.” Only Dalton McGuinty would refer to hard-working taxpayers’ money as a pittance. What’s next for Minister Colle? Stay tuned; we’ll be finding out.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I rise on behalf of the more than 160,000 Torontonians with low and moderate incomes who live in Toronto Community Housing. Many live in homes that are crumbling and in need of urgent repair and refurbishment. Just last week, long-suffering tenants of two buildings staged a protest. Their building has an infestation of rats and mice and is in need of \$2 million of essential repairs. The price tag to repair all of Toronto Community Housing’s properties is estimated to be \$300 million, but the money simply isn’t there and the problems will only get worse if the repairs aren’t made soon.

It’s now up to the provincial government to step up to the plate. It was the province that downloaded the immense cost of social housing to the city of Toronto in 2002. Since then, the residents of Toronto Community Housing have been used like a political football between a city that doesn’t have the money and a province that is neglecting its duty. After five long years, the residents of Toronto Community Housing have now reached the point where enough is enough. They have launched a campaign calling for the provincial government to finance the needed repairs. I am proud to support their campaign and echo their very clear message to this Liberal government: Accept their responsibility and invest \$300 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a decent home in good repair.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): One month ago, I started a competition for high school students in my riding, called the Climate Change Challenge. Students were asked to design a poster that encourages the public to reduce their individual carbon footprints.

The contest ended this weekend on Saturday, Climate Change Day, and it was a tremendous success. Many talented young environmentalists submitted some very inspiring and creative posters. I’m very proud of all of the students who participated in the competition. They

not only learned about climate change, but they made an active effort to share that knowledge with others through their work.

I would particularly like to congratulate the winners. The top prize was given to Liza Rozina from Cairine Wilson Secondary School, who also won the overall prize for her school. The other overall school winners were Salwa Haider from Gloucester High School, Paulyn Joy Mulles from Lester B. Pearson High School, Ashley Merrill from Louis Riel High School and Charles Williams from Sir Wilfrid Laurier High School.

The posters will be uploaded to my site within the coming days, and I hope that everyone will visit the site to view the students’ work. I would like to thank Enbridge for donating the wonderful prizes. And I thank Place d’Orléans, which allowed us to hold our awards ceremony in their mall. Chris Day, a news anchor from CTV, kindly participated as a guest presenter in the final awards ceremony. Lastly, I’d like to thank Dawn Stroz and Halima Mautbur from my office, who did a wonderful job.

I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in fostering more youth leaders for the environment by starting similar competitions for students in their ridings.

1340

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I had the opportunity today to meet with representatives of PAIRO, the Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Ontario. I would like to welcome them to Queen’s Park. I met with Ontario medical students Mario Marin and Matt Strickland. Matt is from Huntsville, in the beautiful riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. They are here at Queen’s Park today to ask the province to defer interest accrual and repayment of OSAP loans until the end of their residency. Doing this would bring Ontario in line with other provinces who have already adopted such a policy, and the students say it would cost the provincial government approximately \$250,000 annually.

According to the finance minister, in response to questions about the Liberal end-of-year slush fund, \$200,000 is a pittance. So perhaps the Premier could give direction to the medical students as to where you pick up the application form for the \$250,000 pittance grant they are looking for. This money would enable Ontario to remain competitive in physician recruitment and retention and help with the current doctor shortage. It would also lessen the stress level of medical interns. If the Ontario Medical Students Association had known how to get one of your pittance fund applications, they could have applied.

Thirty-one groups, many of which were Liberal-friendly organizations, received grants from this government of varying amounts totalling \$20.4 million this year. But this, according to the Minister of Finance, is simply a pittance.

CANADIAN FORCES

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise in the House today to celebrate the safe return of seven soldiers from the Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment).

Applause.

Mrs. Jeffrey: Thank you. Tonight, I will be the guest of the commanding officer of the regiment and I will honour Captain Christopher Federico, Sergeant James Joseph Fallowfield, Master Corporal Andrea Katona-Smith, Master Corporal Rodger Murray Alexander Campbell, Corporal Shawn Denty, Corporal Roy Rich, Corporal Jason Vasquez, Sergeant Michael K. Kase and Master Corporal Martin Borczek: seven local heroes from my community who recently completed their tour of duty in Afghanistan and Darfur to return to their family, friends and community.

Thanks to the efforts of these brave individuals from my community, they've made significant progress in strengthening our collective efforts in southern Afghanistan, supporting the NATO mission and helping Afghans secure a peaceful, prosperous future that will improve the lives of ordinary Afghans. Our brave men and women are not only standing up for our interests by protecting our security but also engaging the world where it counts.

Tonight, I will be congratulating and thanking a few of our returning heroes. I am inspired and grateful for their spirit and selfless actions. I want to thank them for putting their lives at risk serving Canada and helping people throughout the world.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise today to celebrate a recent funding announcement in my riding that is not only beneficial to Hamilton but to the entire province as well. Over \$15 million is being dedicated to McMaster University's Initiative for Automotive Manufacturing Innovation. The McGuinty government is committed to research and innovation, and Hamilton is excited to be a leader of the project. When the Premier visited McMaster University to make this announcement, I could feel the buzz in the air. Knowing that Hamilton's research and innovation park will further enhance economic development and offer new opportunities to the best and the brightest was exhilarating.

I would like to recognize Dr. David Wilkinson of McMaster University and Dr. Michael Worswick of the University of Waterloo, who are the lead researchers committed to the innovation of our automotive industry. By researching and developing new technologies in Hamilton to produce lightweight, cost-competitive cars, Ontario's future as a global leader in auto and auto parts manufacturing will be strengthened. Producing reformulated metal alloys, polymers and composites will help meet the performance and cost requirements of the next generation of environmentally efficient cars. In addition to creating better materials, new fabrication processes

will require highly trained professionals, thus creating new jobs.

Speaking of innovation, my first grandson, Raine Eric, was born on Thursday. Congratulations to his mom, Andrea Marsales, and his dad, Jaan Lilles, and thanks to Women's College for the love and support of the future leader of Ontario, who entered the world at 7 pounds 14 ounces.

We're excited to have research done in Hamilton and we thank Premier McGuinty for his leadership in creating new economic—

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

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough—Rouge River): The McGuinty government recognizes that acquiring language skills is the foundation of success for newcomers. It is vitally important that we support children in our schools and our communities in their transition to better communicate in English.

The McGuinty Liberals want to ensure that all hard-working Ontarians have the same access to prosperity through language programming, because, after all, our society is based on providing opportunity. One of the prerequisites to prosperity is often to have a solid comprehension of the English language.

Some Ontarians, particularly those new to Canada, need assistance through English-as-a-second-language programming. One of the best ways to provide this is in our schools. Our children often grow up speaking a variety of languages—a growing testament to our multicultural society. Not only does this benefit the children, but the entire family as a whole. The children often pass on what they have learned in school to their parents and grandparents. They become the gateway between generations.

That is why the McGuinty Liberals provide over \$226 million for ESL. That's a 25% increase since 2003, or over \$2,500 per eligible student. We are taking steps to ensure that all funds allocated for ESL are spent on students with ESL needs.

We will continue to provide the resources and the tools necessary so English-as-a-second-language programming is second to none.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I wonder if members might join me in boisterous applause for guests from the great northwest, Thunder Bay: former Regional Chief of Ontario, Charles Fox, and his friend and partner, Meladina Hardy.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to welcome the very first school I've had from my riding visiting Queen's Park. Unfortunately, I'm thanking them in ab-

sentia because they're out on a tour and they were going to take a photograph, but it's St. Paul Catholic High School from Nepean. We welcome them.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan is asking unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Parsons and Mrs. Van Bommel exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Parsons assumes ballot item 32 and Mrs. Van Bommel assumes ballot item 5, and that, pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 5.

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

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe that we again have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committee meeting times.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Caplan has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committee meeting times. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the standing committee on justice policy be authorized to meet Wednesday, April 25, 2007, and Thursday, April 26, 2007, after routine proceedings and to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment for the purpose of conducting public hearings on Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

The Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any order of the House, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet

from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 23, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion number 326. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chan, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Oraziotti, David	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Ferreira, Paul	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Prue, Michael	Yakabuski, John
Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 44; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PRE-ELECTION REPORT ON ONTARIO'S FINANCES

RAPPORT PRÉÉLECTORAL SUR LES FINANCES DE L'ONTARIO

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm proud to rise on this historic day. I have today laid on the table the first-ever pre-election report on Ontario's finances to give Ontarians a transparent and accurate description of the province's finances before the next provincial election.

Ce premier rapport préélectoral sur les finances de l'Ontario donnera aux Ontariennes et Ontariens une description claire et précise des finances de la province avant les prochaines élections provinciales. En déposant le rapport préélectoral sur les finances de l'Ontario de 2007, nous fournissons à la population de la province un compte rendu détaillé de notre situation financière actuelle avant des élections générales.

With the tabling of the 2007 pre-election report on Ontario's finances, we're giving Ontarians a full account of our current fiscal situation before a general election. It's essential that the state of the province's finances be known before and not after an election so that no government can hide a deficit as it approaches an election. With this significant step forward, Ontario joins only a handful of jurisdictions around the world, and we will be the only Canadian province to provide this level of transparency and accountability before an election.

As members may recall, when we came into government in 2003, we found an obvious discrepancy between the Balanced Budget Act and the most recent financial updates provided by the province at the time. We asked former Provincial Auditor Mr. Erik Peters to assess the real state of the province's finances. What Mr. Peters found was not a balanced budget, but a deficit of some \$5.6 billion.

Mr. Peters had strong comments about the Balanced Budget Act. He said, "I urge the new government to consider legislation dealing with fiscal responsibility. The objective would be to improve accountability through greater transparency in and quality of budgets and updates such as the quarterly Ontario Finances. This approach," Mr. Peters said, "would be more effective in ensuring fiscal accountability than legislation that limits government's flexibility in responding to fiscal challenges."

It became crystal clear that there needed to be a new level of transparency and accountability in Ontario. Recall that before the last general provincial election, the previous government's approach to balancing its budget was to count on revenues from asset sales which would not materialize, while proceeding with tax cuts that Ontarians could ill afford. This is the reason why following former Provincial Auditor Erik Peters's review, our government passed the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, recognizing the importance of transparency and accountability. The act's true objective is to enhance the quality and the credibility of our democracy.

In tabling the 2007 pre-election report on Ontario's finances, we are respecting both the spirit and the letter of the transparency and accountability legislation. The report will provide voters with a better understanding of our province's finances. That understanding will go a long way toward strengthening our democratic system.

Ce rapport donnera aux électeurs une meilleure compréhension de la situation financière de la province, et cette compréhension renforcera notre système démocratique.

I was extremely proud to introduce the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act in 2004, and I am proud

today to deliver the pre-election report. It is essential that the real state of the province's finances be known before, and not after, an election. I made that statement nearly four years ago. The 2007 pre-election report on Ontario's finances fulfills that promise.

EARTH DAY

JOUR DE LA TERRE

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): Yesterday was Earth Day, and the beginning of Earth Week. You can be sure that Earth Day started small. A couple of individuals said, "Enough is enough. It's time to take care of our environment."

Just like so many powerful forces in our history, a simple idea evolved into a grassroots movement that kept growing and reaching more people, people who shared the belief that we couldn't continue to degrade and misuse the resources of our planet. With public awareness came action.

Today we are seeing the same grassroots commitment at the forefront in efforts to combat climate change. Climate change is the number one environmental issue of concern for Ontarians and Canadians. Scientists, economists, doctors and world leaders are all agreeing that we cannot afford to wait. These are extraordinary times, transformational times. We are taking action.

Soon our government will deliver a climate change plan for Ontario. It will have been worth waiting for. Our plan will speak to real people. It will make real differences in people's lives, and this plan will build on major steps our government has already taken.

Notre plan touchera réellement la population. Il changera vraiment la vie des gens et il sera fondé sur les mesures importantes que notre gouvernement a déjà prises.

Since 2003, our government has reduced greenhouse gases from coal-fired generating stations by 29%. Carbon dioxide emissions from those plants are below 1990 levels, the base year for the Kyoto Protocol. We are protecting the air we breathe.

We have introduced new and updated standards for 40 air pollutants and regulated seven large industrial sectors to lower their emissions. We have regulated 5% ethanol in gasoline to bring car emissions down, and our \$838-million investment in public transit in the GTA will encourage more people to leave their cars at home, reducing both smog and gridlock.

We have initiated the fastest-growing alternative energy program in North America, not only securing clean, green, renewable energy sources to power our province, but encouraging environmental innovation and technologies that will spur economic growth and grow tomorrow's jobs.

In these and other ways, our government has demonstrated to Ontarians our commitment to the environment, clean air and a bright future for our children.

Our plan to fight global warming is far-reaching and it is comprehensive. It is fully matched by our commitment

to clean water and safe land. Look at such unprecedented advancements as the Clean Water Act and the 1.8-million-acre greenbelt.

We have only one earth. It is our home, our heritage and our legacy.

There is a Kenyan proverb, "Treat this earth well for it has not been given to us by our parents. It has been loaned to us by our children." Yes, we must preserve and protect it for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

On Earth Day and every day I urge all Ontarians to be aware, to care and to act conscientiously for a cleaner, greener, healthier environment.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND
IMMIGRATION GRANTS

SUBVENTIONS DU MINISTÈRE DES
AFFAIRES CIVIQUES
ET DE L'IMMIGRATION

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): In this House, we share two very important responsibilities: We represent all Ontarians from every part of the province. Nous représentons tous nos chers Ontariens et Ontariennes de chaque région de notre belle province.

And we bear the responsibility of public investment, and that means we owe our hard-working Ontarians two things: Taxpayers' dollars must be well spent and well managed as we make Ontario a better place for all of its citizens. And we need to constantly improve the process by which investments are made. In this context, I wish to address the allocation of one-time capital funding by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

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Our responsibility is to partner and invest in projects that promote diversity, foster community involvement and embrace volunteerism. We're making communities stronger for both newcomers and for established and founding communities; we're investing in language training, community building, counselling services, volunteerism, and all of this to make urban and rural communities across Ontario stronger and more inclusive.

We also support active civic participation in all aspects of life, whether it's honouring our fallen soldiers on Remembrance Day, partnering with the other levels of government to commemorate the victims of the 1985 Air India tragedy or celebrating the contributions of thousands of Ontario volunteers and the Ontario Volunteer Service Award recipients, which we are currently doing throughout the province as we speak. We're proud to make investments that are designed to fulfill a high purpose, and that is to build a stronger Ontario for all.

By way of example, the KCWA—Korean Canadian Women's Association—Family and Social Services received funding to upgrade their office and counselling facilities. This will support programs to create commun-

ity for children and youth, abused women, volunteer programs and leadership building.

We're partnering with the Ireland Park Foundation in its commitment to honour the history of the Irish famine immigrants. We are supporting its mandate of preserving this rich heritage and its contributions to the development of Canada.

Frontier College, in partnership with the Lieutenant Governor of Canada, was able to provide summer literacy camps in northern Ontario for First Nations youth. These programs were designed to build literacy and life skills for aboriginal children and to offer activities such as reading, games, crafts and sports to help build self-esteem in our aboriginal communities.

Lastly, Settlement and Integration Services Organization of Hamilton is the largest provider of services to the thousands of newcomers who choose Hamilton as their home. We're helping to create a model facility to continue providing those settlement services, as well as a place of refuge and housing for those who need it.

I am proud to associate myself with these organizations and the work they do. Ontario is wonderfully diverse as a province.

Nous venons de 200 pays et nous parlons plus de 130 langues. Les nouveaux arrivants viennent du monde entier pour vivre en Ontario.

Our government has a solid track record of unprecedented progress in this sector of citizenship and immigration. We signed the first-ever Canada–Ontario Immigration Agreement, which increases federal spending by an additional \$920 million in Ontario. Our government passed Bill 124, the landmark legislation Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, which, by the way, the province of Manitoba announced that it has also introduced. We created Global Experience Ontario, an access and resource centre for the internationally trained, and established the first-ever Office of the Fairness Commissioner.

We are a province and community of blended cultures and backgrounds and we have a rich tradition of inclusion and compassion. Our government is committed to honouring our heritage, strengthening our diversity and investing in our communities, including newcomers. That is what this funding will do. It is true that governments of all stripes have moved forward with one-time capital investments in Ontario.

The process for addressing these investments must indeed be clear and helpful, so we have improved the process. Officials from my ministry have created a distinct application process that is more clear, helpful and accessible to all communities. This improved process will identify community needs and work to address these needs. The new application will be available online by the end of the week on my ministry's website. Community organizations will be able to submit application forms for future one-time capital allocations. These applications will have to fulfill the same mandate as previous capital funding; namely, to promote Ontario's diversity and heritage, foster community building, including volunteer participation, and celebrate Ontario's rich cultural fabric.

I want to thank members from both sides of the House for the concerns they have raised about the process. I welcome their suggestions as we move forward. In conclusion, I want to thank once again the diverse community groups that do so much to welcome newcomers and build communities throughout the province.

Je remercie nos communautés de nouveaux arrivants, avec qui nous établissons un Ontario prospère.

I want to thank all of the people of Ontario for joining us in this important work, and finally, Speaker, I thank you.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I wish to respond to Minister Colle's Liberal slush fund confession. Essentially that's how we view this. This is an admission of guilt and nothing less. It's typical of the McGuinty government. They react after they've been caught with their hand in the cookie jar. But again, typically, they try to spin, instead of doing the right thing.

