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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 24 April 2007

Mardi 24 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 avril 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NIAGARA WEEK

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): Mr. Speaker, as you and members of the assembly well know, this is the third annual Niagara Week at Queen's Park. I want to welcome Chair Partington, the regional chair of Niagara, various mayors and regional councillors and business leaders from Niagara, and I want to congratulate Patrick Gedge, the CEO of the Niagara Economic Development Corp., and his team for organizing the meetings and events here today. It has been used very successfully by Niagara business and municipal leaders to win such progress as widening the 406, an extension on the lease of Casino Niagara and funding for the Vineland Research Station, which happens to be in my riding.

We hope to see—

Applause.

Mr. Hudak:—there we go, good projects.

We hope to see increased progress on a number of the issues they are pursuing today, including further expansion of Highway 46 to the south. I certainly hope as well that we'll see some movement, finally, on the mid-peninsula corridor, which, sadly, the McGuinty government has thrown into reverse.

An important issue as well is that this is really the first test of the greenbelt legislation. Anyone can draw a line on the map, but very few have the leadership to make investments to ensure it's a success.

We have now, with the closure of the Cadbury Schweppes plant, a crisis in our grape juice industry, where contracts run out at the end of the year, which will result in, effectively, agricultural brownfields in the greenbelt. If the Premier is committed to the greenbelt legislation, I suggest that he immediately invest in the grape replant program to help out these growers.

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): Last week, the McGuinty government released the names of 15 outstanding

teachers from across Ontario who will receive the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

The students attending Westview Centennial Secondary School in my riding of York West are incredibly fortunate to study with a teacher who sits on that very accomplished list of educators. Mr. Amare Demesie will be receiving the award for his role in science, math and physics at a special event on May 2, 2007. Mr. Demesie arrived in Canada in 1983 from Ethiopia as a refugee and studied physics and astronomy at York University. He has now become an accomplished physicist with a deep passion for teaching. He prefers to educate and inspire the youth of our great community rather than move on to more prestigious university posts.

He is a role model for students and teachers alike. Mr. Demesie is a strict teacher, challenging and engaging his students, and a man who believes that failure is not an option. Since Mr. Demesie arrived at Westview Centennial, 13 of his students have reached the top 10% in all of the country. His students are from the riding of York West and many of them are from immigrant families.

Today, I would like to congratulate Mr. Demesie and all the many educators across the province who make such a difference every day in the lives of our youth.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): Almost as quickly as the money he shovelled out the door and into the hands of his Liberal friends, so went the integrity of yet another McGuinty minister. Yesterday in this House, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration pleaded guilty to blindly awarding hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants to organizations tied to prominent Liberals without so much as a paper trail, in the hopes that his announcement of a new application process would mitigate the serious damage already done by his actions. Once again, we see a government that acts only after it has been caught.

This latest revelation only adds to the already well-established trend of a total lack of ministerial accountability by members of this government, the most recent example of which was of course the apparent cover-up with respect to the lottery scandal. Ontarians have to be asking themselves, exactly how much mismanagement will Premier McGuinty really tolerate on behalf of his government? The fact that his ministers continue to hold the belief that they should be accountable to an entirely new set of standards than those who came before them is

really quite astounding, but I suppose at this point not altogether surprising.

In the Ombudsman's recent indictment of the OLG, he cited chief among his concerns the "culture that places profits before responsibility" at the lottery corporation. But I would suggest this characterization could be applied to Premier McGuinty's own cabinet table.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Today, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner took the Premier to task for failing working families who care about protecting the environment and sustaining our natural resources. The Minister of the Environment, who usually takes every opportunity to comment on anything environmental, seems not to be taking advantage of this opportunity today—no surprise, I guess.

In a special report, Gord Miller issued a stinging rebuke to the McGuinty Liberals. He found that the Liberals are shortchanging the environment and resource-based communities by failing to provide the environment and natural resources ministries with adequate funding and support. We can sum it up in this: big words, small action. That's Dalton McGuinty's record on the environment. What working families want is bold action to fight climate change and pollution, but Ontarians can't make it happen if the people are not assigned to the job and the financial support is not there to get the job done.

Remember, this isn't the first time the McGuinty government has had to face the facts. Last year, the Environmental Commissioner raised the matter in his 2006 annual report, titled *Neglecting Our Obligations*. We've raised this matter repeatedly and on each occasion when we've raised it, the McGuinty government has acknowledged the need to do more and then has done nothing. The McGuinty government needs to stop dithering, delaying and denying; it's time to provide these key ministries with the resources they need to protect our environment and sustain our natural resources.

UNITED WAY OF PEEL REGION

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I stand here today to speak about an organization that set a lofty goal and achieved it. The mission of this organization is to improve our most vulnerable citizens' lives and build communities by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action. Last year, the United Way of Peel Region set a fundraising goal of \$13 million. Their campaign lasted a mere three months, from September 1 to December 1, and at the end of this time period, the United Way of Peel Region found itself meeting its goal and surpassing it. The final total was \$13,355,000.

These funds will impact all Peel communities by continuing to mobilize collective action to create measurable and ever-lasting change and improving the lives of the people who need its assistance. In addition, these funds will allow the United Way to continue to improve social

conditions in Peel. Behind reaching this great accomplishment was Shelley White, the executive director, and 2006 campaign cabinet chair Carl Oxholm. Carl is a partner in the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. There were 92 new leadership donors who gave a minimum of \$1,000 to raise a total of \$105,000. As well, 31 local businesses participated for the first time, resulting in a more than \$300,000 boost to the campaign.

With the combination of the will and the collective at the United Way of Peel Region, the people of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon are better served. Congratulations to the United Way.

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MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): It's said that membership in the Ontario Liberal Party has its privileges, and, much like a credit card company, the Liberals have established their own rewards program.

If you're the common-law partner of a Liberal MPP, then you are pre-approved for a grant of \$25,000. If your group's board of directors includes a Liberal riding president, then you are pre-approved for a grant of \$100,000. And if your group's board of directors includes a future Liberal candidate, then, by golly, you are pre-approved for a grant of \$200,000. If all seven of your group's board of directors—seven out of seven—are Liberal donors, then what do you know? You qualify for a \$200,000 grant.

And don't worry about provincial deficits. The finance minister says that \$200,000 is a pittance. With the red slush card, you just can't lose. The red slush card lets you jump ahead of the unwashed masses, the folks who work hard, pay their taxes, line up for health care and expect their government to act responsibly with their tax dollars.

It's clear the McGuinty Liberals have stolen the front-of-the-line program from American Express, and it's been open season for Liberal supporters to access millions of Ontario taxpayer dollars. No application process, no approval process, just your little red slush fund card and, voila, you're at the front of the line.

ENERGY FORUM

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): I rise in the House today to speak about the energy forum that I attended on Saturday afternoon at White Oaks Mall in London alongside Minister Bentley. The energy forum was a wonderful opportunity for residents of London to receive information about how they can become more energy efficient in their day-to-day lives.

Participants of the energy forum set up booths with information as to how residents can conserve energy. Many businesses were represented, such as Union Gas, London Hydro and the Mercedes Smart Car, and all provided wonderful alternatives for the public to be energy efficient and more environmentally friendly. Union Gas,

for example, handed out water-saving shower heads, London Hydro handed out energy-saving light bulbs, and Minister Bentley and I handed out seedling trees.

This was a wonderful event, and the response from the people of London was enthusiastic and encouraging. I would like to thank all of the wonderful businesses that came to the forum. This event would not have been as successful without the generosity and time of those people who participated in this event. I would also like to thank Minister Bentley and his office for all the organizing they did in order to make this event possible.

It is important for all of us to do our part to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to be more environmentally friendly. I believe that by holding events such as the energy forum and getting the message out about alternative uses of energy, we are taking the right steps forward to becoming more efficient in our lives.

NIAGARA WEEK

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise in the House today to recognize what has become an excellent tradition at Queen's Park, which is, for the third year in a row, Niagara Week. I'd like to welcome many members from the Niagara region who are here—politicians, private and public sector alike—to join us for Niagara Week.

They will be holding a reception later this afternoon, so I invite all of you who are in the Legislature to come and bring your staff. It's considered one of the best receptions held at Queen's Park every year. Be there or be square. That's the bottom line.

It has been absolutely a pleasure, a privilege and an honour to represent a part of this province that is dynamic and beautiful and exciting. While everybody knows that tourism and wine are synonymous with the Niagara region, manufacturing, public service, health care, education and agriculture are also major sectors that are big and growing, and that we as a government have been supporting in many ways.

I've enjoyed working in partnership, as my colleagues Kim Craiton and Jim Bradley have, to make sure that our government has come to the table with two new hospitals, not just one but two—two new hospices in St. Catharines and Grimsby. I think the member opposite is vaguely familiar with Grimsby. We are also very proud to have brought infrastructure like highways, and educational institutions are growing with us as well.

So I just want to encourage everybody to celebrate what's good in Niagara, and make sure you're there this afternoon.

ANNIVERSARY OF ISRAEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On behalf of Premier McGuinty and my colleagues, I rise for the purpose of recognizing an historic event that took place 59 years ago, the establishment of the state of Israel. It is

the fulfillment of prophecies, prayers and dreams. On this festive occasion, may all of us join in the hopes and prayers of Jewish people here and in Israel that the day may not be far off when the people of Israel and the nations of the world lay down their arms, turn their swords into ploughshares and realize the beautiful word of peace, "shalom."

The people of Israel wish simply to structure their own future and determine their own destiny. They want to ensure that the torch of freedom and democracy is passed on to generation and generation, and even to the children's children.

I wish to recognize the presence of the diplomatic corps of the state of Israel, including Consul General Brosh and members of the Canadian Jewish religious, cultural and fraternal associations: Mr. Ted Sokolsky, president of the United Jewish Appeal; Mr. Moshe Ronen, vice-president of the World Jewish Congress; Dr. Frank Dimant, executive vice-president of B'nai Brith Canada; Mr. Ed Morgan, president of the Canadian Jewish Congress; and finally, Dr. Charles McVety, president of Canada Christian College.

Congratulations and shalom.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario concerning the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg the indulgence of the House to allow the pages to assemble for introduction.

Safa Abdel Rahman from Don Valley East; Mirabai Alexander from Thunder Bay–Superior North; Midila Anton from York South–Weston; Rachel Baker from Windsor West; Salena Barry from Parkdale–High Park; Omar Chahbar from London North Centre; Lauren Davidson from Whitby–Ajax; Caitlyn Emptage from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; Tom Fischer from Huron–Bruce; Marissa Hendriks from Durham; Zachary Hervieux-Moore from Timiskaming–Cochrane; Matei Leshchyshe from Etobicoke Centre; Brendon Osmann-Deyman from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; Rhiannon Parry from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford; Julie Ramkumar from Timmins–James Bay; Dillon Sambasivam from Don Valley West; Zane Schwartz from Beaches–East York; Doug Spencer, Stoney Creek; Sridaya Srivatsan, Mississauga East; Ali Sunderji, Vaughan–King–Aurora; Christian Webster, Willowdale; and Kenny White-Brown, Lanark–Carleton.