In this case, our leader, John Tory, has suggested calling in the Provincial Auditor. The existence of this fund was not publicized. It doesn't have a name. There's no formal application process. We've had the Treasurer of the province treat these monies with disdain, suggesting that the \$200,000 of hard-earned tax money is a pittance. You're handing out monies to an animal welfare group. What's the connecting link with respect to many of these monies being transferred? Provincial Liberal Party membership. We're talking about potentially millions of tax dollars going into a Liberal slush fund. I have to say that our party, and I expect the third party as well, is not going to accept this so-called explanation here today, three paragraphs of Liberal spin. The minister needs to call in the auditor and get rid of the odour surrounding this situation.

EARTH DAY

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of the Environment for Earth Day, which was celebrated yesterday by communities all over the world. The significance of this year's Earth Day is paramount. Each of us needs to work towards reducing our individual ecological footprint, but this awareness needs to be accompanied by real leadership, leadership we have not seen from Dalton McGuinty.

The Minister of the Environment encourages people to be environmentally friendly this Earth Day. But based on their record, she has clearly failed to lead by example. Despite Dalton McGuinty's election promise to divert 60% of its garbage, we are lagging badly behind that promise. The Environmental Commissioner says there is a real price to pay for this broken promise, and it's not just about the environment; it's about credibility and leadership, neither of which this present Liberal government has.

PRE-ELECTION REPORT ON ONTARIO'S FINANCES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Finance. First, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and his staff, particularly Sarah Hanafy, for arranging the briefing with caucus this past week and the heads-up on the minister's remarks today. I very much appreciate the co-operation of the minister's office and the minister himself.

With respect to the item that's before the assembly this morning, I certainly would have preferred this process had our leader, Mr. John Tory, been involved in the process, and the third party, Mr. Hampton, as well. I think the minister knows that some time ago our leader wrote a very reasonable proposal about how this process should move forward. I don't think we were actually given much of a response, certainly not an adequate response, if this is truly about ensuring that the proper numbers are put forward. There would be a lot more credibility to the process had all three parties been involved.

1420

Speaking about the auditor as well, I do hope the auditor will have all the information that is required for his review. I hope the minister is undertaking to make sure that it is all provided. But at the same time, I would actually like to see the auditor have the time to look at the funding coming from the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, as my colleague Mr. Runciman just said a few moments ago. The minister knows full well that in the last three Liberal budgets the auditor has had very strong comments about end-of-year slush funds, the last-minute spending sprees. You might say that pirates on shore leave would show more restraint than the Dalton McGuinty government when it comes to spending; in fact, would probably cause less damage to the provincial economy. Nonetheless, we do hope that the auditor will have a chance to look at some of the last-minute slush funds we saw in this most recent budget, including the money from the Minister of Immigration that seems to be targeted, as my colleague Mr. Runciman said, more to Liberal Party contacts than to the public good. So I hope we'll have the undertaking of the Minister of Finance to recommend to the auditor that he look through that fund as closely as he possibly can, because after all, these are the taxpayers' funds. We've seen great disregard from the McGuinty government, and when we see spending skyrocket from \$68 billion to \$91 billion in one term without results for taxpayers, it's time for a change.

EARTH DAY

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I'll be speaking today about Earth Day. Yesterday I was at the Earth Day rally here in downtown Toronto, and the grassroots that the Minister of the Environment was talking about were there. What were they speaking about, Minister? They were speaking very directly, very clearly

about their rejection of nuclear power, about their demand for action on Kyoto, for action now. What did you stand up and talk about today in this House? The wonderful record of your government. The simple reality is that you are embarked on a \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme that has been exempted from environmental assessment, that you have written regulations for to get out of the way. Do you think the grassroots support that? Do you think the grassroots don't want an environmental assessment of one of the biggest mistakes in Ontario's history? They do; you don't.

Minister, since I've been here, I've been pressing you for action on climate change. I've heard from you and I've heard from Minister Gerretsen about the fact that you have it taken care of, that it has been spread out amongst the ministries, that everybody is doing their part. We don't have a plan. You say you're going to bring one; I tell you, when I read Murray Campbell's column in the *Globe*, he tells me that you're talking about 2020. Maybe the 1990 levels then; maybe 10% below. But 1990 is not Kyoto, Minister; it is not. You know how urgent the problems are.

Your government has betrayed the environment. Your government has betrayed the grassroots. Your government has no credibility on these issues.

PRE-ELECTION REPORT ON ONTARIO'S FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): First of all, to the Minister of Finance on his pre-election report: very interesting reading, because what you have shown in your pre-election report is that we are going to run very tiny surpluses over the next three given years in total; for the three years, \$300 million only. You are doing that on the backs of the municipalities, because there's nothing in here about the \$3.2 billion of downloading that you're not going to upload. You're doing it on the backs of the poor, because there's nothing in here to talk about the phase-in which you have put beyond 2010. The press has asked you to commit what you were going to do with this \$300 million, and you would not do it. You would not even tell them how your party is going to unfold its election promises or whether you were going to make more promises than the \$300 million.

Your program is based on a whole bunch of assumptions which already are out of date. I point out on page 8 the Canadian dollar, which you said should be, if it goes above 86 cents—it traded at 89 cents all last week. About crude oil, which you said, if it stays at \$61 a barrel—it traded at \$63 a barrel all last week. I don't know what kinds of assumptions you're using. The press were highly skeptical, and so are we.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: The minister

has stood in this House today and has given a total non-answer to the mess that he himself and his party have created. He promised last week in this Legislature, and outside in scrums, that he would produce the applications that were made. No applications were produced. He said last week that he would outline the criteria that he used in order to approve these 50-plus organizations, and nothing at all was said about that today.

He said he would talk about the expectations of performance and where those monies are going to be spent that were given away last year and this year, and there was absolutely nothing done on that. He promised last week to explain the very Liberal connections of the recipients, and nothing at all was said about that today. Last week, the finance minister said that the millions of dollars that were given out in total, and the \$200,000 in particular, were a mere pittance. There was no comment from you about whether or not this is a mere pittance.

You know, the press has termed this whole nefarious scenario "Collegate," and I want to tell you, it is Collegate. It leaves a bad taste in your mouth, and no amount of brushing from you is going to remove it. If you really want to remove it, then you should set up a non-partisan citizen group to vet these, and you should have them choose the best groups, not the ones that you choose and your party chooses based on Liberal connections.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Is there a doctor in the House? Indeed, there are many of tomorrow's doctors, representatives from the student section of the Ontario Medical Association and the Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Ontario. There they are.

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce to the Legislative Assembly, sitting in the members' east gallery, an old friend and current city of Thunder Bay councillor, Mr. Aldo Ruberto.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Today we've heard of your application process and application form after the fact. Elvis has left the building with the money, and millions of taxpayer dollars later, you're going to now do something about it. The real issue is how taxpayers can possibly know if any of this money actually got to some of the purposes that you were describing in your statement earlier on.

We have the International Seniors Club of Brampton. It received \$100,000 from this so-called year-end reinvestment fund, which is actually a slush fund. We've heard earlier that what you did was you received, by your own admission, hundreds of people who got in touch with you. Then, when the Minister of Finance called to say that they were just awash in money, that all the children with autism and the farmers had been looked after, you decided who got the money.

Can the minister please explain to us how he became aware that the International Seniors Club of Brampton was looking for money and whether or not this club actually submitted an application form?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Our government has had a proud record of investing in newcomer communities, volunteer-based communities in all parts of this province. We have gone out of our way to ensure that everybody feels welcome and included in this province. That's why we've made these investments that were long overdue in making these communities stronger and more inclusive in this province.

Mr. Tory: Again, a total non-answer. What I asked for was: Was there an application form from the International Seniors Club of Brampton that backed up their request for \$100,000 in taxpayers' money? We know, from previous experience last week, that one group had a meeting arranged with you by Maria Minna, a former Liberal cabinet minister in Ottawa. When the questions came up about that, you then wrote to them or phoned them and said, "You'd better submit an application form so we can make this look better than some kind of Liberal Party inside job."

The International Seniors Club has, on its board of directors, one Atma Singh Gill, who is also the president of the Liberal Party of Canada Riding Association in Mississauga-Brampton South, a riding represented by a Liberal MP, Navdeep Bains: one more organization with ties to the Liberal Party getting public money without any backup or documentation at all. Will the minister please tell us the basis upon which this group, the International Seniors Club, received \$100,000 in taxpayers' money?

1430

Hon. Mr. Colle: There are many exceptional community groups throughout this province that are trying to deliver important services so that seniors don't feel isolated. This one organization that the member is raising in question is a locally based organization that is renting space from the city of Brampton, that is at the grassroots, trying to ensure that these forgotten seniors who come from different parts of South Asia now have a program and are included in activities in this centre. They are developing this program and centre to reach out to more programs. These are the kinds of services we're investing in.

Mr. Tory: Part of the problem we have here is that these forgotten seniors all seem to have memberships in the Liberal Party, positions in the Liberal Party and so on. We had two groups last week and now a third one

today that seem to have as one of their interests, in any event, advancing the interests of this government, and all three got money from a political slush fund.

For two of them last week, you said that you would produce paperwork to back up their application for money. Now, having said you would do that, you're refusing to do so. As a result, there is a cloud hanging over this government and a smell in this building and well beyond with the taxpayers about the fact that you won't do this.

Will the minister come clean, show us the paperwork, show us the application form, show us that in fact you did anything at all to make sure this money actually went to providing the services you just talked about for lonely seniors or whatever else? That's all we're asking for: a little bit of accountability, a little bit of transparency. Show us the forms; show us the process.

Hon. Mr. Colle: We continually have the Leader of the Opposition questioning the members of any organization because someone in that organization may belong to some party. That is a right of anybody: to belong to a political party.

For instance, we have the Ireland memorial park we're building at the bottom of Bathurst Street to honour the victims of the potato famine. The members of that board come from the Conservative Party and the NDP. In fact, a former controller of SuperBuild is a director of the Ireland Park. I don't see anything wrong with that because the project is worthwhile.

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

Mr. Tory: My question again is to the Minister of Citizenship. I haven't asked you any questions about that one yet—you're obviously worried about that one—but we'll get to it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Finance. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: If you haven't figured out that when one of the organizations has its office at the residence of the president of the riding association and the candidate for the Liberal Party is on the board, come on. Get with it.

Let's ask about the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, a different issue. They received \$250,000 from the political slush fund. Can the minister tell us what due diligence was done on this organization? Did they have to provide proof of financial viability? Did they have to provide proof of appropriate fiscal management systems, required to account for the hundreds of thousands of dollars in public funds? Did they have to prove that they had an appropriate board and management structure? By the way, Minister, these are requirements of your very own newcomer settlement program. Can you tell us: Did the Ontario Khalsa Darbar have to provide that information before you gave them \$250,000 of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Our mandate and the mandate of my ministry—and a proud one—is to help newcomer communities integrate and reach out to the greater community. In fact, this is a perfect example. At this Darbar

at Derry and Dixie, what they've done is they now invite the Peel police force to come in to learn about the Sikh religion, which they're very proud of.

Thousands of people come every day to get food from the kitchen at the Darbar. There are thousands of volunteers at this temple. They're proud of being Canadians, but they're also proud of their Sikh heritage. We have invested in the best of both worlds, the volunteerism here by the Sikh community in the Darbar and the great outreach they're trying to make to the schools of Peel region because they want to share their great religion with the children of Peel region. They want to share their great charity with the greater community. I'm proud to invest in the Darbar.

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The person the Leader of the Opposition is referring to, his nephew, is a candidate for—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I remind members that points of order are not points of debate, and during question period we do not need to hear points of debate.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: What the minister is forgetting is that there's also another part of your mandate that is very important, which is that you have to show every bit of care you can, every single day, about how you distribute the taxpayers' money. Now, had this organization—the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, which I'm sure does some very good work—provided this information to you that I asked about, proof of financial viability, a proper board and so on, you would have known that the Ontario Khalsa Darbar has been embroiled in a court case since 2006 in which the board of directors of this organization has failed to produce financial and corporate records. You would have been aware that there are allegations outstanding that some \$2.5 million in membership fees are not reflected in the organization's books. This is a matter that's still before the courts. We don't know if it's true or not, but you would know there are big issues about the financial management of this organization.

My question is this: Before you handed them over a quarter of a million in taxpayers' money, were you aware of this litigation involving a dispute about their financial management?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I'm not going to be the judge and jury of something before the courts.

This organization and this gurdwara has been in existence since 1973. It's the largest gurdwara in Ontario. It has had an excellent record—again, a community kitchen, providing food for the hungry who come in there every day. There are literally, as I've said, thousands of volunteers who are doing great work in that.

There are athletics. They are building a museum and a resource centre in the front of their gurdwara so that they can invite members of the greater Peel community to come and share with them what their beliefs are and how they can live better together in the community. That's

what I looked at. You can look at potential legal cases. I've looked at the track record since 1973 of doing a lot of good volunteer work in our community.

Mr. Tory: I only asked the minister if he thought it was important that he should have known there was a court case involving the very question of the financial management of this organization before he handed them \$250,000 of taxpayers' money. You obviously, by not answering yes, you knew about it, or no, you didn't, don't want to answer.

Now, this very same grant was reported in the South Asian Observer on Friday, April 20, 2007. In that story, the journalist who wrote it, Jasjit Singh Bhullar, said, "This was ... the direct result of the community electing three legislators. 'We should continue to help them in the future as well,' he added."

This looks, again, like he's making an observation that you have to be involved in the Liberal Party, you have to make donations, as we've seen, in order to get this money. There's a clear suggestion of a quid pro quo between political Liberal involvement and getting this taxpayers' money. Will the minister explain? If it wasn't for partisan political purposes, why would you not have had a process pursuant to which you would have known that these people were embroiled in a big dispute about their own financial management before you handed them a quarter of a million—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?
1440

Hon. Mr. Colle: Members of this Legislature come from all different backgrounds. They are Muslims, Sikhs, Catholics, Protestants. They all have equal standing. All of the communities we represent are very proud of the fact that we've made it to this place. So I don't see anything wrong with the members of this gurdwara being proud of the fact that they have three Sikh members sitting in this Legislature.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Last week, people across Ontario learned that the McGuinty government has been doling out significant amounts of public money to Liberal-friendly groups and organizations, money that you've shovelled out the door with no formal application process, no criteria, no transparency and no accountability. My question is this, Minister: When were you and other members of the McGuinty government first alerted about the problems with these grants, and what did you do about it?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Our government is proud of the investments we've made right across this province. We've made investments in St. Catharines, we've made investments in Welland, we've made investments across the north with our literacy camps for First Nations children. We are making investments based on the promotion of diversity, heritage enhancement and enhancement of volunteerism. We make these investments because we feel there's a need, and these organizations, many com-

munity-based, big and small, are deserving of government partnership.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, the question was very specific. Problems were raised, issues were raised about some of these grants. One of the people who raised them is here today. He is an Iranian-Canadian journalist, Saeed Soltanpour. On February 9, he wrote to the Minister of Finance asking for an interview so that questions could be answered about some of the problems with the \$200,000 grant to the organization that calls itself the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre. He was turned down. On April 4, Mr. Soltanpour wrote to the Premier, the finance minister and you, asking the McGuinty government to “shed light on the grant.” He received no response then either.

So my question is this: Mr. Soltanpour was clearly telling you there were some problems. Why did you ignore him? Why did you ignore the questions that he was raising until they were raised here in the Legislature last week?

Hon. Mr. Colle: When a government invests in worthy projects of all descriptions, big and small, as I’ve given some examples—we invest in the AWIC centre in the Don Mills area, where there’s an incredible group of women who help out low-income families in that area—there are many questions sometimes raised about whether or not they need more money or less money or whether this group is viable or not. But remember, we’re dealing with sometimes emerging organizations that are newcomer-based and they’re trying to develop a capacity to invest in diversity, enhance volunteerism and provide services. We always attempt to ensure that they deliver those services to the best of their ability.

Mr. Hampton: Mr. Soltanpour was very specific about some of the questions and some of the issues related to this \$200,000 grant. He says, “I’m writing to ask these questions. No other organization in the Farsi-Persian community was informed that there were grants available.”

He points out that 20 different organizations knew nothing about this, but this organization that had just been granted charitable status as an animal protection organization somehow got the grant. He wanted to know why someone who claimed that he was a good friend of the finance minister and had a long-time relationship with the finance minister—that’s why he was able to get the grant.

Minister, those are serious questions. They were raised back in February; they were raised April 4; they were raised April 17. They were raised with the Premier, the Minister of Finance, you and the Minister of Health. Why did no one in the McGuinty government look at these issues and say, “Maybe we’d better take a look at this, and maybe we’d better”—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Very clearly, my ministry has ensured that attention was given to these newcomer communities, who in many cases came here with nothing

in their pockets, worked hard, have become lawyers. I know that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I know that all members would like to hear the response of the minister, as I would.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The members opposite sometimes don’t appreciate the fact that this province is made up of immigrants. Many came with nothing but an empty suitcase and the eagerness to work in this country. Some of them have worked very hard and have achieved success, and now they want to give back to the newest immigrants who are coming. We as a government want to encourage that type of community involvement so new groups can help deliver the diversity inclusion services that are needed. We invest in these groups, and we try to the best of our ability to do this. That’s why we’ve even improved the process now by setting up this registry so that all groups—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

New question, leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Again, to the Minister of Citizenship: These questions are not going to go away. Mr. Soltanpour works with a number of organizations in the Iranian community. He supports them. He does all kinds of good work. The question he was asking you is—this Iranian-Canadian community centre doesn’t represent the Iranian community. They refuse to answer questions from other organizations and members of the Iranian community about what they do and how they got this money.

As I say, the group registered as a charity to protect animals, not as an organization to service people in the Iranian community, only three weeks before they got the grant. As he points out, this group has very partisan ties to the Liberal Party. So he wants to know about the fairness of this. He wants to know for the benefit of other Iranian groups and organizations. What conclusion should working families across Ontario draw from your refusal to answer these basic questions?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The member’s facts are incorrect. That organization was registered in 2005, and it got its status. Its letters of patent demonstrate that it’s established to help newcomers and to establish a community centre for the Iranian community.

The other issue about his reference to animal protection was a clerical error made by Revenue Canada or in the process of going to the second step. In many organizations, in every community, there are dozens and dozens of different groups who claim to be the most responsible. We don’t say that one isn’t and one is. We try our best to assess which one is going to try to deliver services, is dedicated towards reaching out to newcomer communities or establishing volunteer organizations. We try to do our best. But to decide totally—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, here is the reality: The McGuinty government has been handing out significant sums of public money—a quarter of a million dollars

here, a quarter of a million dollars there—to organizations that are clearly linked to the Liberal Party. There's been no formal application process so that other organizations could apply, there have been no clear criteria, and there has been no transparency and no accountability. You and the Premier and the Minister of Finance knew that questions were being raised about this granting of money, yet you tried to ignore it and you did nothing about it.

Minister, it is time for some transparency and accountability. Will you make the list of groups who got the year-end grants public? Will you explain what they have done with these grants? And will you tell us what were the criteria upon which these grants were based in the first place?

1450

Hon. Mr. Colle: This year's grants have been on the ministry website with the names of the groups and the contribution made by the government of Ontario. It's been on the website for the last five or six days. The ones from the year before were made public in a very open and transparent way. In some cases, members of his own party were there when I was making the contribution—to the Afghan Association of Ontario, for instance; your member from Beaches–East York was there with me. So it's been very public and the criteria that I do it for are based on building more inclusion, more diversity, promoting volunteerism, community building and recognizing our heritage in this great province. Those are the criteria that are used to ensure that these principles of inclusion—who we are—are now incorporated into many different parts of this province and many different communities.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, you might want to check your records. We just did. The Iranian Canadian Community Centre got its charitable status on March 1, 2006, and then they got the money on March 20, 2006—not even three weeks later. Now, it's true the Minister of Finance calls this money “a pittance”—a pittance of money here. Let me tell you, a quarter of a million dollars is not a pittance for hard-working families across Ontario, and it's not a pittance to organizations that really do want to provide some community services.

Minister, I say again, it is time for the McGuinty government to actually answer the questions. It is time for some accountability and transparency. Minister, will you make the list of the groups who got year-end grants public? Will you explain what the criteria were? And will you tell us, please, what that money is being used for—money for, for example, the Iranian Canadian Community Centre?

Hon. Mr. Colle: That centre in question was established in 2005—that's the first step—and then a year later they went for their charitable status. You don't have to have charitable status to be eligible. The critical thing here is that there are so many excellent organizations that provide newcomer settlement services, like the Maytree Foundation, like CultureLink—excellent organizations that also promote volunteerism. That's why

we invest in community organizations like senior centers that promote volunteerism and also recognize our heritage. That's what we're doing. We're investing in the Buxton centre near Chatham-Kent. It is the first settlement of black slaves who came across into Ontario back in 1850. Those are the criteria. Our heritage—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

Mr. Tory: My question, again, is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He keeps trying to make this about these groups and about inclusion when, in fact, what we're after here is some accountability for the taxpayers' money.

We've heard that you gave the \$2,000 to the Iranian Canadian Community Centre. We've heard that the contact person is the president of the Richmond Hill Liberals and the Liberal candidate is on the board of directors. Well, if it's possible, it gets much worse. According to the corporate filing with Corporations Canada, there are seven members on the board of directors of this organization. Guess how many of them are contributors to the Liberal Party of Ontario? Guess. It's seven out of seven who contribute to the Liberal Party, including \$700 from Andy Bakhtiari, who donated \$700 to the Vaughan-King Liberal association.

My question to the minister is this: Will you now come clean and admit that this grant, on which there were no criteria, there was no application, was given to further the partisan political interests of your government? Stand up and admit it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The Leader of the Opposition is again trying to say that membership or donations to a political party is what these important community organizations are all about.

If you look at the many organizations and institutions that we've partnered with, they have members of boards of directors from all political parties—the Conservative Party and the NDP. That shouldn't be a reason for exclusion. We looked at the need to ensure that community groups that wanted to invest in more community inclusion, more enhancement of diversity, should not be excluded because a member belonged to one party or another.

Mr. Tory: There isn't a soul who has been arguing that membership in any political party should exclude anybody, but what we are saying is this: Surely when you have a situation like this, for example, where seven out of seven directors, 100% of the directors, are contributors to the Liberal Party, it underlines the reason why you should have asked for documentation, you should have asked some basic questions, before you gave them \$200,000 in taxpayers' money. The Minister of Finance thinks \$200,000 is a pittance. We don't. That's bigger than the mortgages most people in this province have on their homes. They don't think it's a pittance.

So my question is this: Last week, you said that there was documentation. Will you bring it forward and produce it so we can see what questions you asked before

you gave this organization, with 100% of the members of its board Liberal contributors, \$200,000 of hard-earned taxpayers' money? Will you produce the documents?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I don't know if the member opposite is saying that before government undertakes any partnership with any organization, we should do a political check on everybody. Is that what he's saying?

If you look at the organizations across this province, these organizations come from all walks of life, as they always have. They're there, and we judge them on what their intention is to provide those services. Many organizations have no political affiliation whatsoever. Many are NDP. Many are Conservative. We look at what they deliver, not what their political affiliation is.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Last year, Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services received a grant for nearly \$24,000 from your ministry—so-called year-end funds. Will you table in this House any internal documents or application forms that you considered before extending the grant, specifically outlining the criteria that made you choose this group over all the others that you rejected?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I think the member referred to Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services. They are one of our newcomer settlement partners. We have about 80 in the province. What we did is, we made funds available to all of them for sectoral improvements, which they've never had for 15 years; in other words, fixing up their offices, fixing up their washrooms, making them more accessible. We made amounts of money available to—I can't remember the exact number, but out of the 80, the majority of them got some one-time funding basically to repair and fix up their services. They were one of the ones that received, I think, \$23,000.

1500

Mr. Prue: There are hundreds of organizations that you have left out, struggling to do good work every year without any help from your government. ICNSS has one very strong advocate, though, in your caucus: the member for Mississauga West. The member for Mississauga West has read 19 petitions in the House calling for more government funding for the group. His spouse is also the executive director of that group.

Organizations struggling for cash don't like the way this looks. If there are clear reasons why this organization got funding while others did not, you need to table the documents—or shall we just go with the new Liberal slogan, "Membership in the Liberal Party has its privileges"?

Hon. Mr. Colle: That is a new low.

As I said, these are newcomers and SP partners—we call them newcomer settlement providers—that have been partners with our ministry for 10, 15 years. Some of them received money going back that far, and what all of them did was put forward a request based on their sectoral needs—Afghan Association of Ontario, African Community Services of Peel, Arab Community Centre of

Toronto, Bloor information services and AWIC. They all did. There were about 80 of them that did it. The ministry staff looked at their needs and, based on their needs, gave them an allocation of money to ensure that their facilities were upgraded.

The one that you condemn is an excellent organization in Peel region, like the other—

Mr. Prue: I didn't condemn them.

Hon. Mr. Colle: You did condemn them, and that's shameful. These organizations—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Drinking and driving are a fatal combination. This is a fact that has been proven time and again. Indeed, the majority of Ontarians accept this and make the right choice by drinking responsibly and ensuring they have alternate means to get to their destinations when they have had a few drinks. Sadly, not everyone has learned this important lesson. There are still those who drink to excess and get behind a wheel. Every time they do this, they put their lives and the lives of all those around them at risk.

In rural parts of the province like my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh and urban centres like Windsor, people need to use Ontario roads to get to work, to a show or to bring their kids to a sports game. We must, as a government, do all we can to ensure that our roads are safe.

Minister, you recently proposed legislation that will toughen the laws on drinking and driving. What additional tools will this legislation give to our community police forces to assist them in their important work of keeping our streets safe?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh for his advocacy on the part of his constituency.

If anybody read the papers this weekend, they know that there were a significant number of people who died, and unfortunately there seems to be the suspicion of speed and alcohol being involved.

Every hour of every day, it's two people who die and 10 who are seriously injured on our roads, and that is unacceptable. We do have safe roads; we need to make them safer. This new legislation, if accepted as proposed, will in fact do that. What we'll do is get to the folks who are in the .05 to .08 range, or the "warn" range. These are the people who are the repeat offenders. We will change the suspension laws—make it longer—and what we will then do is get to the behaviour. If we can separate the behaviour of drinking from the behaviour of driving and find a way—and one of the ways to do it is with the interlock ignition program and mandatory education, and that is being proposed in this bill.

Mr. Brownell: Minister, crimes perpetrated with vehicles are still far too commonplace. Are you sure that this legislation will strengthen the tools of our police forces and make the perpetrators of such crimes think twice before endangering themselves and the public at large?

These crimes, of course, are not limited to drinking and driving. Sadly, there is small contingent of the population who choose to get their thrills at the expense of the safety of themselves and anyone nearby.

Street racing is a selfish, thoughtless act that ends lives. As a parent, I can only imagine the heartbreak mothers and fathers of victims of street racing must feel when they get that call in the night, saying that their child's future was ended because of a senseless act of hooliganism.

There is no cause or excuse for street racing in our society, especially when there are so many safe alternatives for entertainment and competitiveness. Street racing is wrong, and any legislation concerning road safety must address it severely. Minister, what provisions are there in this legislation to tackle the scourge of street racing directly?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: This legislation that has been introduced would provide for a seven-day roadside suspension and a seven-day suspension of the vehicle as well. It actually puts in place the toughest laws in all of Canada. Minimum fines will go from \$200 to \$2,000; maximum from \$1,000 to \$10,000. We're going to get our message out that street racing, stunt driving, is totally unacceptable in this province and will not be tolerated. At the same time, we'll look to the education component as well and look to how we can work with young people around recreational driving with the Ontario Provincial Police program called ERASE.

There are ways and means where we can work together, but the bottom line is that if you're going to do street racing and you're going to do it in our province, you're going to pay. We'll take your licence, we'll take your car and we will fine you so that you cannot do it again.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It concerns, of course, the year-end slush fund and the millions going out the door with no accountability.

On the weekend, we got some indication as to the standard the Premier applies to all of this. He was quoted as saying that the minister should be cut some slack because, to quote the Premier, "He didn't think he'd had a lot of time when he was approached with this and had to make some quick judgment calls."

Would the minister not agree that the issue here really isn't how fast you shovel the money out the door? We'll leave aside the whole argument about whether it's a

pittance; we'll leave aside the whole argument about whether, if you had so much money left over, there aren't some other people who might have benefited from it too. The issue isn't how fast you can shovel it out the door but how carefully you spend it on behalf of the people out there, whom we all represent, who worked so hard to earn it.

Do you now agree, with respect to this list of grants, that you should have had a process in place, you should have had proper application forms in place and proper due diligence, before you gave the money out, and that you've now gotten yourself involved in a process that reflects very badly on government and on the members of this Legislature? Would you agree you should have done that in respect of these grants? Yes or no?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Our government is very proud of the fact that we've gone in a very aggressive way toward ensuring that all these communities that have been ignored for too long—and I'm not blaming any level of government or any party. These communities have been living on a shoestring for decades. There are such excellent settlement workers all across this province. From Thunder Bay to Cornwall, we heard them and we said, "We're going to give you resources."

We're not shovelling money out the door. What we're doing is that we're hearing that plea for help from these settlement workers who have gone without proper bathroom ventilation; they've gone without access. They hear the pleas of the newcomers, so we have given them resources to try and provide those services.

I agree that the process needs to be improved, and we moved to make that better. I appreciate your comments about the need to make the process better, and we've now established this process on our website for registration for capital grants.

Mr. Tory: With that tiny admission, which I appreciate, don't you think, then, if we want to enhance confidence in the people here in this place, in the political process and in the work you claim you're trying to do with this money, that when you have a situation when, for example, 100% of the board of directors of one of the organizations you gave money to are contributors to the Liberal Party, you should at the very least, going back to where you didn't have a process—no due diligence, no application, no nothing, and to quote the Premier, the only problem was that you rushed to get the money out the door—he said that, not me—then refer all these matters, and you should co-operate, to the public accounts committee and to the Auditor General so they can look at the ones going back and satisfy themselves that it was all on the up and up because you didn't do your homework? Will you agree to do that?

1510

Hon. Mr. Colle: Speaker, he always points to something that's convenient for him. One of the biggest contributions that the people of Ontario made—and we're very proud of the contribution we made—was to the United Jewish Appeal. They're going to raise almost

\$300 million to build an incredible series of complexes to help the disabled, help Holocaust remembrance. There are nine members who donated to the Conservative Party on their board. We didn't ask that before those donations went out. We know that the United Jewish Appeal, just like the Islamic Institute of Toronto, is made up of good people doing excellent work. That's what we judge on: their work and their contribution, not on which party their board of directors belongs to.

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

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, today you stood up and said that anybody getting a new grant will get it for diversity and heritage, for community building and volunteerism, or for enhancing and strengthening the cultural fabric of this province. With that in mind, can you explain why the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, using funds supposedly dedicated for helping new Canadians settle in this province, gave half a million dollars to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I'm very glad to answer that question because baseball is a great part of Canadian heritage—Fergie Jenkins. The national baseball hall of fame is a national shrine for all the great history and culture related to baseball. We have invested in making that hall of fame more accessible for the disabled community. We are making investments in creating a museum that's interactive. We have the first Japanese Canadian who was interned during the 1940s. Vancouver Asahi is also in that hall of fame.

Whether it's baseball or other heritage projects, these are part of what our communities are based on. Whether it's athletics or music, culture, art, these are valuable things that make up our fabric in Ontario, and baseball—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: Again to the minister: Organizations across this province struggle every day to find ways to help new Canadians. They're constantly told by you and your ministry that money is not available. Imagine their shock when they learn that funding supposedly designated for their needs went to a baseball museum. This funding may help the local Liberal MPP hold on in a tight election race, but can you explain how it will help new Canadians struggling to settle in Canada and, if so, will you table the documents that led you to that conclusion?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I've been in the mosques. I'm in the coffee shops. I'm on the TTC buses. I see the real eagerness of our newcomer communities. That's why I've reached out to increase investment like never before in newcomers. For 20 years, our newcomers were starved in this province. We fought to get the \$920 million to improve our newcomers. We've increased newcomer settlement programs that have never been increased before. We've increased bridge training programs. We invest \$34 million in helping newcomers achieve professional expertise. No government has done more for

helping immigrants in this province than we have in the last two years.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, as part of our government's commitment to the children's mental health sector, you recently announced a new investment of \$24.5 million to address gaps in local service needs as well as to reduce wait times.

I understand that in the last 15 years, the children's mental health sector has received two base increases. Both of those base increases were provided by our government in the last three years because for 12 long years the Tories and NDP did not raise by one cent children's mental health funding. Minister, can you please share with us what this additional investment will mean for the children's mental health sector?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I want to thank the member from Mississauga East for his advocacy in this area. In fact, what he says is correct: 12 years of neglect by previous governments and an absolute freeze of children's mental health funding, but we have been very pleased as a government. Our first increase in children's mental health was in our 2004 budget, where we announced an increase of \$25 million, which grew to \$38 million in 2005-06. This increase has actually included a 3% base increase to the sector. Over 250 children's mental health services are also benefiting from the funding announcement that our government has made effective this fiscal year. I look forward to the supplementary.

Mr. Fonseca: This is tremendous support for the children's mental health sector. I also understand that in our 2007 budget, we provided an additional \$4.5 million annually, starting this year, to support the implementation of a policy framework for child and youth mental health. Can you please explain how this policy framework will help to integrate services in the children's mental health sector?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: In addition to the 5% across the board which, incidentally, has been very, very well received by the sector, we have two other categories of funding: \$4.5 million is going towards furthering the aims of the policy framework on children and youth mental health in this province, which was worked on by my ministry and the sector. The objective is to improve integration of services, collaboration amongst agencies, with the child as the centre of whatever we do, and support in a more comprehensive manner for the children who are suffering from mental health challenges. I should mention that in Peel region, of the 5% increase, the Peel Children's Centre will receive \$658,548 in base increase and the Trillium Health Centre, for their outpatient program, will receive \$75,000. We have also created an unprecedented emergency fund—

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

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND
IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question again is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration concerning the taxpayer-financed political slush fund. I want to read you a quote—it's a bit of a lecture given here. The quote reads as follows: "It's a new day. We've given the Auditor General the authority to find out exactly what you're doing. Start behaving responsibly. Start acting in the way you know the people of Ontario expect you to act." That quote came from Premier Dalton McGuinty after it was discovered that Hydro One and the children's aid societies were spending money like crazy on SUVs and jackets and all manner of things. The Premier talked a tough game, but at the end of the day what is going to reassure a single taxpayer out there is whether people are actually doing anything to act on his words.

Today I sent a letter to the Auditor General asking him for his opinion on whether an undocumented, off-book grant program met the kind of accounting and accountability standards that the taxpayers should have the right to expect. My question is, will you agree to have these matters referred to the Auditor General? Will you take a copy of this letter—

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

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): It's passing strange that the leader of the Conservative Party would lecture us about that office, when we increased the scope and power of the Auditor General to look at Ontario Power Generation, to look at Hydro One, which they blocked, and school boards and hospitals. We did that. That's an independent office, and that office has within its authority the right to look at any ministry.