Help me welcome the pages.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to welcome to the Legislature today students from Alexander Mackenzie High School in Richmond Hill, along with their grade 10 civics class teacher, Steven Harper. Please welcome them.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like the opportunity to introduce some folks from my riding: Valerie and Ian and Steve and Brittney Darling. They are here visiting. Valerie Darling is also a past president of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Quinte West. Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BATTERY DEPOSIT
AND RETURN ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007

SUR LA CONSIGNATION DES PILES

Mr. Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 217, An Act to establish a deposit and return system for batteries / Projet de loi 217, Loi établissant un régime de consignation pour les piles.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): Millions of batteries are ending up in our landfills each year and the number of consumer batteries discarded is increasing dramatically, releasing a growing amount of dangerous substances into our land and water. This bill enacts a new act that prohibits persons from selling a battery unless it meets the standards prescribed by the regulations made under the act for being capable of being recycled. The seller charges a deposit to the purchaser as part of the sale price and the battery indicates that the deposit is refundable.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding any other 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 Tuesday, April 24, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion 327. 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 1354 to 1359.

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

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Craitor, Kim	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.

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

Nays

Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Ferreira, Paul	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): The McGuinty government remains committed to replacing coal-fired generation with cleaner power to improve the health of our citizens and contribute to the sustainability of our environment. We stand as the only jurisdiction in the world committed to phasing out coal. We remain steadfast in this and are determined we will not be distracted by half-measures, however well intentioned they might seem.

Some time ago, we asked the Ontario Power Authority to conduct a review of the impacts of emissions-control technology alternatives on air emissions associated with the operation of coal-fired generation in Ontario. We have considered that review, which is being released today.

The OPA found that none of the alternatives that are commercially available will reduce greenhouse gases, the primary contributor to global warming. Investing \$1.6 billion to install in plants technology that the OPA tells us will run only for a very brief period of time and does nothing to reduce greenhouse gases, does not make any sense.

We have come a very long way in the last four years, and we are committed to going further. Today, after four years of hard work, greenhouse gas emissions from Ontario coal stations are now below 1990 levels. We are in compliance with Kyoto.

Between 2003 and 2006, generation from coal plants has been cut by 32%. Over the same period, emissions from the plants also decreased. CO₂ emissions were reduced by 29%. SO₂ emissions reduced by 44% and NO_x emissions reduced by 46%. This is in stark contrast to the Tory record. Under the Tory government, Ontario's emissions from coal plants skyrocketed, with greenhouse gas emissions rising by 124%. Emissions reduction since 2003 has been made possible by this government's closure of Lakeview, by operational improvements in our coal plants and by reducing our reliance on coal as new base-load capacity comes online.

In just three years, we have set the wheels in motion to bring online just under 10,000 megawatts of cleaner, diversified generation—more than any other jurisdiction in North America. I am confident we will continue to see improvements and without the distraction of expensive refits of plants Ontario seeks to replace at the earliest possible time. Quite simply, there is no technology for so-called clean coal. I'm sure that members opposite will remind me that there's technology for cleaner coal. This is the equivalent of putting a filter on a cigarette. It just doesn't work. The emissions control technologies that exist today do nothing, absolutely nothing, to reduce greenhouse gases. I think any party that suggests we invest hundreds of millions of dollars in technology that does not do anything to reduce greenhouse gases has no interest in closing coal plants or in fighting climate change.

The power authority has suggested a course that would substantially reduce our use of coal by the end of 2011. The OPA suggests that some coal stations be maintained beyond 2011 to provide additional insurance for system capacity risk, but further suggests that coal plants can be gradually replaced with cleaner generation between 2011 and 2014. On that basis, we have determined that it makes better sense to replace coal as quickly as we can and not be sidetracked by the scrubber sideshow.

Indeed, emissions control equipment is already installed in Ontario's coal plants, notably Nanticoke, where all eight units use low-NO_x burners, two of which are equipped to reduce NO_x even further. At Lambton, two units out of four are equipped with scrubbers to reduce SO₂ and NO_x.

Overall emissions are also controlled to an important extent by improving operating efficiencies and using low-sulphur coal. With the exception of two units at

Lambton that have scrubbers and burn high-sulphur coal, all other Ontario plants burn low-sulphur coal.

Consider the efforts already taken to ensure our plants operate as cleanly as possible. Consider the record under this government of substantially reducing the operation of the plants in recent years. And remember our commitment to running these plants less in the future and ultimately replacing them as soon as possible with cleaner, greener forms of generation.

It would simply not be in the interests of Ontario ratepayers to sink amounts ranging from \$600 million to \$1.6 billion into these plants. As suggested in the OPA's review, the capital expenditure becomes even less effective the less the plants are run and the sooner they are replaced. That is certainly not our intent. Instead, our government will continue to focus on ensuring that Ontario is replacing coal-fired generation with cleaner power. This is the best course for the health of our citizens, the best course for Ontario ratepayers, and the best course for the sustainability of our environment.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to talk about the McGuinty government's commitment to help protect vulnerable workers in this province. We've moved forward by pledging an additional \$3.6 million annually to improve delivery and shorten the time it takes for employment standards claims. Enforcing fair and equitable employment standards is a key to a prosperous Ontario. As well, we're increasing our efforts to raise awareness and provide more accessibility to information. This \$3.6 million in additional funding will allow us to deal with higher numbers.

To increase awareness of employment standards rights and responsibilities, we've been conducting outreach and awareness efforts aimed at diverse communities. We've partnered with various community organizations, including the Centre for Information and Community Services of Ontario in Scarborough and the Settlement and Integration Services Organization in Hamilton. These organizations play an extremely important role in helping vulnerable newcomers, and we're reaching out to them. Right now, we have information in 23 different languages to make sure people understand their rights in Ontario.

As well, we're making it easier for people to file their claims. In 2006, the Ministry of Labour introduced Internet filing of claims and partnered with Service Ontario to provide and accept claims through our Service Ontario centres. By partnering with Service Ontario, we've increased the number of locations through which clients can access employment standards claim forms from 21 to 63 locations. We have a 24/7 online filing system, and that too has helped increase accessibility through Service Ontario centres.

Our government is putting an emphasis on proactive inspections in targeted sectors such as employment agencies where vulnerable workers are at greater risk of exploitation.

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We're preventing employment standards problems before they occur. In 2005, we established a dedicated employment standards team to conduct proactive inspections. The team beat its targets in the last two fiscal years and has recovered over \$4.1 million in wages and other monies owing to vulnerable workers.

We've done more to enforce the law in this province in our first term than was done in the two previous governments. This is mind-boggling. Between 1989 and 2003, there were 97 ESA prosecutions in the province—97 in 14 years. Since 2004, there have been more than 1,000 prosecutions completed. We're serious about protecting vulnerable workers, because this funding is going to help us better protect the workers of Ontario.

The two main priorities that we've moved forward on are province-wide resources to improve our capability on the investigation of claims and doing those proactive inspections, and as well, I'm pleased that my colleague David Oraziotti, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, was able to announce our support for a provincial claims centre in Sault Ste. Marie, to expedite the resolution process and shorten the time it takes to process claims. One million dollars of that new funding will result in the hiring of 15 new staff in Sault Ste. Marie. Those 15 in Sault Ste. Marie will help us serve the citizens of Ontario.

As well, the new funding will allow us to continue our targeted proactive inspection activities, because we want to make sure that employment standards contraventions are nipped in the bud. We want to deal with them before they happen. The added resources will also be complemented by our new province-wide computer system that will automate and standardize claims.

But that's not all we're doing for vulnerable workers. We've made a commitment, for after nine years of no increase in minimum wages, we're moving forward. We've seen four increases in four years, and we'll see additional increases moving from \$8 to \$10.25.

We're committed to improving the quality of life in Ontario. By investing in a system that will provide improved support and assistance to an even greater number of workers, including some of our most vulnerable, we are proving we are a compassionate government that cares about Ontario workers. We're committed to protecting employment rights in this province. We're getting results. This \$3.6 million in additional funding is going to help us do exactly that.

GROWTH PLANNING

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Here, at the beginning of Earth Week, I rise with tremendous pride to share with my colleagues in this House—indeed with all Ontarians—the latest significant steps that our government is taking to protect the province's valuable green space for Ontario's families.

Our government has long been committed to curbing the urban sprawl that is choking our communities and strengthening the environment that is so utterly important to the quality of life that we all enjoy today and that our children will enjoy tomorrow. So we're donating more than 200 acres of natural heritage lands to communities and organizations right across Ontario. I'm talking about a transfer of 10 significant green spaces—some big and some small—that stretch from Pickering to Hamilton and even south down to Essex county.

These properties contain a range of significant natural characteristics, such as wetlands, hardwood forests, environmentally sensitive areas, as well as unique waterfalls and trail systems. All of these properties are excellent examples of the types of outdoor spaces all Ontarians can enjoy, now and into the future. They are precisely the kinds of lands we have sworn to protect, and by transferring them to communities and organizations that share that very same commitment, we are doing exactly that.

We have to walk a very fine line as a government committed to rebuilding public infrastructure that has been sorely neglected for far too long while managing growth in one of North America's fastest-growing regions here in the greater Golden Horseshoe, and also protecting and increasing parkland and natural areas that have been unprotected and eroded for far too long. I am proud to say that we walk the walk and talk the talk with great success.

Our award-winning growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe will ensure that our infrastructure and growth needs will be met for a quarter century as almost four million new residents make this area their home, and they will be met strategically and with an eye on our natural environment.

That greenbelt that now stretches across southern Ontario will protect 1.8 million acres for our children, our grandchildren and future generations. We've protected 5,500 acres of ecologically sensitive land in Rouge Park and the new Bob Hunter Memorial Park, 650 acres of land in Oakville and 180 acres of natural heritage lands to create Hamilton's newest conservation area, Eramosa Park.

This government has already taken action by introducing tough new laws. But you know, it's not enough just to talk a good game on protecting the environment. You actually have to deliver, and Premier McGuinty and this government have done exactly that.

The expansion of our green spaces that I'm proud to be sharing with this House here today is another example of the McGuinty government's delivering on its commitment to the environment and delivering on its commitment to preserving green spaces that help make life in Ontario unique and wonderful.

Right across this province we are proving that sustainable development can be more than a buzzword or a concept or a dream; it can be and it will be a reality. We're proving that you can strengthen the vital infrastructure of our province, its hospitals and schools, its roads and bridges, while still contributing to cleaner air

and safer water and an environment of which we can all be proud.

As we celebrate Earth Week, let us remember that we are making decisions today that affect future generations. By protecting green spaces today, we are ensuring that they will be able to enjoy the outdoors as we all did when we grew up.

The McGuinty government has proven that with the right plan and with the right commitment we can create a cleaner, greener Ontario. We are proving it again today with the donation of these 10 parcels of land so that we can indeed ensure there will be ample, beautiful, vibrant green spaces for Ontario families to enjoy for generations to come.

CANCER PREVENTION PRÉVENTION DU CANCER

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): The week of April 23 marks the second annual Cancer Prevention Week. This year, the Canadian Cancer Society is focusing on the dangerous effects of ultraviolet radiation associated with unprotected sun exposure and the use of artificial tanning equipment. These risk factors are associated with skin cancer, a highly preventable disease.

Le cancer de la peau est la forme la plus courante de cancer au Canada. Il représente un tiers de tous les nouveaux diagnostics de cancer.

Deserving recognition today in the House are some of the Canadian Cancer Society staff that we partner with. I'd like to point out Rowena Pinto, Sarah Smith and Irene Gallagher from the Canadian Cancer Society and thank them very much for being here. They and tens of thousands of volunteers and staff are committed to the prevention of cancer and support for those currently living with this terrible disease.

The McGuinty government works with a wide range of partners, including the CCS, to help reduce Ontarians' risk of certain types of cancer by encouraging people to be smoke-free, to be active and to make healthy food choices on a daily basis.

Santé Canada estime que les coûts indirects associés au cancer dans la province avoisinent les 5 \$ milliards.

The Ministry of Health Promotion has a number of initiatives focused on addressing risk factors for the prevention of cancer. They include the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the smoke-free Ontario strategy. As you may know, the single largest cause of preventable deaths and cancer in Ontario is from smoking. Sixteen thousand people will die prematurely this year as a result of smoking. That's 44 people each and every day. Smoking is not only a contributing factor to lung cancer but also to pancreas, stomach, bladder, kidney, cervix and oesophagus cancers. That's why our government created the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, North America's most comprehensive tobacco control strategy.

Our healthy eating and active living strategy and Active 2010 sports and physical activity strategy includes programs and initiatives that support healthy eating and active living.

The ministry leads the Ontario heart health program, which has broadened its mandate to include other chronic diseases with the same modifiable risk factors. My ministry also supports the Eat Smart program, which is the initiative implemented at the local level with public health units, restaurant owners, workplace and school cafeteria suppliers to provide healthy food choices.

As Minister of Health Promotion, my mandate is to educate Ontarians at all ages and stages of life and to encourage making healthy choices to reduce the risk of certain types of cancer. These choices include increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables; being active every day; limiting amounts of alcohol; practising good sun safety; and being smoke-free.

1420

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague the Minister of Health, the staff in his ministry, and all the health care officials across Ontario for their work in the fight against cancer. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has reduced wait times for cancer-related surgeries by 16%. I'm delighted as an Ottawa-area member to see a doubling of the Ottawa Regional Cancer Centre and particularly as the MPP for Ottawa West-Nepean to see the Queensway Carleton Hospital have a cancer satellite operation. Regrettably, the Tory members on the other side of the House voted against the budget that included this very important initiative.

Last week, I had the honour of attending a special event in Ottawa at the Nepean Sportsplex to acknowledge the Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for—

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The minister keeps injecting additional material which was not provided to the opposition in the statement. He's required by the rules to provide us with a copy of the statement that he is to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The minister needs to provide the opposition members with the statement he is going to read. I will tell you, however, that the Speaker has no knowledge of what is in those particular remarks.

With that, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I know the member from Lanark-Carleton is embarrassed by that vote, and I can see why he raised that on a point of order.

This annual event, the Relay for Life, has grown into one of the most significant and poignant events. Last year, 358 communities raised \$38.2 million, an astounding accomplishment.

While it's important to recognize the memories of family members and friends who have lost their brave battle against cancer, we have to be equally passionate about those who are winning the fight today and for those who will challenge this disease tomorrow.

I end this statement by officially recognizing the Canadian Cancer Society staff and volunteers who gener-

ously give their valuable time, energy and passion towards fundraising efforts for cancer research, education, and awareness programs for cancer prevention.

Ensemble, nous pouvons faire toute la différence en édifiant une province plus saine. Together, we are making a difference to build a healthier Ontario. Together, let's make cancer history.

The Speaker: Statements by the ministry? Responses?

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In that we had four ministers speaking today in ministers' statements and they took 20 minutes, I would ask for unanimous consent that each opposition party be given half that time, 10 minutes, to respond instead of the five—

The Speaker: Thank you. Mr. Sterling has asked for unanimous consent for each opposition party to have 10 minutes to respond. Agreed? I heard a no.

Responses?

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's amazing how times change. In his ministerial statement today, there was not a single word about premature deaths or health care costs. Their argument for closing coal plants in 2002-03 was never about greenhouse gases; it was about health care costs and premature deaths.

I'm going to read you a couple of quotes—a couple from Dalton McGuinty and a couple from Dwight Duncan. Here are a couple from Dalton McGuinty: "It is estimated that in Ontario health care ... costs of smog are \$10.8 billion annually"; "Air pollution kills 1,900 of us every year"; "Taxpayers are spending over \$1 billion annually on health care costs..." From Dwight Duncan: "I urge that people understand the true cost associated with coal-powered generation: more than \$4.4 billion to our health care system..." and "Emissions [cause] up to 668 premature deaths" per year. There's no argument about these.

It's a fact that they should have continued the program that the previous government embarked on years ago. In fact, the Environmental Commissioner has said that pollution abatement equipment should be installed on our coal-fired plants.

If we take the numbers and attach them to the Liberal inaction in the last four years, that's 2,800 premature deaths in this province since you came into power and \$4 billion in health care costs, if we're using the low numbers, since the McGuinty government was elected.

This coal abatement equipment would cost between \$0.5 billion and \$1.5 billion. That is a small amount of money compared to \$4 billion in health care costs and 2,800 deaths, and that's in the last four years. How many more before those coal plants are actually shut down?

They talk about emission numbers in 2006. Well, the summer was very good to them in 2006. As the president

of OPG said at the hearings, not a single thing this government has done led to lower emissions in 2006 on the part of the coal-fired plants. It was our government that ordered the closure of Lakeview; they only shut the door.

This government continues to be willing to play politics and gamble with the lives of Ontarians. It is my bet that they're not going to gamble on you again.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and his announcement today: I remember a very similar announcement during the Burlington by-election about giving some land to Burlington to try to buy votes, and a great concern that that land was contaminated. So I certainly hope that the 200 acres the minister announces today do not have similar problems. I don't want to look a gift horse in the mouth, but you've got to be careful of Dalton McGuinty bearing gifts when it's election time.

Two hundred acres? With all due respect, I'm proud to be part of a party that brought forward investment in the Bruce Trail, that brought forward the Niagara Escarpment plan, that brought forward the Oak Ridges moraine legislation, and that brought forward, in Lands for Life/Living Legacy, the single-largest expansion of parks and protected areas in the history of Ontario. Two hundred acres? It was 9.5 million hectares under the PC government.

My last comment for the minister: With all due respect, I hope he'll address the issue of the agricultural brownfield developing in Niagara with the loss of the contract for grape juices in the province. We'd like to see some infrastructure investments there to support the replant program brought forward.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): The Minister of Labour comes up today and says, "We're going to be pledging \$3.6 million in improving service delivery." I received a letter from him today saying that they're closing the Ministry of Labour office in the city of Barrie effective May 7. How is that going to improve one of the fastest-growing communities in this province? Minister Caplan was up there espousing the greatness of the city of Barrie today, and they're closing down the Ministry of Labour office on May 7, transferring the staff down to Newmarket or Toronto. You're taking jobs out of the city of Barrie and you're decreasing service quality by your actions, not only for the city of Barrie but for all of Simcoe county and Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Minister, we know where you're getting the additional \$3.6 million in funding: You're getting it out of closing this particular office and other offices throughout the province. The critic for the Ministry of Labour will be checking to see what other offices you're closing across this province—so-called improved service delivery. It's a

disgrace that they're closing that office in the city of Barrie.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Energy, and I want to begin my response with a little history. If we go back to June 2001 and September 2002, someone named Dalton McGuinty said that coal-fired plants were all going to be closed by 2007. In fact, the speeches were probably some of the most holier-than-thou speeches that anyone in Ontario can ever remember. But then, on June 15, 2005, the McGuinty government suddenly says, "Oh, we're not going to close these coal-fired plants by 2007." It suddenly became 2009. And then, a year later, on June 9, 2006, what had started out as closure by 2007 and had become closure by 2009 suddenly became closure by 2014.

What we hear today is more statements from the McGuinty government about coal-fired generating stations and coal-fired plants, and the only question I think people across Ontario are asking is this: "Why should we believe anything they say? Why should we believe any date they give? Why should we believe any figures, any statistics that they recite, because everything they have promised on this issue for the last six years has turned out to be false?"

1430

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Well, it's Earth Week, and yesterday we had a non-statement by the Minister of the Environment on climate change; today, the opportunity for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to talk about what he calls "significant steps." At the very least, his speech writers have a sense of humour.

This is a government that's setting up for major water diversions from Georgian Bay basin to Lake Ontario, a government poised to ram a branch of the big pipe through Bob Hunter park, a government that inadequately funds environmental protection, so that today the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario talked about Ontario ecosystems being at risk of what he called "catastrophic events." That's the care that they take of the environment.

The Environmental Commissioner said this government is not ensuring that raw or untreated sewage doesn't pollute our water. That's what the Environmental Commissioner has to say about this government and its environmental record. It's a shameful record.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My response is to the Minister of Labour. According to the Workers' Action Centre, only 18 companies were prose-

cuted in 2006. Ninety-eight per cent of employers found in violation of employment standards, including those who owe back wages of over \$30 million, do not face any penalty or prosecution; 37% of wage earners are part time or contract and lack any protection; 20,000 employees complained last year about unpaid wages; and only 1% of workplaces are ever inspected.

Those at the Workers' Action Centre demand that employees in this province finally be protected. They state that employees need 10% of workplaces to be inspected; they need convictions to carry penalties; they need legislation with teeth to protect those in temp or contract situations; they need the \$30.5 million in lost wages to be collected, not just \$4.1 million; and they need a living wage of \$10 an hour indexed to inflation now, Minister.

I'm sorry, but a new computer system and 15 new workers are not going to effect any real change in the fact that this province has no real enforcement of employment standards at all. I would say that a law not enforced is not a law. Enforce employment standards now.

CANCER PREVENTION

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): We acknowledge the importance of this week as Cancer Prevention Week because we know that cancer and deaths from cancer remain a serious public health issue, and that by 2020, cancer cases will increase by two thirds.

I hope that this week we will focus on the prevention aspects. That's why I want to congratulate the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division, for being here, and also acknowledge the work of all other cancer agencies that work on prevention and supports.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday in the Legislature, in asking a question of the Minister of Citizenship and Culture, I referred to Atma Singh Gill as being a member of the board of directors of the International Seniors Club and also the president of the Liberal Party riding association in Mississauga–Brampton South. I have since learned that they are two different people by the same name. I want to apologize to the two individuals in question and to the House for that inadvertent error.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. It's time that we remember where we are. Oral questions.