1520

Mr. Tory: What we're talking about here is something you did three weeks ago. You did it personally. You said in the House a number of times that you had hundreds of groups approach you. Some of them you even phoned, you said, and asked if they wanted money. There is no application form. There is no paperwork. There is no due diligence. You haven't checked at all to see whether they're spending the money on the things you've talked about here in the House.

All we're asking is, will you join us in asking the Auditor General to look into this and see if any of these payments made out of the minister's slush fund demonstrate any kind of pattern of political favouritism? If the answer is no, then he'll come back and clear the air here and say there is no problem. What are you afraid of? Why won't you agree to join us in referring this matter to the Auditor General for his complete and expeditious review? Then we can have an objective accounting of

what went on here and whether there was anything wrong.

Hon. Mr. Colle: We take these investments that we've made in large and small community groups across the province as being very serious investments of the public purse. That is why we are very proud of the fact that when we look at these needy communities, we ensure that we meet the needs based on their ability to deliver those services the best they can. We look at their ability to meet the different principles we put forward, and the office of the auditor has within his or her mandate that independent authority to do what they want.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South-Weston): I think I'm going to make everyone's day. My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Last May, members of the public were recruited to draft the terms of reference for the environmental assessment for the private Blue22 air-rail link from Union Station to Pearson airport. They were led to believe that their input mattered. Now we have discovered that the terms of reference were already drafted four months before the public meetings began.

Minister, it sure does look like the fix is in. Why did your ministry review and comment on the terms of reference produced by the air-rail link's proponents before the public process had even started?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to speak about Blue22 and the terms of reference that are being drafted by parties other than the government. Certainly, this is a project which GO Transit and other partners are looking to move forward. The role of the Ministry of the Environment, as I've said to my friend before, is to review the terms of reference that proponents provide to us, to examine those terms of reference. I have assured him in the past and I'll continue to do that today that a decision on the terms of reference will only be made once the concerns that I have with respect to the feasibility of this, the protection of the environment, that the community has been heard—all of those issues will be examined, and terms of reference will only be approved at that point in time.

I'm not sure why my friend raises the ire with respect to wrongdoing, but the Ministry of the Environment is examining the terms of reference, as we should, and we will examine them thoroughly, as we do in every case.

Mr. Ferreira: Minister, the reality is that the terms of reference were commented on by your ministry four months before the public committee had a chance to even look at them. They were told they were going to be given meaningful input. The unfortunate victims of this entire charade are GO Transit riders along the Georgetown corridor, who are being made to wait for expanded service because it's tied in with Blue22.

Minister, I'm going to give you a way out of this mess: Unbundle the GO Transit expansion plans from the ill-conceived Blue22 scheme and use the funds ear-

marked for it as a down payment for the city of Toronto's ambitious light rail network, which goes out to the airport. When will you take the action necessary so that the much-needed GO Transit expansion can go forward sooner rather than later?

Hon. Ms. Broten: The reality that we deal with in the Ministry of the Environment is that we work closely with proponents. We give them guidance. Proponents of this project, separate from the government, may have come forward, but the process is important and the community will be engaged. I will not make a decision with respect to the terms of reference until I am satisfied that all issues have been examined fully.

But it does seem somewhat strange to hear this issue promoted by someone who's a member of a party whose government is somehow now opposed to mass investments in public transit. We are the government that has made historic investments to public transit, and it is critical that we continue to do that. But in this case, with respect to these terms of reference, all issues will be examined.

I say to the community: I've stood on your Weston platform. I've spoken to you at the side of Laura Albanese. I understand the issues that are of concern to you and I will take them into account.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education and concerns our government's healthy schools challenge. I think all members know that there's a growing concern among teachers, principals, parents and students themselves about the health of Ontario's young people.

As members are aware, on December 4, 2006, the government released a comprehensive healthy schools framework entitled Foundations for a Healthy School. The framework, based on current research and input from education and school-based health experts, including input from the Ministry of Health Promotion, is intended to assist schools in becoming healthier places to learn. I'm wondering if the minister can tell this House about the healthy schools challenge and how it will benefit students across Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I want to thank the member for Kitchener Centre for his hard work with the schools in his riding.

On December 11 of last year, the Minister of Health Promotion and I launched the healthy schools recognition program. We issued a challenge to all Ontario schools—that's to all 5,000 publicly funded schools in the province—to become even healthier. At that time, we asked that all schools in the province accept the challenge to commit to do one more thing to make their school healthier. Our idea was that schools are doing terrific things, and we wanted to validate what they are doing and ask them to push the envelope a bit more and do one more thing.

The challenge is simple. We'll acknowledge every participating school with a certificate and a pennant recognizing the school's effort to make their school healthier. Some of the activities that schools can undertake are things like developing an anti-bullying program, founding a healthy breakfast club, planting a vegetable garden and promoting safety on the playground, and I'm happy to say that more than 1,000 schools have taken up the pledge so far.

Mr. Milloy: Members may be shocked to know that physical inactivity costs Ontario's health care system about \$1.8 billion every year. Assisting in the development of healthier lifestyle habits in our young people is a tremendous start to addressing this problem.

The previous government unfortunately didn't share the same ambitious plan as we do. The only exercise they seemed to promote was for teachers walking the picket line.

In addition to the recognition program the minister just outlined, I know we are very keen on promoting healthy schools in general. Can the minister tell us what other measures the government is taking to promote healthy schools?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: We have a comprehensive healthy schools strategy. We have released the framework for healthy schools. We have daily physical activity in elementary schools.

I want to say that this morning I was at the forum for the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association—OPHEA's daily physical activity forum. That was a forum where teachers and coordinators from across the province were coming together to talk about the activities that they are encouraging and running in their schools.

Daily physical activity is a terrifically successful program across the province. It's part of the larger healthy schools strategy that we've put in place. The last piece of this strategy is our legislation on anaphylaxis in schools.

The schools are healthier. Kids are doing better. We're on the right track in education.

PETITIONS

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

"Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people who will be affected most by this legislation; and

"Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private

property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

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

“That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation’s implementation.”

I’ve signed this, Mr. Speaker.

1530

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I have a petition signed by a number of citizens from the Peterborough-Lakefield area. It’s addressed 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 Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Enact Bill 25, an act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario.”

As I agree with this, I shall affix my signature and send it with Kenny.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

“Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

“Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people who will be affected most by this legislation; and

“Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

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

“That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation’s implementation.”

This was signed by many people from my riding at their event on Saturday.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I have a petition signed by the good people of Nipissing.

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I support this petition, and I affix my signature thereto.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): I’m pleased to present a petition on Bill 184, which reads as follows:

“Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

“Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

“Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people”—of Ontario—“who will be affected most by this legislation; and

“Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised”—scary—“to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

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

“That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation’s implementation.”

I’m pleased to give this to Christian and present it to the Parliament of Ontario.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I’ve got a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly titled:

“Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I agree with this petition and affix my name thereto.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

“Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs...”

And to conclude:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds.”

I’m in support of this and I’ll affix my name to this petition.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition courtesy of John Bell and the Ontario Sporting Dogs Association, which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

“Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

“Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people who will be affected most by this legislation; and

“Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

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

"That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation's implementation."

I affix my name in support.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This has to do with Mr. Zimmer's bill.

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly

"Regulate Zoos to Protect Animals and Communities

"Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

"Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

"Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

"Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

"Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer's bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act."

I'm pleased to sign this and give it to Dillon to present to you.

1540

CHILD CUSTODY

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact

with each parent and their grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;...

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Zane to give to the table.

ENDANGERED SPECIES LEGISLATION

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government tabled the Endangered Species Act, 2007; and

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources posted the legislation on the Environmental Registry for public comment; and

"Whereas there has been no face-to-face consultation with the people who will be affected most by this legislation; and

“Whereas the proposed Endangered Species Act, 2007, could significantly affect municipalities, private property owners and economic development across the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Ontario Forestry Coalition, the Ontario Forest Industries Association and many other groups have asked the McGuinty government to hold public consultations before passing this legislation; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government previously promised to hold consultation where legislation could have a significant impact on the public; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is virtually bankrupt and unable to fulfill its role and responsibilities as required by the Endangered Species Act, 2007;

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

“That the McGuinty government hold public consultations across the province to provide the public with an opportunity to express their concerns with the Endangered Species Act, 2007, and that the McGuinty government provide dedicated funding for all aspects of the legislation’s implementation.”

I support this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER ROADS FOR A SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 VISANT À CRÉER DES ROUTES PLUS SÉCURITAIRES POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS SÛR

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 19, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 203, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 203, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours pour crime organisé et autres activités illégales et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d’autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I’m pleased to join second reading debate on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act. This proposed Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007, would, if it was passed, be tougher on drinking and driving, street racing and protecting our police officers in the line of duty.

There are three components to the bill. The first one, which I believe to be one of the most important, is the drinking and driving component. This bill would introduce new measures to seize and forfeit the vehicles of

repeat drunk drivers; in other words, you can’t drive if you are drunk and you won’t have a car if the police catch you. This provides an incentive for drivers to separate their drinking behaviour from their driving.

We’re going to clamp down on repeat drinking drivers by increasing the current 12-hour licence suspension for drivers who repeatedly blow in the “warn” range and creating longer suspensions for repeat offenders in this range.

We’re going to have escalating sanctions for .05 and .08 blood alcohol levels. We’re going to increase current 12-hour suspensions for drivers who repeatedly blow in that “warn” range to: for the first instance, a three-day suspension; for the second instance, seven days plus a requirement to take a remedial measures program; for the third instance, 30 days plus a requirement to take a remedial measures program and have an ignition interlock installed for six months.

Drivers with blood alcohol levels that are below the legal limit are still a danger on Ontario roads. In 2004, 20% of drinking drivers killed in Ontario had blood alcohol levels of less than .08%. Also, drivers with a blood alcohol level of .05 to .08 are eight times more likely to be involved in a collision than drivers who have not been drinking. That’s according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Currently, Ontario has the shortest—12 hours—suspension of any province with short-term suspensions and no escalating sanctions for repeat offenders. This legislation would reduce licence suspensions with ignition interlock and reduce licence suspension for Criminal Code offenders on the condition that they install an ignition interlock device in their vehicle. So, for a first suspension—currently one year—they may be reduced to three months if an ignition interlock device is installed. For a second suspension—currently three years—it may be reducible to six months if an ignition interlock device is installed. For a third suspension—currently lifetime and reducible to 10 years—it would be reducible to one year if an ignition interlock device is installed. Fourth and subsequent offences—currently suspended for life—may be reducible to one year if the device is installed.

A vehicle forfeiture would be available to police, and it would amend the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act to make it easier to seize vehicles, including snowmobiles, of those who are found to be drunk.

The second component of this bill is the street racing component. Our legislation is one of the toughest in North America—tougher than what the member from Oak Ridges has proposed. It would have a seven-day vehicle impoundment and a seven-day licence suspension versus a 48-hour suspension. It would increase the minimum fine to \$2,000 and the maximum fine of to \$10,000. A court-ordered suspension: The courts could impose a driver’s licence suspension for up to 10 years for a second conviction.

This legislation would allow police to take immediate action at the roadside against street racers and stunt

drivers with an immediate seven-day vehicle impoundment and a seven-day driver's licence suspension. The maximum fine upon conviction would be increased from \$1,000 to \$10,000 for those convicted—this would be the highest fine in Canada—and a 10-year licence suspension if a second or subsequent conviction for street racing is received.

The third component of this bill is blue flashing lights. To better protect police officers, we propose that police officers be permitted to use blue flashing lights on their vehicles in combination with red.

1550

Ontario is the only jurisdiction in North America that does not allow its police vehicles to use blue flashing lights, a colour that enhances police vehicles, particularly at night. We are proposing that volunteer medical responders may be allowed to use flashing green lights on their vehicles, subject to further regulation.

These blue and red flashing lights on their vehicles, which will improve visibility, was something that the Peel Regional Police spearheaded. I remember—a year ago last May—that Acting Deputy Chief Tetzlaff and I spoke of this issue and we talked about the documented safety benefits. So I'm pleased that we were able to respond in such a timely fashion.

Section 62 restricts the use of different coloured lights to various classes of vehicles. Currently, red flashing lights are permitted to a number of classes of vehicles, including police department vehicles and ambulances, and green flashing lights are permitted to firefighters only. This section is amended as follows: "to allow that further classes of vehicles, to be prescribed by regulations, may use red flashing lights; to give police department vehicles the exclusive right to use red and blue flashing lights; and to allow volunteer medical responders, to be prescribed by regulations, to use green flashing lights."

The community of Brampton and Peel Regional Police are committed to safer roads for a safer Ontario. In fact, in May 2006, community partners from across Brampton launched "Road Safety Starts with You," which was a public education partnership to help drivers and pedestrians understand the role they play in road safety. The group of 26 is led by Brampton Safe City and includes the city of Brampton, the region of Peel and the province of Ontario. The partnership recognizes that each group is performing important work in our community and has a role to play in road safety in Brampton and looks for opportunities to share the message of road safety behaviour.

I'd like to spend a few minutes telling you who those groups are. Our partners include the city of Brampton; the region of Peel; Brampton Transit; Peel Regional Police; Peel Regional Paramedic Services; Peel District School Board; Mothers Against Drunk Driving; Young Drivers of Canada; the Canadian National Railway; Ontario Provincial Police; Brampton Safe City; Brampton Fire and Emergency Services; Peel Children's Safety Village; St. John Ambulance; Peel Car Seat Safety

Committee; Rogers Television; Transportation, Health and Safety Association of Ontario; the Ontario Safety League; and, of course, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

To help spread the message, community leaders, including Brampton Mayor Susan Fennell, Peel Regional Police Chief Mike Metcalf, Brampton Fire Chief Terry Irwin and Brampton Battalion, are spokespeople on this issue.

The public education partnership will benefit people of all ages. It builds on existing programs such as the Peel Regional Police safe driver campaign, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving anti-drinking-and-driving campaign, the Peel Children's Safety Village, the Brampton Safe City community safety team, the Peel health's Wear the Gear initiative, Rogers Cable's annual Pumpkin Patrol and many others.

I'm happy to speak on this legislation. I think it's long overdue. I'm pleased that we are proposing this legislation for a safer Ontario and I believe that it would have an effect on residents across Ontario because they will know that we are serious about being tougher on drinking and driving, street racing and protecting our police officers in the line of duty.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'll be able to speak on behalf of our party, the PC caucus, in a few moments. I just wanted to say that I personally support this piece of legislation. I look forward to making comments and I look forward to putting a lot of things on the record, areas where I think we can do somewhat better.

I guess one of the things I'm concerned about is why members aren't using up all their time in this House. When we speak to this legislation, we get 20 minutes to put a lot of good, positive things on the record. On the other hand, I'll have my time and I'll try to use it up just as well.

I can tell you that too often in our province, if you look at CityPulse News or any of the TV newscasts and you look along the bottom of the screen, you see people who have died because of road safety. I'll tell you, it's actually very discouraging, especially when you see the number of young lives that are lost. I'm hoping that, although no bill will resolve everything or save every life, at least this House, and I hope every member of this House, would try to support this legislation as we move forward and try to make our streets and roads safer. Although, I think, if I'm not mistaken, at least when we were in power—I know when Minister Sterling was the minister, we had the safest roads in North America. If this is an improvement, our roads will continue to be safer.

I look forward to speaking in a few minutes and talking about some of the issues that are on the table here.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I want to commend the member for Brampton Centre—did I get that right?—for her comments.

I grew up in Brampton. Maybe she recalls this. It was about 12 years or so ago on Ray Lawson Boulevard in

the city of Brampton, where there was a horrific accident as a result of street racing. It involved, at the time, a couple of young men who happened to have been classmates of mine at J.A. Turner Secondary School, and there were two fatalities. It shocked the community.

This leads to my comment on the bill. First of all, I think all members in this House would agree with me that this is a laudable, commendable piece of legislation that perhaps we should have brought forth many years ago. But it's missing a very important element, and that's education, especially within our school system and especially amongst young people. If you take a look at the stats of those involved in reckless driving and driving while under the influence, the numbers bear out that more often than not it involves young people. To go along with this legislation, there needs to be companion legislation to call for greater investment in those education measures, in those education programs, that will instil in young people the awareness that this is something they should be responsible for and about.

I'd like to get her comments briefly on what she thinks of the need to increase education measures when it comes to reckless driving and drunk driving, as well.

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 203, an act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the remedies within it.

I want to commend the Minister of Transportation, Mrs. Cansfield, for dealing with some issues that are paramount in the public's mind, and one of those, most certainly, over the years that continues to be a concern for people is drinking and driving. This bill, if passed, would introduce some new measures to seize and forfeit the vehicles of repeat drunk drivers.

I know that constituents of mine—just in conversations with others throughout Ontario at various venues that I might be at, the conversation of repeat drunk drivers is one that comes up often. Trying to address this problem through this legislation is indeed commendable and is something we all would support. Clamping down on repeat offenders by increasing the current 12-hour licence suspension for drivers who repeatedly blow in the warning range and creating longer suspensions for repeat offenders in this range is also welcome.

I was asked this weekend, actually, about street racing, and I don't think all Ontarians understand that perhaps there are two different kinds of street racing. One is done with what one might call your stock vehicle, the one you bought and took off the lot on purchase day. That can occur, and of course it's not tolerated. But there are people who enhance their vehicle to go even faster, and that is where one is planning way ahead to go and race on our streets, and that can't be condoned either.

I've also talked to police officers in the past, and I find it amazing that people still say they do not see police vehicles, or other emergency vehicles, for that matter. But to help them to be seen by all the public, the minister will allow officers to use blue and red flashing lights on their vehicles. I hope the public sees the police and heeds them.

1600

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech made on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007. This bill would strengthen the rules to do with drinking and driving. The bill would create a situation where anyone caught driving with a blood alcohol concentration of .05 would face tougher penalties. I think in Ontario we're moving, as we should be, towards less and less tolerance towards drinking and driving. Last year, the member from Willowdale had a private member's bill to do with drinking and boating and linking drinking incidents on the water to your driver's licence. I supported that bill. The bill got all-party support and passed, and it's having an effect in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, where there have been charges laid.

A good part of this government bill we're debating today came from a private member's bill from the member from Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, who was a former Minister of Transportation. The street racing part of this bill originated from his private member's bill.

We, the PC Party, support this bill. It's going to make our streets safer. I believe that Mr. Klees would like to see the bill passed, but also I know he has some amendments that he feels would strengthen the legislation as well. So he would like to see it get through second reading, go to committee and have some public input, and then at that point he'll have a chance to make some changes to the bill.

He certainly has been very active lately because he has also got a private member's bill, the organ donations bill, which had public hearings last week and is having clause-by-clause this week. So the member from Oak Ridges is working hard on a variety of issues which are being taken up by this Legislature. Hopefully, his organ donation bill will also become law in this province, because I think it makes a lot of sense as well.

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

Mrs. Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the members from York South–Weston, Chatham–Kent Essex and Parry Sound–Muskoka for speaking on this bill and offering us some thoughtful suggestions with regards to the legislation. I think we're all in agreement that this legislation is long overdue. It's a shame that we have to bring in this legislation, that good sense doesn't prevail on the street, but we all know that when alcohol gets mixed with fast cars and when people are drinking and driving, they don't necessarily use good judgment.

I think the fact that we've been able to add some components with regards to what our police officers need is a benefit. We fully intend to have an education program that will assist residents of Ontario to determine what behaviours they need to follow in order to make our roads safer.

I think every community has a program. I spoke a little bit about what Brampton does. I think every community looks for a safer roads program because the safety of its residents is paramount. We need to work with our

ambulances, with our paramedics and with our police officers to provide them with a safer environment. They're the individuals who work in the middle of the night in very unsafe work conditions, when visibility is impaired, and if we have impaired people on the road, we're putting them at greater risk.

Certainly, I think this is a piece of legislation that gets tough on people who drink and drive and people who race on our streets. We fully intend to listen to the suggestions offered by all the stakeholders to try to provide a piece of legislation that more accurately reflects what we've been speaking about today in the House and that provides a safer work environment for our emergency responders as well as for all the residents in Ontario and their families.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Dunlop: I am very happy to be able to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on Bill 203. I've got to be quite honest with you: I haven't had a lot of chance to review this bill yet. I didn't realize it was coming up this afternoon. But over the last few hours, I did have a good chance to review it. I do know that there was some sort of rush to this bill in the end because I think there was a lot of pressure on the minister's office from the support that Mr. Klees's private member's bill was getting. I'm glad they took the time and have come forward with this bill, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

First of all, I do want to say, on behalf of myself and friends and the constituents I represent for Simcoe North, I want to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. As I said in one of my earlier comments, when I discussed Ontario having more safe roads than any other jurisdiction in North America, I meant that sincerely. We should be very proud of our record here. Anything that we do in Ontario actually sets the bar a little higher for other jurisdictions across North America. That's only proper, and I'm glad to be able to speak to this.

But I want to thank also my colleague Frank Klees, and the federal government, which brought a street racing bill as well. I'm not sure of the exact status of that bill as we speak. From Mr. Klees's perspective—I can recall when he was the Minister of Transportation. I thought he did an excellent job as well. He put in a 10-year plan for road construction in the province of Ontario. He was certainly familiar with the complete file in a number of ways. Some of his plans, things such as the HOV lanes, that have proceeded today were the ideas of Mr. Klees. I thank him for that. When some people were killed in York region as a result of street racing, he was quick to jump on that and work to help his constituents and help all Ontarians by drafting that private member's bill, which has been brought forward, most of it, in this particular piece of legislation.

I would expect that there would be fairly strong support for any bill that would protect and make our roads

safer. I think that's the number one thing here. I wouldn't expect any of the opposition parties to really oppose it.

However, I do think there are probably areas—I understand that there are amendments that may be made to this bill, and I hope that the government will listen very carefully to those amendments. I know that my colleague Mr. Klees has some amendments he'd like to make when we get to committee. I would hope that the government would listen to him and make those as well.

Road safety: It doesn't matter where you are in the province, whether it's on a downtown Toronto street or on a concession road in rural Ontario; the impact of speeding and driving with more control of your vehicle is just so important to our communities and so important to our young people.

In the last election campaign, my campaign manager was Dr. Tom Garry. He's a family physician from Brechin and he was the mayor of the township of Ramara. Right during the election campaign, four young people were travelling, I believe, at a fairly high speed, and they hit a train. They were all from Wasaga Beach. I don't know why they were out in this remote area of Ramara township, but they were all killed instantly. It was just a tragedy, not only for the four families but for all of the members of that community, when four young men from their community all passed away instantaneously as a result of a tragic accident with a train. I can recall that my campaign manager basically had to leave the campaign for a few days because he had to be part of the investigation as the mayor and as a family physician and had to attend the funerals, etc. I know how devastated he was during that campaign that he had to be called into that.

I'll never forget—I talk about a young man in our community, very close to my kids' age, a few years back. His name was Harold Black. Harold was a bright young guy, and somehow, going home on a concession road late on, I believe it was, a Saturday evening, he lost control of his car. I don't know whether he was travelling at a high speed. I'm quite sure that he wasn't under any kind of influence of alcohol or anything like that, because he was very responsible. But I can tell you, when his car, very similar to the one my son was driving at the time—for a while, a lot of people didn't know whose car it actually was because the car had been damaged so badly. There was some relief to our family when we found out it wasn't my son's car, but I can tell you, it was devastating, because these kids were all members of the 4-H Clubs together. It had an impact on all of the rural community. I'll never forget seeing his parents' faces at the funeral parlour. It just seemed to be so unnecessary. So, road safety, young people—it has been absolutely incredible how we need to zero in on that.

1610

Talking about road safety, someone mentioned earlier, I believe in one of the comments to Mrs. Jeffrey's statement, about education. I can tell you that there are some things happening out there. I really want to zero in on the Ontario Provincial Police. Just before I came down this

morning, I was at what they call a DARE graduation. This DARE graduation was at the Uptergrove elementary school just east of Ramara township on Highway 12. The DARE program is a program that educates young people against the uses of any kind of drugs, including alcohol. I was there with the principal, a gentleman by the name of Mr. Hoover, with Constable Gerry Dwyer and the new mayor of Ramara township, Bill Duffy.

We were at this graduation of, I believe, 28 grade 6 Uptergrove students. They had taken a 10-week course provided by the Ontario Provincial Police, educating the young people. Gerry Dwyer is a community safety officer with the Ontario Provincial Police out of Orillia. He's just an incredible police officer, because he takes these kids under his wing as though they're all his own. He tries to educate them so that they're not being part of the Internet scene. He just told them this morning, for example, to turn off the computer if you see any of these bad programs on the Internet or anything that would refer to Internet luring. But today we talked about the DARE program.

He runs a number of these programs throughout all the schools in our community. Of course, part of that would be road safety and not drinking and driving. I think that message was sent a number of times this morning at that graduation. I know there were three young students—I can't recall their names—who were all winners of an essay project. Each one of them referred to drinking and driving in their comments because they are grade 6 students, and in four or five years they'll be looking forward to getting a driver's licence, etc., and driving cars, and they want to be responsible adults, not doing drugs, not drinking and driving and that sort of thing.

That takes me a little bit to the Ontario Provincial Police. I'm very pleased with the appointment of Commissioner Julian Fantino as the Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, the headquarters being in my community in the city of Orillia. I attend a lot of Ontario Provincial Police functions and quite often see Chief Fantino at some of these events.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): How's he doing with that investigation into his e-mails?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm getting some heckling down the way here. I actually didn't ask him about that.

Anyhow, one of the programs—at first, I questioned. It revolves around the black-and-white cruisers. My first reaction to having all the cruisers go back to the black-and-whites was, "Why did they ever go to white at the beginning?" They seemed to be effective cars, and if we're adding blue lights on with the reds and oranges, etc., that are already on the cars, I know these are all added expenses. But study after study has probably indicated that it's more safe to have those blue lights on a vehicle and have them black and white—a little more visible.

I know that a lot of the officers I've talked to are very pleased with the black-and-white cruisers. My understanding is that it's costing about \$500 more per cruiser to paint them. However, if it's going to save lives—

Mr. Kormos: How?

Mr. Dunlop: Someone is yelling, asking me, "How?" My understanding is that the presence of vehicles, the fact that you can identify them so easily and the fact that the commissioner has planned on using a constant road safety program instead of just the—that's on the 400 series of highways. I know that is the first place now where you will see the black-and-whites. I saw a couple coming down the 400 this morning. But if it will save lives, if it will make the job safer for police officers, then I would support that. I can tell you that, in my opinion, the Ontario Provincial Police officers I talked to like the black-and-whites. They're pleased that the commissioner brought the program forward and wish him well with it.

Apparently we're no longer going to be doing the weekend blitzes like the May 24 weekend and July 1 weekend. Apparently there's going to be more of a police presence all the time. However, that will require additional funding. That will require additional resources to have those officers on the road. I know, from my discussions with the Ontario Provincial Police Association and my contacts with the OPP, that they know they need more officers—not officers to go under contract policing, but officers to work under the patrol programs on the 400 series of highways etc. I'm under the impression that they may need 200 to 300 just in that alone across the 400 series of highways in the province. Of course, as you know, it has cost a tremendous amount of money to keep a number of our police officers—I believe it is 124—right in Caledonia for the last year. So that's been a burden on the budget. And I'm not so sure where Mr. Fantino or the commissioner will find the resources to add more police presence on the highways if we're going to do this 24 hours a day, seven days a week, like we originally did with the weekend blitzes.

The other area I'd like to comment on is the section in the bill on the ignition interlock. A lot of these pieces of legislation evolve around a private member's bill. We talked about Mr. Klees's road safety bill, Mr. Zimmer's bill on boat safety—drinking while driving a boat—Mr. Hoy's bill on protection for kids on school buses; improvements have been made there. And of course I go back to the time that I introduced the ignition interlock bill. Again we go back to road safety and the control on a road. The reason the ignition interlock bill got to this floor in the beginning—I'd like to tell you the story. There is a gentleman in my area named Doug Abernathy. He still runs a program called Orillia Against Drunk Driving. In 1981, Doug was in a terrible accident with his brother. His brother, whose name I believe was Tim, was killed in an accident up on Highway 11. It caused Doug a lot of sickness as well. Even to this day, I think Doug still has times when he has problems with his health. But I can tell you, he never gave up on ignition interlock. He kept coming to me in my office. First of all I thought, "What is this? How would we ever get this through the Legislature?" And he came in with the people from Guardian Interlock, who gave us demonstrations and showed us how it worked etc. I can tell you that he main-

tained that. I took my first private member's bill on ignition interlock over to MTO, and the bureaucracy over there said, "It won't work. Amend it so that it's a nothing type of bill and it will kind of go away, because we don't want ignition interlock here in Ontario."

But I have to say that I thank Premier Mike Harris. Mike Harris saw the bill. He wanted the bill to have teeth, the same as this bill today has additional teeth. To this day I thank Premier Harris, and in the end it was Norm Sterling, the minister, who allowed that bill to go through. It was passed unanimously by this House. And I should say at this time that that particular piece of legislation had the support of all members of this House. But it was strongly supported by Mothers Against Drunk Driving and OSAID, and almost all of the stakeholders in the insurance industry felt we should go ahead. I can't think of anybody that didn't really want to see that legislation put in place, much the same as I think we're discussing here today with Bill 203. In the end, a nice thing happened under that ignition interlock bill: That particular year, after it was passed and implemented, Doug Abernathy from Orillia was made Citizen of the Year in the community, because in the end he saved lives.

1620

That's what we're doing here in this House today, trying to save lives, whether it's with the bill as it stands or with an amended bill. Whether it's Frank Klees's bill or the Minister of Transportation's bill, hopefully it will be good, even if we do have to make some amendments.

I know that the whole idea of lowering the blood alcohol content in some areas from .08 to .05 has been promoted very strongly by Mothers Against Drunk Driving. It's another step on the way. Eventually, I expect we may see no alcohol at all being allowed in vehicles in North America or anywhere else as far as our blood alcohol content is concerned. More and more people are more responsible all the time. The vast majority of young people today, the kids who are 16, 17, 18 years old, know the laws and they simply do not drink and drive. The odd time something will happen and, unfortunately, you'll get an accident where driving under the influence is the charge that is laid, and that's very unfortunate.

In the end, we need to know that whatever we do in this Legislature does have an impact. I like the education component that a few people have mentioned. Just visiting that classroom this morning with Constable Gerry Dwyer and seeing these grade 6 kids absorb this—they were all given little graduation pins and booklets, etc—I think it's a step in the positive manner.

We also have a group in Orillia, out of the Orillia detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police, called the adult youth volunteer group. They're not like auxiliary officers, just ladies and gentlemen from the community who want to help out at the OPP detachment. I'm so pleased that they're around at a number of events, any of the festivals or community events involving young people, or the fall fairs, etc. They get out there and they

help the OPP provide information to the general public on all these types of things. Any information coming out of this legislation today would be seen at one of their booths. I think they may be the only adult youth volunteer group in Ontario at this time, but again, it's because of people like Gerry Dwyer and the support they got from the commissioner's office in the past and the local detachment and the mayor, etc, that it's been a big success.

I'm going to wind up here in a second. There are some amendments we'd like to see to this bill. I hope you will listen to them. It's one bill that we should get to committee fairly quickly, spend some time there and get it into law as quickly as possible.

I want to thank the minister for bringing it forward as well, and I want to again thank my colleague from Oak Ridges, the former Minister of Transportation, for his hard work in really drawing attention to this issue in this provincial Legislature. It's a job well done. I applaud the work Mr. Klees and the minister have both done to bring this to the attention of the public and look forward to other comments that we may hear in this House this afternoon as we further debate Bill 203 and make our roads and highways safer in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ferreira: I'm pleased to rise for a short response to the member's comments. I want to reiterate what he mentioned about his colleague from Oak Ridges. Mr. Klees has certainly been at the fore of putting forward legislation to deal with street racing, or extreme driving as some have called it. He recently made quite a good statement where he compared the additive nitrous oxide to turning a vehicle into essentially a rocket and the devastating effects that has had across our province—in fact, in the case of two of his constituents. I want to applaud him for that initiative.

The member also referenced the need for education initiatives in our schools with the young people. I mentioned earlier that I think we need to do more. I have been present at schools in my riding where they bring in the vehicles that have been destroyed as a result of drunk driving, as a result of street racing, and it really does make a powerful impact upon those young people. There are other programs. I'm sure we've all seen the videos that are put out by organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving. But still we see a preponderance of young people being involved in these horrific accidents. The member referenced the one in Ramara township, I believe it was, where four young men died as a result of that accident.

Clearly we're spreading the message, but it's not going far enough. I would like to see increased measures. I would like to see members on both sides perhaps discuss that issue, about how we can increase the level of awareness through education measures aimed at young people.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to rise today and follow the speaker from Simcoe North and the member from York South–Weston. I think this is one

of those issues that strikes people in their everyday lives on a regular basis, and while there may be some philosophical argument about all sorts of issues, one thing that people have in the forefront of their mind all the time is road safety. Whether you're a motorist or a pedestrian, a young person or an older person, safety on the roads in both the urban and rural areas of Ontario is something that people want to see treated seriously.

You see some of the carnage on the roads these days. If you've ever been at the scene of a fatal accident, there's a hush that goes over the accident scene that makes that highway and that whole area just seem different. It's a thing you'll never forget and something I hope none of us who haven't experienced it ever do experience.

This bill starts to treat drinking and driving in a much more serious way. It starts to treat street racing in a much more serious way.

I'd like to pay homage to the young people of the upcoming generation, because I think they get the drinking and driving message much more clearly than the older generation. I know that my children's friends, my son's friends are much more serious about drinking and driving than those in my generation were. They have a designated driver before the party starts. They know who's driving them home that night. They take those sorts of precautions. The people of my generation simply didn't do that. So for those who point to this as being an issue that is only for young people, I think they would find that the contrary is actually more accurate, that it's older and middle-aged people who are still having a problem with drinking and driving.

This bill, I think, will do a lot to make sure that our roads are much safer and safe from those who still continue to choose to drink and drive.

Mr. Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the speech from the member for Simcoe North on Bill 203, which is the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007. He commented on the DARE graduation he attended in his riding, the drug abuse resistance education training that is done by the OPP. I've had the opportunity on a couple of occasions to attend the ceremony in Parry Sound, at the Parry Sound High School. The last time I attended, Christine Dawson was the constable who was running the program and, based on what I saw, it was very successful. She had enthusiastic students learning about drugs and alcohol in our society.

This legislation is being supported by the official opposition. Society is changing. Twenty or 30 years ago, drinking and driving was something that was relatively commonplace, I would say, and now we're moving towards less and less tolerance, as we should be. We may very well be moving to the stage where there is zero tolerance.