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. It concerns the political slush fund. Let me reiterate the real issue here. Did you as minister, did the McGuinty government, exercise any duty of care at all in disbursing the taxpayers' money, as should be done with any group of all kinds when it involves any taxpayers' money at all?

The Shromani Sikh Sangat temple at 269 Pape Avenue in Toronto received \$100,000 from your slush fund. Will the minister please advise the House as to what sort of due diligence was performed, what sort of financial and other background information was required by you and by the government before it was granted \$100,000 of taxpayers' money in your year-end spending spree? Can you tell us what was required and what they submitted?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First of all, I would just hope that the Leader of the Opposition is clear about what he did yesterday. By his reckless accusations, he's ruined the reputation of two people, Mr. Atma Singh Gill and Mr. Atma Singh Gill, whom you claimed were basically Liberal insiders. You've also ruined the reputation of the seniors' club of Brampton because you didn't take the time to look at the fact that sometimes people have the same names. How can you stand in your place and accuse us of not doing our due diligence when you clearly did not do your due diligence by smearing two families and the seniors' club of Brampton?

Mr. Tory: I suppose the difference is that when I made a mistake, I got up in the House and apologized for it, which is more than you've done. You've taken, as part of this program, hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money and given it out to people without asking any questions and with no application forms. You picked these people personally. So at the end of the day, there is a difference. We're waiting for your apology to the taxpayers.

We know from the Premier's statement this past weekend that you didn't have a lot of time to make these decisions. The year-end March madness rush prevented you from exercising the care you should have exercised. We know from your own statements earlier this week that you didn't have time to put these grants out for any kind of proposal call, so there was no time to do a proper check. So I'll ask the minister if he's aware of the fact that in the 1990s, the federal government revoked the charitable status of this very same organization for failing to file tax returns. You would have found that out if you'd done any checking at all. Are you aware of the fact that they had their charitable status revoked and that you gave them all this money without—

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

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, we on this side of the House are proud of the fact that so many newcomers have come to this province, and they've come under great duress. So many of them are living below the poverty line—a 30% higher poverty rate amongst newcomers than there is in the general population. Many of these newcomers come from the South Asian community. I will tell the Leader of

the Opposition that I have never been so impressed by the volunteerism, the generosity, the love of Canada by these newcomers who are members of the Sikh temples. They are proud Canadians and they are so generous, yet they need a helping hand. That's what we've tried to do in each one of these cases. We've reached out to these newcomers who are having a great deal of difficulty reaching a level of income—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tory: The minister continues day after day to miss the point. We all share in the joy of these people who have come to Ontario and the contribution that they're making. What we're talking about here—

Interjections.

The Speaker: This could be a long afternoon. We need to allow members to place their question and we need to allow ministers to respond.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: What we're talking about here would apply whether we were talking about an environmental organization, an arts organization or a tenants' group. The bottom line is that when you have the responsibility of government, you have the responsibility—which I believe all members in the Legislature share, quite frankly—of properly safeguarding the taxpayers' money.

1440

I have an article from the Toronto Star from 2002. It says this very same organization was one of three in 2002 that was caught issuing improper tax receipts to its donors, eight years after having its charitable status revoked by the federal government.

Again, my question to you is very simple. You handed out a big quantity of taxpayers' money to this group. I don't know whether you have any understanding as to how this looks: that you didn't check, that there was no application, that there was no interview, that there was no selection committee. Did you do anything before you handed out the money to a group with this kind of history? Did you bother to check?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, we are looking, whether it's a Sikh temple or a mosque or a synagogue or a secular Red Cross food bank in a basement, to partner with them because they are involved in the same goals of inclusion, of helping newcomers.

In this case here, this was a registered charity, 2005. It was part of the same major gurdwara on Derry and Dixie—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Colle: —on Pape Avenue. So they are essentially the same kind of outreach function where they have soup kitchens and much volunteerism. Sometimes even political parties and big corporations have problems with their charitable status and getting their paperwork done with Revenue Canada. We can't condemn this volunteer organization. They are registered and are trying to do their best.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: This is again for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He continuously and deliberately

mistakes the fact that anybody is condemning these organizations. We're condemning your government for a complete, absolute failure to safeguard the taxpayers' money, to exercise even the most basic level of care.

Yesterday we asked about the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, which has been embroiled in a court case regarding disputes about their bookkeeping and their failure to keep proper financial and corporate records. They received \$250,000 from your slush fund. Five of the 10 board members, it appears, have connections to the Liberal Party.

The Premier says we should be cutting you some slack because you had to make some very difficult judgment calls. You must know how bad this looks, how any reasonable person would think the shortage of paperwork, i.e. no paperwork, and the surplus of Liberals make it look in terms of what happened with taxpayers' money.

My question is this: Will you agree to full co-operation with the Auditor General so we can come clean and get to the bottom of this? Will you agree?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, taxpayers' dollars have to be spent prudently. Taxpayers' dollars also have to be invested, and not just talked about, with our newcomers. For 20 years, we've had these incredible, generous, hard-working people coming to Ontario. They have been ignored. We believe as a government, whether it's the Khalsa Darbar on Derry and Dixie—as I said yesterday, I wish that every member in this House would come with me to Derry and Dixie Road and see the spirit of volunteerism, the spirit of charity. They may not look like people at the Albany Club, but they are great Canadians.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Northern Development. Minister of Energy. Member for Niagara Centre.

Interjections.

The Speaker: We'll wait.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: Nobody once yet, I don't think, in this entire discussion has called into question the generosity of spirit or anything else of these organizations. What we've—

Interjections.

The Speaker: When I sit down, it doesn't mean everybody can make as much noise as they consider possible. We're going to continue and we're all going to remain in here. We're going to do it in a way that respects the institution.

Mr. Tory: We just have to look at the record here. The Bengali group got the money after a meeting was arranged by the former Liberal cabinet minister Maria Minna. The Iranian-Canadian cultural centre, registered as an animal welfare group, got money after being a registered charity for only three weeks, and all seven of its board members are donors to the Liberal Party. We have the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, with half its board members with ties to the Liberal Party.

Those are judgment calls, as the Premier said, that you made. It reflects badly on you, it reflects badly on all of us, and, frankly, it reflects badly on these groups, which

might well have qualified if you'd bothered to have a proper process to safeguard the taxpayers' money and let them put their case forward.

If there's nothing to hide, then why don't you stand up here today and indicate you will fully co-operate with the public accounts committee and the Auditor General in getting all the facts on the table on these grants and getting to the bottom of this and clearing the air? Why don't you just stand up and say that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the point is that whether it's the Khalsa Darbar or the Afghan Women's Association, these are incredible, hard-working people. When I went to the Khalsa Darbar, I didn't go around asking the thousands of people, "Which party do you belong to?" I saw the volunteers cooking in the basement. I saw the volunteers handing out food. I saw them with their children. I also heard from them when they said, "We are reaching out beyond the temple. We want the rest of the GTA and Peel to come to the temple to learn more about what we are like and what our religion is like. Could you, as the government of Ontario, do anything to help us become more integrated with Peel, Mississauga, so that we can be fully participating Canadians?"

Mr. Tory: The minister continues to entirely miss the point, which is that there was no process by which you ever bothered to ask what they were going to do with this money. There was no process by which you checked on what they did with the money. There was no process by which you checked on the background of any of the people involved in any way, shape or form. You just sent the money out the door to people you picked based on—you didn't even tell anybody this money was available.

You want us to somehow believe that everything is okay because from now on there's going to be an application form. But the minister will still make the decisions. It won't be at arm's length. There will be no mechanism like the Trillium Foundation or like your own newcomer settlement program where people look at this stuff. For years this has been going on. What needs to happen is some real change. We need the Auditor General's and the public accounts committee's help to change the way we safeguard the taxpayers' interests.

All I'm asking you is, will you completely co-operate with the public accounts committee and the auditor to get to the bottom of this and make some changes so we can tell the taxpayers we're looking after their money properly? That's all.

Hon. Mr. Colle: It just strikes me as strange. I remember when that party there got \$3 billion for the 407 when it was valued at \$12 billion. Remember? There wasn't five minutes of scrutiny over that \$10-billion or \$12-billion giveaway. There was no examination; there was no discussion. Yet if the Korean women's association is to get \$50,000 to basically get a new kitchen table and fix their toilets, the opposition leader is here going through everything of this \$50,000. Where were they when they gave away the 407? No debate, no paper—they gave it away.

Interjections.

1450

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

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I will not warn the Minister of Economic Development and Trade again.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, community organizations receive government funding to help them provide important services to Ontarians. In order to receive government financial support, these organizations must complete detailed formal applications, they must detail how the funding will be used, and they have to adhere to rigorous deadlines. That is how accountability and transparency are ensured. Minister, why does your year-end slush fund money fail on each one of these measures of accountability and transparency, and how do you justify that?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I guess I'd like to ask the leader of the third party how he justifies slamming a newcomer settlement services organization yesterday, which his party did, that has been receiving funding from the NDP, the Tories and our government. In fact, the president of the Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services Association says:

"I correct Mr. Prue's suggestion. As a card-carrying member of the New Democratic Party"—and this is from Angela Connors, the president of this organization—"his assertion that there is a connection between our agency and the Ontario Liberal Party is offensive to us. We expect a full apology from the New Democratic Party."

Will you apologize?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, this is not about organizations; this is about your failure to provide a program which has the adequate accountability and transparency—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I will not warn the Minister of Natural Resources again.

Mr. Hampton: The reality is, for most federal and provincial programs, voluntary sector organizations have to provide extensive information about their governance structures and their financial status, and they have to show the capacity to actually deliver the services that they're being funded for. But, Minister, your year-end slush fund has none of these requirements tied to it.

Why have you cheated so many excellent, legitimate cultural organizations out of the chance to apply for this funding while some fly-by-night organizations with Liberal connections have gotten a cheque with no questions asked?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I can wait.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the leader of the third party doesn't have the guts to stand up and apologize for what he has done to a non-profit organization that has been there for over 25 years. It's also interesting that the leader of the third party calls the United Jewish Appeal a fly-by-

night organization. He calls AWIC Community and Social Services fly-by-night.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the minister. Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Colle: If I can continue with what he calls fly-by-night: CultureLink does incredible work in Parkdale. The Jamaican Canadian Association, which for years was starved of government money, he calls fly-by-night. He calls the Halton Multicultural Society fly-by-night. He calls Frontier College, which has been in existence—this is the best one of all. Frontier College has been in existence since 1898, doing incredible work in literacy in his own riding for decades. That's what he's trying to do, because he's picking and choosing and saying that these volunteer-based organizations are, to him and to the NDP, fly-by-night—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, a well-developed and rigorous evaluation and auditing process is key to transparency and accountability. Most voluntary sector organizations that receive government funding have to pass auditing and evaluation tests. They have to prove that the money they receive is used for what it was intended for.

Minister, why are there no auditing or evaluation processes for the organizations that received money out of your year-end slush fund? Can you provide people with a full accounting of how the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre used the quarter of a million dollars that you advanced to them at year-end?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, many of the organizations and institutions that received this investment—as I said, we, as a government, felt these investments were long overdue—have long-standing relationships with our government. In fact, the ones that I have just mentioned have been partners with us under our newcomer settlement program, and we keep on working—we've worked with them for over 20 years.

Now, there are sometimes new, emerging organizations that have been ignored and never listened to for years. They couldn't even get a phone call returned from the NDP. We have to understand, as I said at the beginning, that for too long many newcomer groups and emerging organizations have been totally ignored. They said, "When do we start getting help? We waited five years, 10 years, 15 years. When can we get partnership from government?" So some of the newer organizations we've also tried to help, along with, you know, Frontier College, United Jewish Appeal. We have helped the older ones plus some of the new ones.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: Speaker, since we're not getting any answers from the minister, we'll try the Premier. Premier, your minister has a problem, and the problem is this: He's responsible for a year-end slush fund that stinks to high heaven in terms of its transparency and its accountability. There are no formal application processes, no criteria, no accountability, no transparency. Hard-working cultural organizations have not been funded, while

organizations that were created three weeks before they got the cheque but are very Liberal-friendly got a quarter of a million dollars.

Premier, my question is this: Are these the standards that you set for your cabinet minister? Are these the standards of transparency and accountability that you set for your government?

1500

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): In an effort to smear us, there are some unfortunate casualties who are being caught in the crossfire. I want to bring to the attention of the leader of the NDP once again a press release that was just issued by the Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services—just issued. The headline reads, “NDP Challenge of Social Services Agency Integrity False.” It goes on to say, “The Ontario NDP has questioned the integrity of Peel’s largest social services provider, that serves 50,000 newcomer clients each year, says ICNSS president Angela Connors.” Those are the president’s words. She goes on to say, “Any allegation or suggestion that Mr. Delaney, in whose riding one of our locations is situated, was involved with this grant is completely false.”

Mr. Prue’s suggestion, “His assertion that there is a connection between our agency and the Ontario Liberal Party is offensive to us. We expect his full and public apology.”

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you may not like it, but this is about your government’s lack of standards, lack of transparency and lack of accountability.

I know organizations around this province that desperately need \$200,000, \$250,000 of funding so that they can carry on their very excellent community work. But they will also tell you that when they apply for funding, they have to go through a long, formal application process. They have to show evidence of good governance and financial status, they have to show that they actually have the capacity to deliver the service, and they have to show that their books have been audited and that they’ve passed other evaluations and tests.

The question is this, Premier: Why is your government, the McGuinty government, handing out cheques of \$200,000, \$250,000, to organizations that haven’t met any of these tests and appear to be very—

The Speaker: Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Once again, they’re right back at it. Notwithstanding the fact that an organization is beyond reproach, received 77% of its funding from the federal government, is over 21 years old and serves 50,000 immigrants in 35 different languages, the allegation was made in this House yesterday by one of their members that the only reason that organization got any money was because Bob Delaney’s partner is the executive director of that organization.

We hear today from the president of the same organization: “I correct Mr. Prue’s suggestion as a card-carrying member of the New Democratic Party,” said Ms. Connors.” She says, “His assertion that there is a con-

nection between our agency and the Ontario Liberal Party is offensive to us. We expect his full and public apology.” It’s one thing to stand in this House and deliberately try to defame one of our members, but there are innocent bystanders who are being hurt in the process, including this wonderful organization—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I won’t warn the Minister of Energy again. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: To you, Premier: When are you going to apologize for your government’s running a year-end slush fund?

A respected journalist came here from the Iranian-Canadian community yesterday. He warned the Minister of Finance that something doesn’t look good here. He warned your office. He warned the Minister of Citizenship. He said this person’s organization was only given charitable status three weeks before the grant, they have no connection to the Iranian-Canadian community, they refuse to answer questions from other activists in the Iranian-Canadian community, and yet they got a \$250,000 grant from the McGuinty government, no questions asked. Premier, when are you going to apologize to the people of Ontario for running a year-end slush fund that has no transparency, no accountability and seems only to have given money to a Liberal-friendly Liberal Party activist?

The Speaker: Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We obviously have a different perspective on these groups and the valuable work that they perform on behalf of, not just their own immediate community members, but indeed the good work that they do to enrich our province both economically and socially.

The leader of the NDP not only questions the funding that went to the ICNSS, the Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services group, which has been performing valuable work for 21 years in Peel, but he is also opposed to the money that we’ve sent to the Afghan Women’s Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization, to the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum, to the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, to the Filipino Centre, to the Flemingdon food bank, to the Korean Canadian Women’s Association—

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. Here’s what you said in response to the auditor’s report this past December: “Everybody should get a sense of responsibility, and understanding that, we have to be very careful when it comes to how we deal with taxpayers’ money.”

Premier, I’m the MPP for Richmond Hill. I was never contacted by the minister to advise me that the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre was applying for funds. I was never contacted by anyone in the ministry to ask my opinion as to whether or not it would be appropriate. And I was—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): They’re shouting down legitimate questions. That’s the strategy, shout it down—

The Speaker: Member for Leeds–Grenville. I won't warn the member for Leeds–Grenville again.

Mr. Klees: Premier, as the member for Oak Ridges, representing Richmond Hill, I was never contacted by anyone to get my opinion as the member as to the appropriateness, and I was never advised that the grant was issued. Do you not consider that it would be appropriate for the sitting member of the riding to be contacted and, at the very least, advised that the grant was in fact issued?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I will ask the members of the official opposition to take a look at the two gentlemen above me in the public gallery. There is Mr. Atma Singh Gill, who is on the federal Liberal riding executive, and there's a second Mr. Atma Singh Gill, who's on the board of directors for the seniors' centre, the International Seniors Club of Brampton.

Now, yesterday, the leader of the official opposition said that the only reason that this volunteer organization received money, the International Seniors Club of Brampton, was because one of the directors, Mr. Atma Singh Gill, a volunteer, was also on the board of the federal Liberal executive. You can see, Mr. Speaker, behind me, these are two separate gentlemen. In one fell swoop, the leader of the official opposition yesterday maligned the reputation of both these gentlemen, as well as their volunteer organization. I will now ask Mr. Klees, on behalf of his party, to apologize to these gentlemen and to that organization.

Mr. Klees: The leader of the official opposition has, in fact, already apologized. What the Premier has not done is responded to my very specific question as a member of this Legislature and as the member who represents Richmond Hill. Do you not believe that it would have been appropriate for the minister to contact the member to get the member's opinion—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Labour, I won't warn you again.

This is going to be a very long afternoon. I would ask members on all sides to realize where we are, who we represent and why we're here.

Member for Oak Ridges.

1510

Mr. Klees: As a member, I've been involved in helping people make application to the Trillium Foundation and many other government grants. There is a process; I have been involved. The Minister of Health Promotion has the good sense to advise me when he provides a foundational grant for the riding. Why is it that this minister ignores a sitting member, ignores the fact that the sitting member should have some respect in the matter and at least bring him into consideration? Premier, I ask you, is that not appropriate?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Is it any wonder that new Canadians are bypassing the Conservative Party and going directly to the Liberal Party when it comes to having their needs assessed and met?

I'll say again as well that yesterday, because of what the leader of the official opposition did, the media took him at his word, so that this organization, the International Seniors Club of Brampton, which has been maligned by the leader of the official opposition, appeared in print in Canada's largest daily. I would expect that the leader of the official opposition will make a formal apology that would appear in print in that same newspaper, that he would attend at the International Seniors Club of Brampton and apologize formally to the volunteers who devote themselves to the good works that they do there, and, finally, that Mr. Tory would also extend an official apology to the other Mr. Atma Singh Gill, who's a member of the federal Liberal executive.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Minister, Ontarians are absolutely concerned that your end-of-the-year slush funds were doled out in such a big hurry that you established no formal accountable application process. But what Ontarians want to know now is, what has happened to the money that you doled out?

Iranian community journalist Saeed Soltanpour came here yesterday to seek answers. He didn't get any. You refused to account for the \$200,000 you gave to the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre for the protection of animals. Can you tell this House what this Liberal-friendly group did with the money that you have now given them for 13 months?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, that member should stand up on his feet and have the backbone to say that he made a mistake yesterday, that the association in Peel that received that funding was one of dozens of NSP partners that have had a long track record of great work in newcomer communities. If he cannot stand up and apologize for putting a bad light on a member of this Legislature, at least have the fortitude to recognize the 25 years of good work that that organization has done in Peel.

Mr. Prue: Another complete non-answer from the minister.

Minister, we have established that the ICC is made up of you and your finance minister's friends and supporters. We have confirmed that this money was doled out to them. Ontarians want to know what was done with the year-end slush fund money you handed over to them. Will you tell us what they're going to do with the money, or do you have the intestinal fortitude to ask that it be given back to the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Taxpayers' dollars are very important and they have to be invested properly. What we are trying to do—and I hope the member opposite appreciates the fact that many of these organizations, for many, many years, have never had any support. We have now made sure that there is support for them. We are investing in their hard work. We are going to continue to do

that. Yes, the process has to be made better. We've now put up a direct application for capital funds so that there will be a more direct application process. That's going to be on the website Friday. That's why we're improving that, because the need is growing, and it has been unmet for dozens of years. We are trying to meet that need of inclusivity and diversity enhancement all across the province.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Energy. When we came to office, the energy sector was in a shambles. No new generation had come online, no new transmission was being built, and conservation wasn't in the previous Harris-Eves Tory government's vernacular. Thanks to the McGuinty government, we're moving forward to right their wrongs. Clean and renewable generation is coming online, transmission is being built and we're creating a culture of conservation.

I know that we're all too familiar with how the NDP makes things up when the facts don't suit their political needs, but this time I think they've gone far too far. Minister, I hear that the NDP are trying to make people believe that we have a plan to bring a transmission line through the heart of the city of Toronto, down Pape Avenue, as part of our plan to bring system stability. Minister, is that true, or are the NDP just making this up, as usual?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): The member is right: No government has done more on conservation, energy efficiency or energy renewables than the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government.

The member for Toronto-Danforth, along with the leader of the federal NDP and a city councillor, put out a flyer that they're circulating, saying that a \$600-million high-voltage transmission line is proposed down Pape Avenue into the port lands. That's completely false. It's inaccurate, false; it has never appeared in any formal or informal government document. I want to be parliamentary: It is devoid of fact; it is devoid of integrity; it is devoid of any sound policy planning involvement. It is, to put it mildly, fear-mongering. It's a crock.