This bill follows up on the private member's bill that was introduced a few years back by the member from Simcoe North, to do with driver interlock. It strengthens that part of the bill and follows up on the private

member's bill by Frank Klees, the member for Oak Ridges, to do with street racing, and it also strengthens some of the rules to do with drinking and driving.

We support this bill. I know Mr. Klees had some amendments to do with after-market parts for street racing that he'll want to put forward on this bill when it's in committee. We support the bill and look forward to it going to committee.

1630

Mr. Kormos: It is always a delight to listen to the member from Simcoe North. His commitment to safer communities and safer streets and roads is unquestionable.

I should tell folks that I'll be speaking to this bill later this afternoon. As a matter of fact, in a couple of minutes' time, the member for York South-Weston—you notice how I refer to Mr. Ferreira by his riding, in compliance with the standing orders—will be speaking to the bill.

Now, I do note that the member from Simcoe North reminds us of Commissioner Fantino's little Martha Stewart moment, when he decided to repaint all of Ontario's OPP cruisers—or maybe he was just channelling the Designer Guys; I really don't know. I hear the member say it's going to make our highways safer but, Lord thundering, my friend, how does painting police cruisers black and white instead of white and blue make our highways safer? For the life of me—at 500 bucks a pop, it seems to me that a few more cops on the road would make our highways safer. Is Fantino so caught up in this redecorating that he's going to install grey velour on the upholstery so that it doesn't clash? I would dearly love the member to explain his enthusiasm for newly repainted police cruisers.

Look, we're talking about the same commissioner who deep-sixed Sergeant Cam Woolley, the most recognizable single voice of the OPP here in Ontario, and one who attracted our attention immediately on radio broadcasts and whom I'm convinced by his very nature made our highways safer. Explain those, member from Simcoe North.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe North, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from York South-Weston, Oakville, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Niagara Centre for their comments.

I go back to the member from Niagara Centre. I have to tell you that as critic for community safety and correctional services, I try my best to work as closely as possible with all of the stakeholders. I work very closely with the Ontario Provincial Police Association. If I go down to Caledonia to visit some of the officers or if I'm just talking to officers like I was at a retirement this past weekend on Saturday night, I quite often ask them what their thoughts are on changes that have been made. I can tell you that very few of the police officers—it's partly to do with tradition, why they like the black-and-whites, because it was a symbol, going back many decades, but the feeling with police officers—and, I believe, with

Commissioner Fantino—is that they believe the vehicles are more easily identifiable on the roads. For that reason, I know a lot of the younger officers support it too. I don't think it's unanimous support; I'm not saying that for a second. But I felt that when we're talking about road safety, if the officers—

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: I want to sum this up. If there's a savings—

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes, it costs more money, maybe up to \$500 for a car, but the reality is, if it's more identifiable and there are more officers on the road—and I agree that there should be more officers—then it should make our roads safer. They can identify people who are being caught doing 200 clicks and being drunken drivers. That's what it's really all about. I support the black-and-whites and I support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ferreira: I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007. This is a worthy piece of legislation.

Mr. Kormos: Whoa, whoa—

Mr. Ferreira: I think the member from Niagara Centre needs to read the comments—

Mr. Kormos: We haven't finished the debate yet.

Mr. Ferreira: Well, let me go on for my 20 minutes before you jump in, all right? We have to whip the member from Niagara Centre into line. I look forward to speaking on it for the next 19 minutes or so.

There are some areas of concern that we believe need to be addressed, but this is a start. I hope we get through second reading and that we're able at the committee level to examine this bill and offer amendments that I think would make it even more worthy and begin to make a real impact on improving road safety across the province of Ontario.

I wanted to start by talking about some of those who have been most affected by what has happened on the streets and roads of Ontario, and they are the victims, the needless victims of the irresponsible actions of others. I ask members to recall a particular case in early December that shocked me. It was the case of Terri Callaway, who was a 37-year-old mother of four who lived in Richmond Hill. Ms. Callaway, as she did every night after tucking in her four kids, who are aged three to nine, went out for her jog. Just a couple of blocks from home, as she completed her evening jog, she was struck down by a drunk driver who took her life. The very sad case of Ms. Callaway I think illustrates why a bill of this nature is so important and why we must do all that we can to get drunk drivers, to get street racers, off of our streets.

There are other cases, and I want to reference a couple of those. I know that what happened in the case of Rob and Lisa Manchester, a couple from the riding of Oak Ridges, was certainly instrumental in the member for Oak Ridges coming forward with his private member's bill last year on street racing. Rob and Lisa Manchester were a couple living life to its fullest. They had been out

celebrating their 17th wedding anniversary back in May of last year. On their way home, they were killed instantly when their car was struck by one of two vehicles that were racing up Yonge Street. The young man in that case was a 19-year-old who was charged in the deaths of Rob and Lisa Manchester. It's important to remember them as we debate this legislation.

Then there was another shocking case: Tahir Khan. Mr. Khan was a Pakistani immigrant who had come to Canada to seek a better life for himself and his children and was working as a taxicab operator for Diamond Taxi. In January 2006, Mr. Khan was killed in a violent collision on Mount Pleasant here in the city of Toronto. Again, he was the victim of two young people, both 18, who had taken their souped-up luxury cars out for a drag race up Mount Pleasant. What was particularly sad about the case of Mr. Khan is that he was about to receive his Canadian citizenship and was then planning to bring over his wife and children, and he lost his life as a result of senseless actions and decisions by others. So let's remember Mr. Khan.

In an interjection to the member for Brampton Centre earlier, I raised another case. This one happened further back, in 1994. It was in the city of Brampton, where I grew up. A young mom who was about to have another child—she was an expectant mother—was killed on Ray Lawson Boulevard, again as a result of street racing by a couple of young men. There are examples of this throughout the province. Since 1999, when we talk about street racing, 38 Ontarians have lost their lives needlessly and as a result of the reckless actions of others.

1640

When we talk about drunk driving, the human toll is even higher. In 2004 alone—and I believe this figure has been quoted by other members, but I think it's worth repeating it to magnify the seriousness of this issue and the toll that it's taking in the streets of our communities—drinking and driving collisions across this province claimed 192 lives, and the toll continues to mount year after year after year.

In response to these and other incidents, members of this House have come forward with private members' legislation. In many ways, this particular piece of legislation, Bill 203, is an amalgam of some of those initiatives that have been brought forward by members such as the ones from Oak Ridges and Simcoe North, and I believe the member for Willowdale also put forward a private member's bill.

So we have a bill which, as I said earlier, I think all members of this House would agree is something we do need to bring forward and we do need to implement, but there are concerns. I want to read from a story that appeared in the Toronto Sun about 10 days back. It talks about the reaction to the legislation by the mother of someone who was killed by street racers. It reads as follows:

“The mother of a young man killed by a suspected street racer says new provincial anti-racing measures don't go far enough to prevent more tragedies.

“Adrienne Seggie, of Brantford, whose son Matthew Power, 21, was run over while crossing a Hamilton street last November, said measures in a road safety bill introduced by the Dalton McGuinty government yesterday are only a good beginning.

“Seggie said she believes the legislation was rushed in an election year to appeal to voters, and said the government should have taken the time to draft a more proactive bill.

“I don’t feel it’s enough because the police still have their hands tied,” she said.”

I would hope that it’s not a case of electioneering, because this is a very serious issue. I would hope that’s not the case. But let’s look at some of the concerns that seem to indicate that perhaps this bill has come forward in a hurried manner.

On the issue of suspensions for those who are driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, we see that the bill is proposing to increase the period of suspensions. For a first offence, the period of suspension under the bill will be three days; a second offence, seven days; a third offence, 30 days. I think that’s laudable, but here’s my big problem with it: There is, in effect, a statute of limitations on this in that previous suspensions won’t be considered if they occurred five or more years previously. So it allows these irresponsible, reckless human beings to perpetuate their behaviour. They essentially get a clean bill of health after five years. I think that’s a serious flaw with this legislation, and I hope we can work in an amendment once it goes to committee hearings after the passage of second reading.

Similarly, when it comes to street racing, again we have this statute of limitations. If a conviction occurs—the first conviction—the bill is calling for increases in the minimum fines, and it’s also calling for increases in licence suspensions. On a first conviction, not more than two years in length; on a subsequent conviction, not more than 10 years. But again, after 10 years, previous convictions for street racing get tossed out, so you have this possibility, this culture, that repeat offenders will have their offences taken away. Again, it perpetuates itself. When we look at that, both under the provisions on impaired driving and the provisions under street racing—that needs great study by members of this House in committee.

I want to also say that we’re leaving too much to regulation. When it comes to administrative fees for licence suspension, when it comes to exemptions from payment, when it comes to establishing conduct review programs, when it comes to establishing fees to conduct a review of the program, I don’t think that this bill in its present wording, in its present text, addresses—it leaves it up to regulation, and I don’t think that is meaningful enough.

In reference to the term “street racing,” I’m afraid what it does is glorify the activity. Let’s call it what it is: reckless driving. Those organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving have referred to it as extreme driving. That’s what this is. I don’t think we need references that glorify or romanticize extreme racing, reckless

behaviour, that has led to so much carnage on our streets. This has something that has been pointed out by both law enforcement officers and activists who are concerned about the impact of this piece of legislation.

A further comment about street racing—and I want to go back to the very worthwhile private member’s bill that was put forward by Mr. Klees, the member for Oak Ridges. I hope that his proposal is one that deserves great merit as we study this in committee. He’d like to have an outright ban on the nitrous oxide connections that turn these extreme racing vehicles into killing machines. His exact quote—which I think is a powerful one, and that I referenced earlier—is, “It takes an ordinary car and makes it into a rocket that kills.”

We’ve seen the examples of that. Mr. Klees’s proposed amendment is one that I would certainly encourage my colleagues on the NDP caucus to support, because it is well thought out, and he’s someone who has taken a great initiative on this issue.

I’m down to about five minutes left, and I want to go into the aspects that I mentioned in a couple of my shorter interjections, and that’s around education, and specifically the education of young people when it comes to the dangers that they put themselves into and also put innocent bystanders into when they decide to get into a vehicle while intoxicated or drunk or when they decide to use that vehicle for extreme racing.

The legislation in its present context talks about punitive measures. Certainly it’s worthwhile to make penalties and sanctions more difficult. But I believe there needs to be a component in this legislation that talks about education and raising awareness. Law enforcement has called for this.

1650

The Minister of Transportation, whose bill this is, mentioned in the press late last year that we would be seeing a comprehensive educational campaign brought forth, aimed not just at young people but all Ontarians. We haven’t that yet. It’s now about six months later. We’re seeing the legislation, and we’re glad the legislation is being brought forward for debate and for consideration, but we’d like to see that educational component come forward as well, part and parcel of this legislation. Organizations like MADD, the Ontario Safety League and, as I say, some of our most senior law enforcement officers across this province have said how important this is.

At the end of the day, I don’t know whether this legislation will actually see itself being passed through final reading in this House. As we all recognize, our time in this session may be limited. It would be unfortunate if this particular legislation doesn’t make it through till the end. I would urge my colleagues on the government side, as they make decisions on priorities over the coming weeks—perhaps a few weeks, perhaps more than a few—that this be one of the bills that is given legislative priority so that we can see it through and can enact these measures to prevent the recurrence of too much carnage that we’ve seen on the streets and roadways of Ontario,

and that the passage of this bill by this Parliament in fact be a tribute to all those who have lost their lives and also the families of those victims, who have seen their loved ones lose their lives as a result of such reckless decisions made by others.

I look forward to the comments of my fellow members in this House and I look forward to participating in the remainder of the debate this afternoon and perhaps in the future as this bill makes it through second reading, goes to committee and hopefully comes back to this House for passage in the not-too-distant future.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I do want to say to the member from York South–Weston that I applaud your urging that we give this speedy passage. This is important legislation; it is. I think you used the term “legacy legislation.” It does make a difference that will live long beyond our term and certainly this session.

When I think of legacy legislation, I think of things like the greenbelt. That’s going to be there for years and years, for generations and generations. That’s a legacy piece of legislation. The Ontario child benefit that we’re currently debating and looking at: another piece of legacy legislation. I’m really happy to support something where we will have left an important footprint here.

One component of this legislation I’m particularly happy about is the escalating sanctions for the repeat offenders who fall within that warning range. A police officer in my riding at a Mothers Against Drunk Driving red ribbon campaign launch talked to me about their frustrations. They know that there are certain drivers who are habitual offenders.

Young people have figured this out. My kids, all in their 20s, know that if they’re going out drinking, one person is going to be a designated driver. They’ve figured it out; it’s the older people who still have some work to do on this. This will give the police a tool to keep those habitual drunk drivers off the roads: three days’ suspension on the first offence, increasing to seven on the second with a mandatory remedial measures program, and 30 days for the third instance. This is good, progressive legislation.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Bill 203. I had spoken with prosecutors regarding this bill. One of the interesting points they brought forward, which I’m sure hasn’t been discussed, was, first of all, that it’s kind of giving an explanation of how the actual process works.

I very much appreciate the time that has been added, Clerk. That’s okay. We can go on for quite a while.

What takes place is that the technology in the industry is so well-defined that they actually have onboard computers whereby they are given directions from a central booking agency that says that you will enter on this onramp at such and such a time, this car will pull up beside you, you engage at this speed and at this bridge you begin the race. The race is over however much distance—it could be five kilometres away. Those indi-

viduals then tell you who the winner is when they see it. That’s the level of technology and advancement they’re talking about.

One of the areas that hasn’t been brought up that I think needs to be discussed—and I did say to this prosecutor that I would bring it up on his behalf—is that they need to look at the attendees. The reason that it’s doing so well is that people come to watch. If there is some way to capture those individuals who are watching and paying to watch that, it would reduce the likelihood of these sorts of actions taking place. They need some form of prosecution method so that they can come forward and prosecute all those attendees who are spurring them on, paying the bucks to come in and watch that sort of thing where it’s happening and getting inside the loop on all that information.

We’ve brought forward a couple of things that I certainly hope the government will address in their discussions on that: how to address the technology and how to look at that, when they’re racing up the 400-series highways, as expressed to me, with their onboard computers and they say, “Go,” and they’re going and that’s when it ends. They’re just winding through traffic and causing all kinds of problems. Certainly they know where the police are; they’re well organized enough to look at these things.

One of the other areas that hasn’t been mentioned would be the attendees who are spurring this on and making these sorts of things happen.

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about Bill 203.

Mr. Kormos: I’m going to be speaking to the bill in almost 40 minutes’ time. Let’s not get carried away here, please, for Pete’s sake. This bill does far less than the government would have us believe, and I say to you that it’s going to do precious little to end street racing in the province of Ontario. So I say, please, get a grip, folks. Legacy legislation? Far from it; not bloody likely.

This is more about spin and drama and flash and flair and appearing to respond to a very serious problem on our roadways that has taken far too many lives already. While symbolism in and of itself is fine, let’s not pretend that the bill is something that it isn’t. I’m going to have a chance to explain why I say that. As a matter of fact, there’s a consideration here that hasn’t been spoken about yet, and that is that this bill may well have the effect of reducing the consequences that convicted or potentially convicted street racers will have to face, and I’m going to speak to that in the 20 minutes that are going to be made available to me in 40 or 50 minutes’ time.

Regrettably—gosh, here we go—I may be squeezed out. Unless there is goodwill amongst members of the chamber here who shorten their time so that I can get my 20 minutes in, I’m going to find myself at 6 o’clock adjourned to yet another day. But that’s fine, because I’ll be back and I’ll tell you what it is that I want to talk about when it comes to this bill.

1700

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell):

Je dois dire que je suis pleinement d'accord avec ce projet de loi. La raison en est que l'on s'aperçoit que le projet de loi était déposé le 12 avril dernier, ce qui veut dire il y a 11 jours. Lorsque j'entends mes collègues de l'autre côté de la Chambre nous dire qu'on ne va pas assez loin avec le projet de loi—s'il y avait des amendements à porter, pourquoi n'avons-nous pas apporté les amendements avant aujourd'hui? Mais on aura certainement aussi la chance d'en apporter lorsque le comité permanent va se rencontrer pour discuter le projet de loi.

La partie qui m'intrigue le plus, qui me touche le plus, c'est l'article 172, qui « interdit les courses automobiles illégales. À l'heure actuelle, la peine imposée pour cette infraction est une amende d'au moins 200 \$ et d'au plus 1 000 \$. » J'ai vécu une expérience en 1997, je crois, lorsque mon neveu a été tué dans un accident où les autos couraient sur la rue principale dans la municipalité de Rockland.

Aujourd'hui, avec ce projet de loi, j'espère que nous allons pouvoir mettre en force, en place, des amendes qui vont vraiment arrêter cette course illégale qui se pratique toujours dans nos communautés. Lorsque je regarde aussi le programme de conduite avec facultés affaiblies, je regarde le programme d'examen de la conduite. Souvent les personnes sont portées à venir nous voir lorsqu'elles sont arrêtées pour conduite avec facultés affaiblies. Je dis toujours aux personnes : « Il n'y a aucune chance pour toi de gagner. C'était prouvé que tu étais pris en conduisant ton automobile avec des facultés affaiblies. »

J'espère que les trois partis vont appuyer ce projet de loi pour le bien de tous et chacun de cette belle province.

The Deputy Speaker: Member from York South–Weston, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ferreira: I want to thank the members for London North Centre, Oshawa, Niagara Centre et le membre de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for their comments. I want to especially thank the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for sharing with us the personal story about his family member who was himself a victim.