I say to the member opposite: We have to work to ensure the reliability of power to Toronto. This kind of fact-devoid fear-mongering is false. This is not going to happen, and you should apologize to your constituents for—

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

Mr. Duguid: I have the same notice here, and it's very clear. It says, "A \$600-million high-voltage transmission line is being proposed down Pape Avenue into the port lands. What will the impacts be on our community and families?" It's very clear what they're trying to do here, and I've seen this before when I was at the old city of Toronto as a city councillor. I've seen this tactic: When you can't dispute something that the government is doing, you make something up, you rile up your com-

munity and then you pretend that you're going to go to bat for them and fix the problem.

It would appear that the NDP has nothing to offer in terms of ideas and energy except a desire to play politics with it. Minister, while the NDP play politics, can you outline how the McGuinty government is making progress on the energy file?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The NDP government cancelled all conservation programs in Ontario. That party has put out a piece—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I need to be able to hear the minister.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: It is a brochure that's devoid of truth, devoid of fact, devoid of any background.

The other interesting thing: They attribute the fact that the Markham 24-kilometre high-voltage transmission line didn't proceed. They're right; we cancelled it. It wasn't the right solution. It was the right solution for Markham not to do it.

1520

I would urge the member opposite—and I certainly hope you're not using members' budgets to do this—at the very least not to put out false information to your constituents while you're trying to—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would urge that information that's devoid of fact not be put out under your letterhead, sir, because it's false. You shouldn't have done it.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration with respect to his political slush fund: There is no application process. There was no rating whatsoever of projects. There was absolutely no public knowledge that your slush fund existed. You are running a political slush fund that would make Chuck Guité blush. Minister, I'll ask you one thing: Why don't you do the right thing? Why don't you come clean, call in the public auditor and let him look at these projects, because otherwise—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We can wait.

Member for Erie-Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Minister, why don't you do the right thing? You don't want to be the next Gagliano of the Liberal Party in the province of Ontario. You don't want to show up with the next Guité within your ministry staff. Minister, why don't you do the right thing? Call in the auditor, let him have a look at the reports and get to the bottom of what you did with hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Education will come to order. Minister.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Again, that member there sat in a cabinet that gave Paul Rhodes one million dollars in contract to OPG, Hydro One. Tom Long was paid I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of dollars by Hydro One. They, again, gave away a \$12-billion public asset, the 407, without any scrutiny or any paper. This is the government that basically wouldn't let the Auditor General look at Hydro One, OPG, and this is the government that orchestrated the Magna budget. That's what he was part of.

Mr. Hudak: Absolutely unbelievable, that kind of a garbage answer. Taxpayers were—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I need to be able to hear questions put and responses given.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Again, I would remind members where we are and why we're here. I need your co-operation.

Member for Erie-Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: The minister knows that the list of these projects, the connections to the Liberal Party—it's not what you do; it's whom you knew in the Ontario Liberal Party. I know this minister doesn't want to be known as the son of Guité, as a second coming of Chuck Guité here to the Ontario Legislature.

Minister, when you see the connections to Liberal candidates, to Liberal Party presidents, you know that taxpayers across this province are damned mad about your use of their taxpayer dollars for political purposes. Why don't you clear the air, get out of the gutter, answer my question and tell us when you're going to call in the Auditor General to get to the bottom of your political slush fund?

Hon. Mr. Colle: This is a party that never questioned the expenditure of billions of dollars—in the last month of the campaign, billions were going out the door, yet they never even mentioned the word “immigration” in this House in eight years. There was only one time they ever referred to immigration in this House, yet when we invest in newcomers, when we invest in volunteers who were ignored by that government for nine years, they now question those investments. That's the double standard that you have to answer to.

The last thing I'll say is that I think you should respond to Mr. Gill, who said, “It is my hope that I will visit this Legislature. Yesterday's proceedings in the Legislature made me reconsider whether I committed a crime by becoming an active member in the political system in this province after being a proud citizen in this great country for 15 years.” Your leader accused that volunteer organization of being connected—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding of Parkdale-High Park is the most ethnically diverse of any riding in Ontario, and yet it continues to be overlooked and underfunded by your government. I

have met with countless new immigrant community groups that desperately require funding. They're all doing excellent work to help new immigrants settle in Ontario. When I spoke to them, they did not know of any application funds, and none of them received a quarter of a million dollars of last-minute largesse. I'm speaking about the Vietnamese Women's Association, the Parkdale Intercultural Association, the Canadian Tibetan Association—I could go on; there's about 12 of them. Minister, if you can't stand up for all new Canadians instead of just Liberal supporters, why won't you resign?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We're the government that ensured that all newcomer organizations across the province would share in \$920 million from the federal government. Maybe the member opposite should talk to CultureLink in her riding, which has now received a 30% to 50% increase in funding for those programs because of our hard work that flows directly into community organizations right across the province. There are many organizations across this province that were underfunded. Now we have dramatic increases in funding for all of them.

We are also trying to meet the new capital capacity which has been ignored for 30 years. We're proud to invest in the growing capital capacity, and that's why we've now added another dimension to investment on the capital side with a direct application online.

Ms. DiNovo: I spoke to CultureLink last night. They were unaware that there was \$20 million available to them. They were unaware that there were application forms for such a process.

As the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, you're responsible for supporting all vulnerable new Canadians. However, the evidence clearly shows that you only give last-minute largesse to groups that are supportive of the Liberal government, even if they're not known in their communities. Minister, if you can't support all new immigrants equally, why don't you resign?

Hon. Mr. Colle: For the first time in 15 years, all of the newcomer settlement partners received money so they can upgrade their facilities. That hasn't been done in 15 years. They're all eligible and they got this upgrading money. Many of these organizations now have increased operating capital, which they never had before, because we stood up for them to get the federal money they were owed. We have never seen this much investment in immigrant aid services in this province in 20 years. We're proud to make those investments and we're proud to continue to expand capacity. We're going to make the system even better because the need is great, and it's great all over this province.

1530

TOURISM

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I have a question for the Minister of Tourism, but before that, I just want to take the opportunity to welcome the delegation from Niagara that we have with us in the House

today in honour of Niagara Week here at Queen's Park. This is their third year coming here to work with us in partnership to help to grow a tremendous Niagara well into the future.

I think you know already in this House how blessed Niagara is, with some of the best soil on this planet and a microclimate second to none in this province and in this country for growing tender fruit. We've been long famous for our peaches, our vineyards, our wine industry and our tourism industry, and I know that our government has been working tremendously hard with Niagara to help build an infrastructure to support that.

One of the things that our Minister of Tourism has spearheaded and I'd like him to talk a bit about is culinary tourism, which is something that's been expanding around—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I would like to thank the member for her question and certainly her dedication to the Niagara Peninsula. I want to join her in welcoming the delegation from Niagara that is here again this year. This is the third year the delegation has come here. They speak as a unified voice and make some good points on behalf of the region, and get responses from this government.

As the member mentioned, culinary and wine tourism is a growing phenomenon around the globe. Here in Ontario we have all the ingredients to make it one of the top culinary tourism destinations indeed in the entire world. That's why our government has launched the culinary tourism strategy, which is a 10-year plan to make Ontario a leader in culinary tourism. Since the launch of this strategy, culinary regional committees have been formed in five key regions, including Ottawa, Muskoka, Toronto, Prince Edward county and Niagara.

In Niagara, we have the great wine route, which lures people from one of the seven wonders of the world to the gates of Hamilton. Our scenic vineyards and top-notch wineries are all part of—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary. The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I think it's very exciting that our government has recognized the importance of culinary tourism to the Ontario economy, including its importance to my riding of Niagara Falls and the entire region.

As has been mentioned, this is Niagara Week, and I too want to recognize the delegation that is here. I can't mention everybody's name, but I would like to mention my mayor from Niagara Falls, Mayor Ted Salci, and, in the members' gallery, a regional councillor, Barbara Greenwood, newly elected. Welcome.

My riding is dependent on the day-to-day traffic from the United States. Visitors from across the border drive to my area to enjoy the wonderful culinary and wine experience the region has to offer, as well as to visit our two casinos and to spend time at our new convention centre that will be opening.

Minister, I understand that you were in Washington yesterday talking with officials from the Department of Homeland Security about the proposed passport requirement. Can you update the House and the people of Ontario—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I certainly can. The discussions were very productive. You'll remember that initially there were people who said, "You should simply comply with the regulations suggested by Homeland Security and not try to buck the trend," and we in Ontario thought it was important to look for an alternative. So in our submission we asked that they make an exemption for those under the age of 16.

Interjection: We got it.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: We got that exemption. We asked for an exemption for those between the ages of 16 and 18 involved in groups going to such things as hockey tournaments. We got that.

You kept hearing all the negative responses out there that somehow the position of Ontario was not going to be realized. In my meetings yesterday in Washington, representatives of the Department of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State agreed to Ontario's plan to provide an alternative—that is, an existing document which most people would have: the driver's licence—to enhance the security on that, and that indeed that could be one of the solutions to this problem. So Ontario's position—

The Speaker: Thank you.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, I hope you would bear in mind your Premier's throne speech and what he said about accountability and the promise to adhere to those principles when you answer your questions, which you have not, as of yet.

Minister, regarding the Liberal Party slush fund, you have said previously that this money came out of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Will the minister please tell us what conversations he had with the Liberal Party campaign chair, who also happens to be the Minister of Finance, or conversations at a staff level about this Liberal Party slush fund?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The conversations I have are with the people at the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre. I have conversations with the people who work at the Jamaican Canadian Centre. I have conversations with the North York Community House. I have conversations with the incredible people at SISO in Hamilton. I ask the member to come with me and have some conversations with those incredible people. That's who I have my conversations with.

Mr. Yakabuski: So much for principles and accountability. We all know what those promises mean from a Liberal government.

It's clear from your previous statements that the Liberal Party campaign chair had a hand in this in some manner. We just want to know what it is, and it certainly looks fishy when one of the people connected to one of the groups that got money out of this Liberal Party slush fund donated hundreds of dollars to the Vaughan–King–Aurora riding association, the home riding of the Liberal Party campaign chair.

We want the minister to clear it up for us. How precisely did it work? Did the minister of Finance or his staff contact you and pick which groups were going to get the money?

Hon. Mr. Colle: I think the member from the opposition still hasn't learned his lesson. His leader yesterday falsely accused a citizen of somehow doing something wrong. He still doesn't get it.

What we have done right across this province—we have gone to help organizations that are sometimes small, sometimes large and some organizations that are quite large—sometimes having Tories that have donated to the Conservative Party. We don't say to those organizations that you're disqualified because your board of directors is made up of people—we don't even ask that. But we know those organizations want to do good work. We support that, and that's what we are dedicated to.

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

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question, again—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Minister, you haven't answered any question, but here's a real simple one for you. You claim that your slush fund is transparent and that all grants you have made are posted on a website. Would you please tell this House, and tell everyone in this province, on what website or where else you have posted the \$200,000 you gave to the Iranian–Canadian Community Centre?