This piece of legislation deserves considerable debate and study and a very thorough committee process once it passes second reading in this House, which I think it will have no trouble doing. I hope that this is more than just electioneering as my esteemed colleague from Niagara Centre suggests. I hope to be here for his critique, which I know will be constructive, when he gets a chance to debate this bill, perhaps this afternoon, perhaps not.

Again I want to go back to two of the major concerns I have. One is regarding previous suspensions. I don't think any of the members touched upon this. Someone who is a habitual offender gets their record wiped clean. In the case of drunk driving, any suspensions that occurred more than five years previously will disappear from the record. I don't think this is a clause that we can allow to remain in this legislation because it promotes

continuance of this reckless and dangerous behaviour. And when it comes to extreme driving, reckless driving, previous convictions won't be considered if they occurred 10 or more years previously. These are two particular measures that deserve amendment, that must be changed for this legislation to have more teeth.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'm very pleased to speak in support of this bill, but I'll just pause for a second because my NDP colleague is moving away from this side of the House. He doesn't want to be seen on camera beside a Liberal who's supporting this bill. We'll give you a chance to return to the other side of the House.

On a serious note, this bill, if implemented and passed—and I'm glad to see that my friend across the way in the NDP caucus is confident that it's going to—is about saving lives. There are so many lives in Ontario that are needlessly lost because of driving offences and drinking and driving offences that we really have to do something about this.

My experience last year with my boating bill, which brought in car-driving licence suspensions for impaired boating operators, was another example of things that this government has done to eliminate this problem of impaired operators of vehicles. When I was working through that piece of legislation, what I came to realize after speaking with all the stakeholders was the importance, the high value, that a possessor of an Ontario driver's licence places on that licence.

There are people in Ontario who will drink some beer, drink some alcohol, get in a car and drive and not give it a thought except if they think there's a chance they're going to lose their Ontario car driver's licence. That is a huge motivating factor in people's lives, especially when you take a big jurisdiction like the GTA. People need their car to get from one end of the city to the other. They need their car to get to work. They often need their car as part of their employment. An Ontario driver's licence is an asset. If you have the driver's licence in your pocket, that is an asset that facilitates your life and often facilitates your employment.

What this bill does is, it threatens that person's asset. We say, "If you're going to race cars and if you're going to race cars negligently, if you're going to drink and drive a car, we're going to put that asset that we know you value under threat."

The other thing that people really value, and particularly—and I don't mean to pick on the youth, but with street racing, the fact of the matter is, it's largely younger drivers who are involved in that activity, and they've got a second asset: A young person who has his driver's licence—that's an asset—has his car. These street racing cars are typically souped-up, hopped-up cars. They've got a significant financial investment in the car. That's another asset that the person has. What this bill does is put those assets—the driver's licence and the car itself—under threat because, if you're stopped when driving and you've got alcohol on your breath, we increase the threat to that driver's licence. We say, "If

you've been stopped and you've got a reading of 0.05, you're going to lose your licence automatically for three days. If you're at the next step up, you're going to lose it for seven days. If you're at the next step up, you're going to lose it for 30 days." That's not even when you're blowing over; that's just when you're in the danger zone, between .05 and .08. So now there's the threat. The threat always was, "If you're over .08, you're going to lose that driver's licence"—what I call an asset. We've increased the risk to that asset. You're going to lose your licence for a period of time even if you're not impaired but you're close: You're somewhere between .05 and .08.

We've also, on the vehicle suspension provisions of the bill, really threatened that person's asset. We've threatened the car itself. And the bill says—if passed—that if you're caught street racing, you're going to get an immediate seven-day suspension of your driver's licence, you're going to get an immediate seven-day impoundment of the vehicle, and then various other penalties kick in from there.

So putting those assets of a driver—his or her licence, the actual ownership or possession of the car—under threat, in my view—and I don't mean to make a pun here—is a very sobering thought for that driver, for that possessor of the driver's licence.

1710

Similarly with the ignition interlock provisions: What the interlock provision says is that if you've lost your licence and you can't drive—a lot of those people are driving outside the system. They're driving notwithstanding the suspension, so it doesn't have any real bite for them. So there's a bit of an incentive here: "Look, we know you really want to drive. You're under suspension. The existing interlock provisions don't apply, but if you will voluntarily submit to the ignition interlock and put that in your car on a limited basis, you can get your driver's licence back." Again, we put value on that driver's licence. That driver's licence has been suspended and we've shown that person, "Here's a way to get that asset back, with some limitations. If you will submit to an ignition interlock system in your car, you can drive that car for certain limited purposes."

So this bill provides for threats to the driver's licence and threats to the possession of the vehicle. There's also the incentive, then, to provide a means, for a person who I suppose really needs their driver's licence but is under a long-term suspension, to bring themselves back into a way of operating a car legally if they'll undergo the voluntary ignition lock system.

This is a bill that has been crafted with some creativity. It addresses motives for why people might want to protect their driver's licence, might want to protect themselves from the threat of vehicle seizure, and provides an incentive, for people who want to drive, to reintegrate into a legal driving regime.

This is a piece of legislation that I urge my colleagues to support. I'm happy to see that the member from York South–Weston is obviously supporting the legislation. He

feels confident that it's going to pass, and I urge my colleagues to support it, as I will.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm pleased to add a few comments to those remarks made by the member from Willowdale with respect to Bill 203, which amends several acts, including the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, 2001, which is renamed, as part of this bill, the Civil Remedies Act.

I'd say that this is a bill which all parties in the Legislature should be supporting, and we certainly will, to deal with street racing, as well as to provide stiffer penalties for impaired driving. This bill, in large part, grew out of the private member's bill that was brought forward in June 2006 by my colleague the member from Oak Ridges, who was sufficiently concerned about this that he brought the private member's bill forward following the tragic deaths of Rob and Lisa Manchester.

We're pleased that the government is bringing forward Bill 203 and we look forward to working with them to get this bill passed as soon as possible. But again, this is a situation where we need to take the time to listen to the concerns that have been heard with respect to this legislation, to make sure that it does end needless deaths on our roadways, specifically some of the comments that my colleague the member from Oak Ridges has brought forward with respect to the nitrous oxide power-boosting systems that have been added to some of these street racing vehicles, that being part of, I guess, the thrill that's associated with street racing, and making sure that we don't have those systems to be equipped on vehicles that are going to be operating on our streets—of course, not interfering with recreational systems. But I think that's an important consideration that I would urge the government to take a look at in proposing amendments which we will be bringing forward in due course to make this bill as strong as it should be.

Mr. Kormos: I listened carefully to the comments of the member from Willowdale. He made it very clear that this government covets Ontario's assets. He couldn't have said it in a simpler, more straightforward way, so I suppose if Mr. Zimmer, the member from Willowdale, is telling anybody anything, it's to cover your assets and, at the very least, don't get caught drinking and driving; preferably, don't drink and drive. I'm going to have a chance to speak to the bill in a few minutes' time.

Let's understand that the bill is more than just about the amendments to section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act, the road-racing provisions. It's also about some significant amendments to the provisions that permit the seizure of goods obtained by the proceeds of crime. This is one of my concerns, that that's going to get short shrift in the process because of the focus on street racing. That's why New Democrats believe this bill should go to committee. We're eager to start in committee as soon as the bill receives second reading and to work very hard at the committee level.

I'm interested in hearing what folks have to say. I'm interested in what MADD—Mothers Against Drunk Driving—has to say when, on the one hand, government members support a Liberal backbencher's bill to put beer and wine in corner stores, making beer and wine available as easily and readily as a walk down the block, yet on the other hand the government says it wants to get tougher on drinking and driving, drunk driving, and the incredible dangers that poses. Well, I see one as a very significant contradiction of the other. Here we are, we've got Liberals who want to make liquor, booze, spirits more readily accessible, more easily accessible, more instantly accessible, accessible to people who've already probably been drinking, yet they say they're concerned about the safety on the highway. I'm not suggesting that there isn't a single member here who doesn't have a commitment to creating safer highways, but I'm saying there are some real contradictions within the Liberal caucus.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Obviously, both as an MPP and as Minister of Health Promotion with responsibility for injury prevention strategy for the government of Ontario, I'm very pleased to support this bill. I want to commend my colleague the Minister of Transportation for her quick response to a number of issues, and also the parliamentary assistant, Mr. McNeely, who's been very helpful on this file.

Let me just talk quickly about a couple of the aspects. I was out canvassing in my riding in Ottawa West—Nepean, on the Nepean side and on the Ottawa side, on the weekend—a beautiful weekend, people in a good mood, raking their lawns, talking about how the Senators are going to win the Stanley Cup. They also were very pleased with this particular piece of legislation that's been proposed, particularly when it comes to street racing.

We have some challenges in pockets and neighbourhoods of Ottawa where people are abusing the law. They're putting their lives and other people's lives at risk through street racing. The thing that I am very pleased with in this particular piece of legislation is that it allows police to take immediate action roadside, against street racers and stunt drivers, with an immediate seven-day vehicle impoundment and a seven-day licence suspension. What that does, obviously, is take that vehicle away from the individual so he or she can do no further harm to themselves or to the community.

Street racing is also annoying from a noise point of view. It's just this grinding sound that is keeping people up at night. It's disrespectful to the neighbourhood, the environment and the public safety of the people in the neighbourhood. So I know the people of Ottawa West—Nepean are very supportive of this, and I look forward to seeing this particular piece of legislation pass quickly with full opposition support.

I'm also pleased, as someone who was nearly killed about 20 years ago by a drunk driver, to see tougher sentences coming into effect and tougher provisions for those individuals who put the community's safety at risk

as a result of drinking and driving. It's not acceptable, and I look forward to quick passage.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark—Carleton): It is a bit ironic that the Minister of Health Promotion, before he became the Minister of Health Promotion, said in the Ottawa newspapers that he was in favour of selling beer and alcohol in corner stores. It was pointed out earlier in the responses that there is a dichotomy here, or an irony or a duplicity, with regard to their real concern about this particular issue.

I want to say that I'm very proud that when I was the Minister of Transportation I was able to bring on the bill with regard to ignition interlock for this province. I took the lead from my colleague Garfield Dunlop, the member for Simcoe North, who had brought forward a private member's bill. Our government took some of the initiatives by private members and brought them forward as government legislation. But I want to tell you, when I did that, I gave the member for Simcoe North all of the credit for bringing that initiative to the floor. I believe that there are several private members' initiatives in this bill, and I don't think that they have received due credit from the government with regard to their initiative and bringing them to the floor. I think that it would have been more appropriate had those pieces of legislation been stand-alone pieces of legislation so that those several members from the Legislature could point to them and say to their constituents, "I was here not only as an opposition member, but I was also here as a constructive member of the opposition as a backbench MPP."

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elliott: I'm pleased to be able to join the debate on Bill 203, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Zimmer would be the only one who could give the response, and he's not here.

Further debate? The member for Whitby—Ajax.

Mrs. Elliott: Let me say at the outset that we support Bill 203, subject to a few amendments that we're going to be proposing subject to hearing issues in committee and hearing from other people who have a stake in these matters. But as I mentioned briefly a few moments ago, it was our party that first brought this issue forward almost a year ago, on June 7, 2006, when my colleague the member for Oak Ridges brought forward the private member's bill known as the Street Racing Act, 2006, which contained a lot of the same provisions that are contained in Bill 203. In fact, the Premier congratulated the member for Oak Ridges when the announcement was made with respect to Bill 203 on April 12. He said, "I want to thank Frank, and I want to acknowledge the leadership role he has assumed. He has taken a keen and active interest in this, he has put forward some very positive proposals.... I want you to know, Frank, that you have had an influence for good on the policy that we are announcing today, and I thank you for that."

We do appreciate the Premier giving some credit where I believe credit was due, but I think that all members of this Legislature can certainly agree that something needs to be done to address especially the issues involved with street racing to prevent the needless deaths that happen every year as a result of it. According to government statistics, there have been some 35 deaths attributed to street racing since 1999, all of which have left behind many grieving friends and family members and, in the case of the tragic deaths of Rob and Lisa Manchester, have left behind an orphaned seven-year-old child.

We all understand the importance of dealing with these issues, and we all know that we need to work together to pass this legislation quickly but not in haste, of course. We need to have a full and complete consultation process with all of the stakeholders involved and all of the members of the public who want to make representations with respect to this bill, so that we have a well-thought-out, comprehensive consideration of the contents of Bill 203. I trust that the government will allow the sufficient time that will be needed for committee hearings and for debate on this whole process, because there are a number of important areas that are dealt with as part of this bill. It's really divided into several distinct areas, the first one of which deals with the issue of impaired driving. Of course, that has been dealt with numerous times over the past number of years, but Bill 203 certainly increases the suspension periods and conviction times for persons who are caught and convicted for impaired driving offences.

Section 48 currently provides for a 12-hour administrative driver's licence suspension for drivers whose blood alcohol concentration exceeds .05%. Bill 203 will increase the initial licence-period suspension to three days for a first suspension, seven days for a second suspension and 30 days for a subsequent suspension. This has been strongly supported by a number of groups. I imagine what we will be hearing in committee is the comments from a number of groups as to whether that is going to be a sufficient penalty.

The penalties will also be increased. The current penalty is a one-year driver's licence suspension for a first offence. Bill 203 will provide for a three-year suspension for a second offence and indefinitely for a subsequent offence. It's hard to believe that it should be even necessary to provide for subsequent offences with respect to impaired driving, but I guess there are some people who just don't get it, and they need to get that message, loud and clear.

With respect to street racing, there's a sharp increase in the rate of fines, suspensions and convictions. The fines are increased from the \$200 minimum and the \$1,000 maximum that currently exist to a \$2,000 minimum and a \$10,000 maximum. Similarly, the suspension is increased to a maximum of two years for a first offence and a maximum of 10 years for a subsequent offence. In addition, there will be a seven-day administrative driver's licence suspension and vehicle impoundment.

While it's important to stress that some feel it is important that these penalties be stiffened, there are also those who think these penalties do not go far enough. One of the previous members mentioned Mr. Coté, the Rockwood gentleman who lost his daughter and son-in-law in an alleged street racing incident last year. He commented, "But a seven-day licence suspension is like nothing at all. A year or something would be meaningful. I just think the tougher the deterrents, the better. It's senseless killing of innocent people, and of the people doing the street racing. Having those cars is their biggest thrill, and if it was taken away from them indefinitely that would be much more of a deterrent." So there are certainly those who feel that those penalties need to be increased even more for street racing.

Another concern that has been raised, in addition to whether the penalties are stiff enough, is the issue of whether there are the necessary teeth in this legislation with respect to the enforcement aspect of it. Benedikt Fischer, an associate professor at U of T's Centre of Criminology, has stated, "Laws on the books are one thing, but the question is, how will it be applied? Will the police go out and be able to effectively apply this, or will it be some paper tiger somewhere in a legal paragraph that will not be allowed to have any teeth? That is the question that needs to be answered." I know that's something that many groups will want to speak to, and I trust there will be sufficient time dedicated for them to voice those concerns.

Another concern that's been voiced by my colleague the member for Oak Ridges deals with the failure of the bill to prohibit the so-called after-market products, such as the nitrous oxide power boosters that can typically be found on street racing vehicles to increase acceleration and horsepower. I'm by no means an expert in these matters, but I'm told that this significantly adds to the power of the vehicle. It's found in many of these street-racing vehicles and adds to the so-called thrill of street racing, I guess, which the member for Oak Ridges strongly feels needs to be dealt with as part of this legislation, and to be taken away.

We would distinguish in this case between those vehicles that are operating on our streets as opposed to recreational vehicles. I understand that with respect to street vehicles it has been suggested that any ability to access these power boosters from either the driver or vehicle side of the car should be taken away so they cannot be used in street racing. This is a significant concern that has been spoken about, and I would urge the government members to take heed of that in the deliberations as we go forward.

The other section of the bill that has not been spoken about very much is under the newly named Civil Remedies Act, which puts more teeth into the street-racing solutions that have been proposed. The penalties under this act are such that it could be given by an order of a judge of the Superior Court of Justice to actually impound a vehicle that's been found to have been involved in street racing and allow for it to be forfeited.

Not only is it impounded; it's gone, and could be sold in order to put money into a special-purpose fund that would allow for anybody who's been the victim or has suffered any pecuniary or non-pecuniary losses as a result of street racing to access this fund. I'm not aware of the details of this fund as yet, but it certainly seems that the idea of having a judge able to allow for the forfeiture of a vehicle is one of the issues this act was meant to address in the first place. For unlawful activity, the "proceeds of crime," so to speak, to be forfeited to the crown and used for compensation for victims is certainly worthy. I would again urge all members to support that and flesh it out with a little bit more detail on exactly how that's meant to proceed.

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In conclusion, we support the aims of this bill. We certainly would urge the government members to listen to the concerns that are being expressed, both with respect to the stiffness of the penalties allowed and the teeth that really need to be put into the enforcement if this bill is to achieve the goals it's meant to achieve. Thank you very much for the opportunity to add my comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kormos: I listened carefully to the comments made by the member for Whitby–Ajax. The member for Whitby–Ajax, Mrs. Elliott, has made a mark on this Legislature since her election here as an articulate and effective member of the chamber and one who has a particular commitment to safer communities, including safer streets, roads and highways. It's a pleasure to hear her speak to this particular bit of legislation.

I'm going to have a chance in about eight, nine, 10 minutes' time to speak to the bill, unfortunately for only 20 minutes. I will be commenting about Bill 203 in the context, quite frankly, of the real world. My concern is that this bill is merely symbolic and that it will do far less than any of us hope, and far less than some of you believe, to reduce the actual phenomenon of street racing, whether it's organized or spontaneous, the two forms being prevalent here in Ontario.

As for the colour of flashing lights, I'm going to have some things to say about that too, because it's my view that Commissioner Julian "Martha Stewart" Fantino, in his redecorating orgy, repainting all these police cars—I'm concerned that he's going to again second-guess the black-and-white. They may not coordinate well with the blue-and-red lighting. Far be it from me to suggest that spending \$500 per OPP cruiser to repaint them is a gross waste of money when there's scarce money available for policing; but, hey, who am I?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I'd just like to address something the member from York South–Weston said earlier about previous records. Previous records are not being expunged; that's not what we're doing. I think he is misinterpreting the facts. We are proposing a five-year look back for drinking and driving and 10 years for street racing. If you committed drinking and driving in one range, when you were 20 years old, you would

receive a three-day suspension. Then, if you did it again over five years later, you would only get a three-day suspension again. It's not forgiveness; it's recognizing the fact that you're starting over with that same clear record after five years.

One of the things the early ignition interlock program will prevent is repeat drinking-and-driving incidents, because people have been driving cars without insurance, and people have been taking these privileges. They should not be driving, but they are driving. That's the case. So with the ignition interlock, we will have a situation where a person can get back his driving privileges, and when he gets them back, he has to undergo certain education and treatment for the condition that is causing the problem. That's so important, because that's the situation. We have a lot of people who are driving cars and are not insured, and they're continuing to drink. This should make that change very beneficial to safety on the roads. That's one of the things that was recognized, that we don't take enough care to educate and change people's ways. That's a big part of this bill.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have a few seconds here to comment on this. I want to thank the speaker before, from Ajax–Whitby, on her presentation. As Mr. Kormos said, she's very thorough when she does get up here to speak and explain things.

I understand that we may want to support this bill if there are some amendments. It's more of an urban problem, I think, than rural. Next, we won't be able to race with our tractors or something. They'll come up with something over there, some more debate on that. But as it's mainly an urban bill, I'm sure it will go out to committee, because we don't like rural and northern bills. We don't want to send them out to committee. They must stay here in Toronto, where no one will come down to speak against them. So I'm sure this one will get to go out somewhere and people will have their say.

There's nothing wrong with having safe streets. Everybody wants that. There's no doubt about that. But we have to be careful that we don't legislate everything into the ground. There are some things that do cause concern. If we get some amendments and things like that, we certainly will take a look at them in our caucus and we may be able to support the bill. I'm just concerned that every time this government comes up with another bill, we have more red tape, more laws, and I wonder where they're going to get the people to enforce all this. If we look at the Ministry of Natural Resources, we have hardly anybody left there to enforce anything anymore. That ministry is pretty well gutted, so they won't be able to help the OPP do this.

There are a lot of things that go along with this bill, and I'd be very surprised if the government across the way has even thought about that. They just love getting these bills in here and making themselves—they think—look wonderful to the world, with the nice titles they give to bills like this.

Mr. Ferreira: As always, I enjoyed listening to the member from Whitby–Ajax and her presentation on this

bill. I want to pick up very briefly on the comments made by her colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, specifically around the impact on law enforcement. The director of government relations and communications for the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police raised this very issue. His concern is the impact that legislation will bear on the resources of our already strained police officers. His point is a very good one. He wants to see that this government, at the same time that they're bringing forward this legislation, this initiative, also commit to providing law enforcement with all the tools, the mechanisms—perhaps extra officers on the streets and highways of the province—to be able to properly enforce it. So I want to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for raising that issue. I thought it was worthwhile to mention the concerns expressed by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

In my remaining time, I want to go back to the member for Whitby–Ajax and the education component. Last November, the Minister of Transportation stated that the government would be coming forward with some kind of education and awareness-building initiative around the issue of drinking and driving and extreme driving. We haven't seen that. I'd like to know why we haven't seen it. I think it should come as part of this legislation, certainly side by side, and I'd like the member from Whitby–Ajax to perhaps talk about the need for increased educational and awareness measures.

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The Deputy Speaker: Member for Whitby–Ajax, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Elliott: I would first of all like to state that I appreciate the very interesting comments with respect to Bill 203 by the members for Niagara Centre, Ottawa–Orléans, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and York South–Weston.

The concern was expressed by the member for Niagara Centre that the provisions in this bill were largely symbolic, and I certainly hope that's not the case, because I think we all realize that there are many families out there that have lost loved ones and that the public at large have a significant interest in making sure that the problems arising around impaired driving and street racing are going to be addressed.

The members for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and York South–Weston have also expressed some concern with respect to the enforcement provisions and whether there is going to be adequate law enforcement personnel and resources available in order to enforce the provisions of this legislation. Again, I certainly trust, if effort is going to be made to pass this legislation, that there are the teeth in the legislation and the enforcement abilities available around it.

Finally, with respect to the issue around education with respect to impaired driving and street racing, I think a lot certainly has been done in recent years with respect to educating youth about the dangers of impaired driving. I think we still need to do more, and we need to embark again on a campaign and a public safety and information

program with respect to the dangers of street racing, because I think there's still an allure to that which needs to be dispelled by giving our young people the facts about the dangers of street racing and the tragedy that it can cause for many people across our province.

I thank all members for their comments and, again, I would urge the government members to take these comments into consideration as we move forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: First, let's make it very clear that this does not create a new offence here in the province of Ontario. Section 172 of the Highway Traffic Act has been in existence for years and years and years. Again, the language used in this bill is very consistent with the language that historically was used in section 172.

I'm grateful, I should tell you, to Dominique Valiquet, who wrote the research paper for the Library of Parliament on Bill C-19, which is of course the federal amendments to the Criminal Code that beef up the federal provisions dealing with street racing. It's interesting because in that research paper it is noted that the problem of street racing is seen in rural areas, but it's more widespread in urban centres.

I don't want the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to think that—well, not this Parliament—Parliaments of days gone by have ignored rural Ontario. Indeed, if you take a look at section 173 of the Highway Traffic Act—section 172 makes it an offence to race a car on a highway—section 173 makes it an offence to race or drive furiously any horse or other animal on a highway. So you see, this type of outrageous behaviour is contemplated as occurring oh, so well in rural Ontario as much as on urban streets.

We're all increasingly familiar—there is a proliferation of street racing and, again, a huge increase in the deaths and the injuries, and there has been research done and reported. One of the other things that Valiquet in her research paper notes is that street racing also occurs in the middle of urban traffic. For any of you who, like me, drive up the QEW to get here to Toronto from, let's say, the Niagara region, it seems that just about when you hit Trafalgar Road you're joined, as you're Toronto-bound, with this very phenomenon: street racing occurring in the middle of urban traffic—a pair or a trio of smaller but very fast cars weaving in and out of traffic, initially scaring the daylight out of other drivers, but obviously creating huge hazards for themselves and for other people using the roadway. Once again—this is the point that I want to make—they're almost impossible to apprehend. Especially when it's taking place in thick, dense traffic—and there is the rare moment on the QEW, just like on the 401, north of Toronto, where it isn't thick, dense traffic—the police can't pursue people. The police can't pull people over. The enforcement of highway laws has become increasingly dangerous for police officers because of the mere fact of the danger inherent in going through that traffic themselves and signalling for somebody to pull over.

Here we've got Bill 203, the amendments to section 172. Let's focus on it for a minute. We've got this in the shadow of Bill C-19, which passed third reading on December 14 and received royal assent; it's the law now. So Bill C-19 in fact beefs up the Criminal Code provisions, which always were, quite frankly, far more appropriate: dangerous driving and criminal negligence in the operation of a motor vehicle. Quite frankly, if you want serious penalties to apply, I suggest you want prosecutions under the Criminal Code. This is the fear that I expressed to you earlier. All of our constituency offices have been subject to phone calls expressing concerns around plea bargaining in our stressed and overburdened courts. I want my friends over here to listen carefully. Almost inevitably—or perhaps not almost inevitably, but one would hope that a Criminal Code charge would be laid, when there's evidence, along with the Highway Traffic Act charge. Understand what's going to happen. In the course of plea bargaining, in an effort to reduce the load on the courts, in an effort to expedite matters through the court, defence counsel are going to be offering up the Highway Traffic Act racing charge, section 172, if the crown drops the Criminal Code charge of dangerous driving or criminal negligence, unless, of course, there's serious bodily harm or death, in which case it's the rare crown who would agree to that type of proposal unless the crown had serious problems in terms of prosecuting.

So understand what's happening here. You're opening the door with section 172 and its higher penalties to it being used as a fast and speedy alternative to a Criminal Code conviction. Because, quite frankly, the increased fines, in my view, do precious little. When it comes to criminal misbehaviour, almost inevitably it's not the severity of the penalty that's the deterrent; it's the likelihood of apprehension. Do you understand what I'm saying? People wouldn't commit murder if it was the severity of the penalty that was the deterrent. There's precious few people who commit murder who don't understand that it can have some serious consequences, like life imprisonment. But they don't intend to get caught.

In the case of organized street racing—and there's some interesting discussion of that Valiquet paper, because she explains, “While some street races occur spontaneously—in response to a challenge—between drivers who do not know each other, others are well organized and take place before hundreds of spectators. The event is announced, the length of the improvised track is defined, and sometimes streets are even blocked. Someone is in charge of giving the starting signal and timing the race, while lookouts keep an eye out for the police, using laptops, cell phones, portable transceivers and radar detectors.”

You see, they don't do this intending to get caught. It appears that street racers, and this level of organized street racing, is using some pretty sophisticated technology to avoid detection. The tragedy is that you only catch people and lay charges, not only after the event, but

after the event when somebody is injured. That's the tragedy. And if it's a minor injury, people are unlikely to report the event, but that means, even more seriously, it's when there's serious injury or death. Take a look at the illustrations we've had. Charges have been laid in the instances where there have been deadly consequences as a result of the street racing.

This, then, begs the question, why is the government not being very specific about incorporating the fuel systems provision in the Klees bill? One of the admirable elements of that bill is the provision that says—this is the private member's bill; Bill 122; this gives the cops half a chance at apprehending some of these people—“No person shall drive”—I'm condensing this—“a motor vehicle equipped with a nitrous oxide fuel system,” which I understand is the hopped-up fuel of choice to turn your machine into a road rocket, unless the container “is completely disconnected from the other parts of the system;

“(b) the disconnection can be observed by looking at the interior or exterior of the motor vehicle;

“(c) the disconnected parts cannot be reconnected from the driver or passenger seats.”

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What this does, in my view, and why I'm a fan of that provision of the Klees bill, is it gives police the opportunity, when they pull somebody over on the highway who may not be, *de facto*, racing at the time—but if they've got the nitrous oxide hooked up, it's a pretty reasonable inference to draw that they have just been, that they plan on it or that they're going to, and that person can then be charged.

Under the legislation as it's existed historically—I agree—and as it's proposed in Bill 203, it's highly unlikely, unless the police deploy a whole lot of police officers working under cover doing surveillance—that's what they'd have to do to infiltrate street racing operations, and that's horribly expensive. Look, cops are hard pressed to deliver core services in almost every municipality in the province of Ontario because of the funding restrictions they face. So we're hard pressed to call on them to conduct specialized investigations—very labour-intensive, that involve surveillance, possible use of under-cover police officers and then still risk the possibility of not getting a charge laid, or at least not getting a conviction. So the likelihood of arresting and charging people in these organized street races is very, very low unless and until there's an injury, because then the police are drawn into it because somebody's injured or killed and they're taken to hospital and the process goes from there.

The spontaneous racing, the kind that most of us are familiar with—I've never been to an organized street race. I've never been to one, never witnessed one. But I have no reason whatsoever to doubt that they take place. The evidence is clear in terms of the consequences that are well publicized. But there isn't a single one of us who hasn't witnessed the spontaneous racing—look, I give credit to the authors, the drafters of the bill; legislative counsel gets kudos from me for including language like

“stunt,” “performing a stunt,” because I suspect that’s designed to accommodate, if you will, the single car that’s not in a race with other cars on the QEW but the guy or gal who’s zipping back and forth, in and out of traffic and squeezing between rows of traffic. We’ve all witnessed them, small displacement engines just revving away, and the car’s going to beat the band with, sadly, usually younger drivers. I say “sadly” because these are the least experienced drivers. All of us reflect back when we were young drivers: We of course thought we were good drivers, but oftentimes we learned the hard way, hopefully in most cases not tragically, that there was still a lot left to learn. That’s one of the sad things, that it’s mostly younger drivers who engage in this type of activity.

The other spontaneous racing—I was at a committee hearing where I heard a narration about a Mercedes-Benz, one of the hyper-high-priced ones that are customized by Mercedes-Benz, meeting a Porsche at a stoplight. This, of course, doesn’t tend to be young drivers. This is your basic Yorkville crowd, the boulevardiers. Every time I see one of those \$160,000 Porsches or Mercedes-Benzes on the highway, I say to myself, “Some people still aren’t paying enough income tax.” Look, the GST on one of those vehicles buys most people’s cars, so these are people—they’re the stop sign, they’re the testosterone, the bravado. They tend not to be young people. They tend to be middle-aged males with gold chains and coiffures that are designed to impress much younger women whom they have no business trying to impress.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: You know exactly what I’m talking about, Ms. Bountrogianni. I’m not telling stories out of school here. That’s an entirely different issue.

The other issue, then, is policing; just plain, old-fashioned policing. I say to the minister across here: She travels that route. She comes from Hamilton along the QEW; I start down in Welland. How many times have you seen driving conduct that made you wish there was at least one OPP cruiser on the highway, where you could at least honk as you’re going past and point to the car that just sped past you in the right-hand lane? We don’t have sufficient numbers of police patrolling our highways. It’s a simple, plain fact. That’s aside from the inherent dangers in pulling people over on the very, very intensely trafficked parts of the 401—impossible to pull somebody over. Similarly, on the QEW: impossible to pull somebody over, never mind to pursue anybody; the police officer is going to put himself and a whole lot of other people at risk.

Which then takes me to the incredible, as I say, Julian “Martha Stewart” Fantino obsession with spending \$500 per police car on new paint jobs for cars that have perfectly good paint jobs. For the life of me, I don’t get it. I get the additional lights, the blue lights to make those police officers safer when they pull their car over. The member for Brant—that’s Mr. Levac—remembers well, and I joined him in the effort to amplify the types of

lighting that are available to police cruisers and other emergency vehicles in the interest of safety. So I have no qualms about that whatsoever.

I haven’t asked—I’ve got to find out. Somebody’s going to tell me how many OPP cruisers there are in the province of Ontario, and we’ll do a multiplication of that times \$500 and find out exactly how many thousands, tens of thousands—why, was it hundreds of thousands of dollars? As I said earlier, is Commissioner Fantino channelling the Designer Guys? Is he similarly going to want to reupholster the seats with grey velour so that they match the black-and-white paint jobs? Is this some sort of obsession, some side of Julian Fantino that’s crying to be released, to be freed, to come to the fore? Perhaps we could have him come into the Legislature. Maybe he’d like to do something with the curtains or the carpeting. Maybe we have some colour conflicts in here that he wants to address.

I repeat: It is nuts that we’re repainting police cruisers. I appreciate that the member for Simcoe North—that was Mr. Dunlop, talking earlier—was defending the paint jobs, saying that they made the highways safer. I don’t know; I think he was reaching a little far on that one. I think he was grasping at straws. In his zeal to show himself friendly and supportive of Commissioner Fantino, I think he was pushing it beyond any reasonable limit.

Let’s also talk about this whole business about licence suspension. Understand that the—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: I’m sorry? Repeat that.

Mr. Ferreira: It’s 1,200 patrol cars.

Mr. Kormos: It’s 1,200 cruisers times \$500. Get the BlackBerry out. Put it in calculator mode and figure that one out.

Mr. Ferreira: It’s 600K.

Mr. Kormos: Six hundred thousand dollars to repaint police cruisers that have perfectly good paint jobs? That’s the sort of stuff that drives taxpayers crazy, that has them banging their heads, saying, “What kind of Alice in Wonderland world is this?” It’s not nuts; it’s stupid.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Calm down.

Mr. Kormos: Ms. Bountrogianni, you’re a fan of blowing 600 Gs? I know I’m not to refer to the member by name, but I couldn’t remember the riding. The minister.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Speaker, we’re in a dilemma, aren’t we? No, we’re okay? We’re okay? I’ve got but a minute and 55 seconds left, but the Speaker’s—

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Folks, please accommodate me, because we’re talking about \$600,000 that Commissioner Fantino is spending, repainting police cruisers that have perfectly good paint jobs.

If, when he orders new cruisers as you replace them—the Crown Vics—if you want to order them in black and

white, if they come in black and white—but you know what? I bet you the public has to bear the cost of painting them anyway. I bet you that the plant down in St. Thomas doesn't deliver black-and-white Crown Vics; I bet you dollars to doughnuts. This is going to cost the people of Ontario.

What's the obsession with black and white, anyway? Is there any arguable reason, other than to confuse the public, because quite frankly, unless you're the member from Lanark–Carleton or, oh, I don't know, the minister of fitness, you don't remember black-and-white cruisers; you don't identify with them. The only time you saw black-and-white cruisers was on American sitcoms—Car 54, Where Are You?

The problem is that most Ontarians identify a police cruiser by the presence that we understand: the white cruiser. Besides, let's not kid ourselves. It's not that cruiser that's going to catch us speeding; it's the unmarked cruiser; it's the dark blue one with the tinted windows that's going to get you, where you've realized, "My God, I saw you. I passed you. I should have known who you were."

I'll be back next time we call the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: It being slightly past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned, and will return at 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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