The Speaker: The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Colle: Again, the member opposite still hasn't stood up on his feet and apologized for the fact that he has called one of the most reputable newcomer agencies in Peel a disreputable fly-by-night organization, by him and his party. He still hasn't done that.

Our investments in organizations, big and small, have been good investments, because they serve the issues of diversity, inclusion and also the celebration of our heritage. Those are the kinds of investments we've made. The people across Ontario want us to partner with these organizations. They want us to make the system better too, and we are doing that with the on-site registry.

We're working at it, because there is a great need that has been ignored, as I said, for too long.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: It is no wonder the minister can't answer this simple question. Mr. Minister, the list of slush-fund grants from March 2006 has disappeared. It's no longer on your website, it's no longer on your ministry's website, and our own legislative library cannot find it. How can you say that this is a transparent process when you won't even reveal where the money is going and you won't even tell the people of Ontario and this Legislature how they can find out?

1540

Hon. Mr. Colle: I've made those lists available; in fact, you were at an announcement where we invested \$200,000 in the Afghan Association of Ontario.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Colle: He was there with me. All of these are available. We made it available to the media that have asked. These investments have been made right across Ontario and they're investments that have been celebrated as good investments—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I was having great difficulty hearing the minister. Minister, if you wish to—

Interjection.

The Speaker: New question.

CITY OF WINDSOR

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Last week, I heard reports that the Financial Times of London, a very reputable publication out of London, England, has ranked Windsor as the number one small city in all of North America for foreign direct investment. Needless to say, I was absolutely thrilled at the thought of our area being bestowed this great distinction.

Minister, I know that you will be able to confirm these reports for me and let me and our constituents know that the Financial Times of London has indeed voted Windsor as the number one small city to invest in.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): We know that the member from Essex is a huge booster of the Windsor–Essex region. In fact, the London Times FDI magazine published yesterday indeed ranked Windsor as the number one small city for future investment, and we are very proud.

Let me tell you exactly what they said—and special congratulations to everyone in that area: “Windsor, in the Canadian province of Ontario, ranks as North America's leading small city of the future, scoring well for business friendly policies and a strong development program that includes several large-scale projects” involving both the public and private sectors.

To everyone affiliated with Windsor and Essex county, we say a hearty congratulations, and special

thanks to all who worked so hard to achieve those investments for the city of Windsor.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is a registered charity and private police force autonomously enforcing federal, provincial and municipal animal laws under the provincial animal act without any type of provincial oversight or accountability mechanism in place; and

“Whereas in 2006 resigned OSPCA director and treasurer Garnet Lasby stated, ‘Government, not the humane society, should be in charge of enforcing laws to protect animals and to prosecute offenders’; and

“Whereas in 1989 the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) formally requested the province remove police powers from the OSPCA; and

“Whereas in 2006 the Ontario Farm Animal Council (OFAC) stated, ‘The number of questions and complaints from the farm community about specific cases and the current enforcement system continues to increase’; and

“Whereas the Animal Care Review Board, a tribunal staffed by volunteers, is the only OSPCA appeals mechanism available outside the court system; and

“Whereas the OSPCA recently received \$1.8 million from the province and is lobbying for additional long-term stable funding;

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

“(1) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to ensure that members of the Animal Care Review Board tribunal are adequately trained in accepted provincial livestock practices and have some legal training to rule competently on issues brought before them; and

“(2) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to investigate the resignation of 29 OSPCA directors (including the chair and the treasurer) who in May 2006 urged ‘the province to step in and investigate “insane” abuse and animal cruelty charges’; and

“(3) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to appoint an ombudsman to investigate allegations of abuses of police powers against the OSPCA.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have several petitions here and I think I’ll read this one.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

“Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

“Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people’s complaints about children’s aid societies’ decisions; and

“Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman’s office;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province’s children’s aid societies (CAS).”

I agree with this petition, sign it, and send it to the table by way of page Brendon.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have two petitions today from the citizens of Newmarket, Holland Landing, Aurora and Richmond Hill to 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 support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

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

“Whereas age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is

present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common 'dry' type and the 'wet' type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

"Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

"Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult subtype of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service."

I'm pleased to support this and provide it to Dillon to present to you.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition is forwarded to me by Mr. Jesse Flis and was signed by members of Cardinal Wyszynski Council #9296. According to Mr. Flis, there are thousands of these petitions being collected from other councils and parishes across the province. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

As the proud proponent of this bill, I am pleased to affix my signature and hand it to page Salena to present to the Clerk.

1550

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition entitled "Raise the Minimum Wage.

"Whereas more than 1.2 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay them less than \$10 an hour;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to ensure a living wage for working families;

"Whereas people who work hard and play by the rules should be rewarded with the opportunity to earn a decent living and the chance to get ahead;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals were able to increase their own pay by 31%;

"Whereas an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would help Ontario's working families earn a living wage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to pass Bill 150, the NDP's living wage bill, which would immediately increase the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 an hour."

I agree with this. I'm signing and sending it to the table by way of page Lauren.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"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 affix my signature and support the petition.

MULTIPLE LEGAL PARENTS

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

"Whereas the appeal court of Ontario on January 2, 2007, ruled that 'a child may have more than two legal parents';

"Whereas that sets a precedent and leaves many unanswered questions which could result in possible multiple legal parents and unknown devastating ramifications to children and families of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to appeal the Ontario Court decision so that various levels of government may thoroughly study the personal, societal and legal implications of allowing more than two legal parents."

I have signed this, Mr. Speaker.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition signed by many people from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

"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 affix my signature to support this.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to read into the record a petition that was delivered to me by Melissa Tkachyk. It relates to the regulation of zoos to protect animals and communities. It reads as follows:

"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."

PASSPORT OFFICE

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas, at present, residents of Barrie and surrounding area must travel to Toronto to receive a passport; and

"Whereas the only service available to obtain information or make application for a passport in the city of Barrie is through the post office or through the local MP office; and

"Whereas a passport to travel is now becoming a way of life for Canadians and there is a great need for a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie; and

"Whereas, due to the growth in population and demand and necessity for a passport to travel, a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie is essential; and

"Whereas, due to the current security enforcement in place, a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie is essential; and

"Whereas a full-service passport office would be beneficial not only to the residents of Simcoe county but also Parry Sound-Muskoka region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the federal government to give consideration for a full-service passport office in the city of Barrie."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is from the Saint Athanasius Anglican Church in Orillia. It has to do with affordable housing.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 122,000 households across Ontario are on waiting lists for affordable housing, enduring wait times of five to 10 years;

"Whereas housing affordability problems are worsening in Ontario, with one ... household in five paying at least 50% of its income on rent, and almost 65,000 facing eviction in 2005 because they couldn't afford to pay their rent;

“Whereas Ontario’s current social housing stock is increasingly rundown, with tenants forced to endure degrading conditions, including mould, cockroaches and mice; and

“Whereas the cost of ignoring the plight of our poorly housed and homeless neighbours affects all citizens of Ontario through increased health costs, emergency shelter costs and other public expenditures;

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

“To ensure there is a major allocation of funding for affordable and supportive housing in Ontario’s 2007 provincial budget, with a commitment to release this funding quickly; and

“To urge the government of Ontario to reassume financial responsibility for the cost and repair of the current social housing stock which was downloaded onto municipalities, who cannot afford repair and upkeep costs.”

I’m pleased to sign this and give it to Marissa to present to the table.

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 23, 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? Further debate? Sorry; my peripheral vision isn’t—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): That’s fine, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Northumberland.

Mr. Rinaldi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s certainly a pleasure to take a few minutes to speak about Bill 203, about our Safe Roads for a Safer Ontario Act. Let me first say that in general we probably have some of the safest roads in North America. When you talk about the complexity of our road networks that we have, especially around larger urban centres—for example, in southern Ontario, where there’s an enormous amount of traffic. When you look at the corridor between Toronto-Montreal, Toronto-Niagara, Toronto-Barrie, they certainly are highly used highways. But this goes beyond the highly

used highway. It goes beyond the roads that you and I and most members in this House use on a regular day.

1600

One of the things we see all the time is that it doesn’t matter how safe or how cautious you and I are when we’re driving. The thought behind our minds is that it’s always the other person next to us, behind us, in front of us or coming towards us we have to be careful of. Unfortunately, most of us have only two eyes and sometimes those two eyes might not be 100%. Having said that, we always have to be on the lookout. I guess we introduce measures to help us be on the roads in a safe manner, so that when we leave home in the morning or go to our offices or our places of work, we expect to go back to our families, to our kids and our grandkids.

I’ve had discussions with the minister and the minister’s staff over the course of the last few months—and this is going into last year—when they were putting this bill together. I must commend the minister for the amount of work that she and her staff and her ministry did, because I know that I was part of some consultation to get our input: what it was like in the world that Lou Rinaldi drives in every day or when he’s on the road, or his family. An awful lot of work went into this, and there’s certainly been a lot of thought behind it.

As we move forward, we hear about the unfortunate incidents. We should not tolerate drinking and driving. I know that in the past, through no fault of anybody, there was more tolerance when it came to drinking and driving. Although it was not acceptable, society sort of turned a blind eye 20 or 30 years ago. It was the macho thing to do. But we realize today, with the type of equipment we drive on the road and the volume of folks on the road, that does create a challenge. So we need to reinforce or make new rules to help us make those roads safer.

One of my sayings is that driving is a privilege. If everybody in this province, in this country, in North America, obeyed all the rules of the road, we’d probably save a pile of money in policing or those kinds of support services. Unfortunately, we cannot depend on that, so we clearly have to give those law enforcement folks fairly tight rules when they patrol our highways. When we talk about drinking and driving not being acceptable, drinking and driving is not acceptable, because in many cases, when we read an article, a person who was probably intoxicated and was involved in an accident, as much as you hate to say it, sometimes doesn’t suffer the consequences of somebody that they caused the accident with, some innocent bystander, whether they’re just crossing the road or driving another vehicle. I don’t think anybody is against providing those measures for the safety part of it.

The other piece that I’ve heard about in this House for the last three and a half years, over and over again, is street racing. Back a few years ago, I must admit that I was one of those folks who liked to soup up cars a little bit. I think most of us did. We showed off sometimes. But, truly, that’s not acceptable for a number of reasons. As I said before, we have a lot more sophisticated

equipment like the nitrous oxide that's available today, which certainly enhances performance to a great extent. You can buy little modules, little chips that you put in your computer that control the fuel and air mixture in cars, which enhances performance. Back in my day, it was a matter of getting a little drill bit. I'm sure you'll remember, Mr. Speaker, drilling those jets a little bit bigger so they could use a little bit more fuel and give us a little extra zip. That's not to say that was acceptable; all I'm saying is that we're so far advanced that, like any other technology today, it creates more problems.

I hope this is not a conflict, but I have been involved in racing for a number of years, but not on the streets. There are places across Ontario like the facility that my family has, all different types, where true enthusiasts who want to race—places where it's a safer environment; it's controlled. I think that's the type of thing that we as citizens or as legislators—if people want to have performance cars, we should encourage them to go to appropriate places. There are locations, although not that many, where they can perform, whether it be road racing, drag racing, oval racing and those types of things. I think that's another sector of our road safety that we cannot ignore.

I heard in debate in this House the other day—I think it was a member of the opposition—the type of technology that's out there right now; that people who perform racing on the streets create huge hazards. When they are street racing, they are thinking about either one or two competitors who are going head to head but they forget about other folks: the families who might be going for a Sunday outing or going out at night for some kind of recreation, or somebody who basically left home to go to work and either on their way to work or on their way home, through no fault of their own, might not make it home. And in some cases, if they do make it home and they have injuries, they are huge injuries. They are injuries that bring a lot of suffering to those families.

The member opposite, Mr. Klees, has been a strong advocate of introducing private members' bills. I need to congratulate Mr. Klees for being forward-thinking. That was one component of how we can improve road safety.

As we look through the bill we also want to be able to, for example, make police officers maybe more noticeable, to allow police officers blue and red flashing lights on their vehicles. It's a combination that has been proven to enhance the visibility of the police. Along with visibility, as I said before, give the police or the law enforcement folks the tools required for automatic suspensions, automatic confiscation of those vehicles and automatic roadside suspension of licences, along with appropriate penalties that truly deter folks from doing illegal acts on the road.

Having said that, I think we need to move this piece of legislation forward. From what I hear in the House, there is general consensus that we all support this. We've waited a long time, so it's time to move forward.

Thank you very much for allowing me some time to put my thoughts on this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's my pleasure to respond to the member from Northumberland. He took me by surprise. He ended a little early. Usually he goes on beyond the time the clock allows, but today he must have some important engagements or something.

As you know, we're substantially supportive of this bill. I'm going to give my colleague from Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, a lot of credit for pushing this bill forward, at least the portion of it that deals with street racing. I know this is an issue that Mr. Klees has been passionate about throughout his time here in the Legislature. No one has spoken more clearly and consistently about the need to deal with the scourge of street racing on our young people, and the needless and senseless deaths and injuries that occur as a result of it.

1610

One of the amendments that my friend from Oak Ridges has proposed is an amendment dealing with nitrous oxide and its accessibility within the vehicle—that it would not be available for either the driver or the passenger to activate from within the vehicle and that the connection would be visible to the police as well—so that we could eliminate the use of this substance which enhances the performance and horsepower of a vehicle. We would at least have that tool in the toolbox to deal with that substance. That would be one more thing to discourage our young people from engaging in such a dangerous and senseless activity as street racing.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my friend from Oak Ridges for his diligence and drive in bringing this issue forward.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I look forward to speaking for a while on this bill. Of course, we in the New Democratic Party are definitely in favour of stronger restrictions against those who choose to drink and drive and of course the extremely dangerous practice of racing as well. In fact, the term "racing" rather glorifies this activity. I know that "extreme driving" has been the term used in the safety community, and that's the one that I think I'll stick to. I know, from my own experience as a rural pastor in Huron Perth Presbytery, that every year we saw children die drinking and driving. As a rural pastor, you're intimately involved with those families and the tragedy of what ensues, so certainly I look forward to speaking about this.

Really, I'll be speaking about how to possibly strengthen this bill in terms of amendments and some of the questions it raises that we need to develop answers for, particularly around the area of enforcement. It's one thing to write a piece of legislation; it's another thing to actually make sure that it's enforced out there, as we all know. So I'd like to also talk about enforcement, the police aspect of this. Of course, it also reflects some of the federal legislation on this as well.

Finally, I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about education, because it's one thing to enforce and be punitive, and it's another thing to prevent. Hopefully every-

one watching this and listening is involved in that. There, it would be wonderful to have some of the stakeholders present and get their input into ways in which perhaps we could assist them in preventing both extreme driving and drinking and driving, before they result in the death that I think inspired this bill.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I apologize for my rough voice. I'm just recovering from a very nasty bout of that virus that's going around, but I did want to get on the record.

I'll be speaking a little bit more later on this evening, but I wanted to make mention of the fact that I unfortunately had to meet the mother of Matthew Power. Adrienne Seggie is the mother of Matthew, who was killed in Hamilton, through no fault of his own. For the purposes of edification, he was actually just walking across the street and was an unwilling victim of the stupidity of street racing. This young man was 21 years old. He was just crossing the street and absolutely was not one of the people who were watching. He actually was just simply crossing the street in Hamilton, and the next thing you know, this car comes just barrelling down the road and snuffs his life out.

As you can appreciate and understand, his mum was absolutely devastated. To sit and meet with his mum, to see what his mum wanted to do, was so rewarding for me on a personal note. Here is this woman who has lost her 21-year-old son to the stupidity of street racing, and she wanted to talk to me about forming a march and continuing to Ottawa to talk about Criminal Code improvements.

I just wanted to put on the record that I'm so enamoured with this woman's fortitude, her desire, and what's in her heart, to see things improve so that it doesn't happen to another child or another young adult. So I compliment her. I've worked with her in terms of what we should do and in terms of how we organize the walk. Unfortunately I couldn't make it to the walk, but I support it and offered her petitions. My heart goes out to her and the rest of the families that have been devastated by street racing through no fault of their own. I'll speak more to that later on.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech of the member for Northumberland on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, 2007. Of course, a large part of this bill was derived from the member for Oak Ridges' private member's bill. He's going to be the next speaker on this bill, so we'll certainly look forward to hearing his comments. I know that he is hoping to have some amendments to do with, I think, aftermarket products to do with street racing brought forward to improve the bill.

Certainly the member for Oak Ridges has been very busy. He has a private member's bill this time to do with organ donations, which was receiving public hearings last week, and it will have clause-by-clause this Thursday. As this bill is supported by all three parties, hopefully that organ donations bill, which I think makes a lot of sense, will also receive the support of all three

parties in this Legislature. It seems obvious that all three parties support this bill. It will strengthen the rules to do with drinking and driving so that between .05 and .08 blood alcohol, you then start to receive, I think, for the first offence a three-day suspension, then seven days, then 30 days, and then you have to move into education, and eventually a six-month period with an ignition interlock device, which originated from another private member's bill, that of the member for Simcoe North. With that ignition interlock device, you have to breathe into some pipe before the ignition on your automobile would work. These are all improvements to help make our roads safer. I think all three parties support it. Certainly the member for Oak Ridges will have some comments that will be worth listening to coming up next. Otherwise, we should move on and get this bill to committee and make some amendments to it.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Northumberland, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rinaldi: First of all, let me thank the members for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Parkdale–High Park, Brant and Parry Sound–Muskoka for their comments on my thoughts on this bill.

It is obvious that in this Legislature we all played a role in trying to develop a piece of legislation that truly addresses a need in the community. There's no question about that, and credit needs to be given where credit is due. Let me tell you, I am impressed by hearing people from every corner of this House. They've been very supportive. I think this is probably the first time in three and a half years that we are in unison. I'm not saying we agree 100% to everything but I think it's very important to recognize that.

As we move forward with this legislation, I'm sure when it goes to committee and clause-by-clause there will be equal co-operation to make sure that at the end of the day it really addresses the needs of our road safety to the best of our ability, and to keep that in mind. I'm confident that as we come to the end of this session of Parliament, we will have a much stronger bill to deal with road safety. I know that our government would be proud of that achievement. I'm sure that all the members of the House will be proud to be part of achieving that.

I look forward to further debate from other folks in this House, obviously in support of this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in the debate on this bill. I'll say at the outset that I congratulate the government for coming forward with this bill. I want to thank the member for Northumberland for his acknowledgment of my role in advocating over the last number of years, really, to ensure that we have legislation in this province that will speak very clearly and send a very strong signal that the activity of street racing will not be condoned in the province of Ontario, and that for those who do, there will be significant and very meaningful consequences. We can't legislate responsibility, but what we can do—and I

believe we have a responsibility as legislators—is to ensure that there are consequences for irresponsible actions. That has been my thrust in wanting to bring forward legislation that will send a very strong signal to people that racing in and of itself, if you want to participate in that sport, as the member from Northumberland indicated he does—that there's a time and a place for that. And it's certainly not on our public roads and highways.

1620

I have a number of very good friends who are car enthusiasts. In fact, as a former Minister of Transportation, I recall well that when we were contemplating this legislation, I met with a number of stakeholders from the after-market industry, for example, who convinced me, as a result of those consultations, that we should modify what we had in place at that time as draft legislation and focus even on the nitrous oxide aspect of the bill—which ultimately was tabled as a government bill—in such a way that it not be outlawed from use in the province, that there are legitimate places where it can be used, and that is in a controlled environment on a race track. But it should not be connected on our streets and our highways.

That's why, as the member referenced earlier, I will be looking forward to this bill moving on into committee so that we can then contemplate an amendment that I will be presenting that will very specifically deal with the nitrous oxide aspect of this issue. For those who are observing this debate and who perhaps don't understand the technology, I want them to fully understand that there are those enthusiasts who, by virtue of installing a nitrous oxide component in the car, significantly enhance the horsepower of what is a normal vehicle on the road. I will be moving an amendment that will read as follows—and I want to read this into the record. I want to give members opposite an opportunity to contemplate the proposal. This is taken directly from my private member's bill as it was written there. It reads as follows:

“No person shall drive or permit to be driven on a highway a motor vehicle equipped with a nitrous oxide fuel system unless,

“(a) the part of the nitrous oxide fuel system comprising the canister, bottle, tank or other store of nitrous oxide 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; and

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

The next provision relating to this is also stated in the amendment. It reads as follows:

“A police officer exercising his or her powers under section 82 may take or cause to be taken a sample of any substance from a motor vehicle to determine whether or not the motor vehicle contains nitrous oxide.”

Then there's a reference to the seizure empowerment of the front line-officers so that they can effectively deal with this. It states as follows:

“A police officer exercising his or her powers under section 82 may,

“(a) remove nitrous oxide, or the part of the nitrous oxide fuel system comprising the canister, bottle, tank or other store of nitrous oxide, from a vehicle and dispose of them, or cause their removal and disposal, at the cost and risk of the driver and owner, who are jointly and severally liable; or

“(b) order the driver or owner of the vehicle to remove nitrous oxide, or the part of the nitrous oxide fuel system comprising the canister, bottle, tank or other store of nitrous oxide, from a vehicle and dispose of them appropriately.”

I wanted to make that point with the government because I do believe it is the one failing of the legislation, and I'm hopeful that we'll have the support of the minister and of government caucus members when we go to committee.

I'd like to provide some context as to why I became involved as assertively as I did on this issue, and I want to focus my comments relating to this bill—I know it's considerably broader than just street racing, but my interest stems from the fact that as transportation minister I was faced, at that time, with the reality that far too many deaths had occurred throughout the greater Toronto area and in fact across Ontario as a result of the irresponsible activity of street racing. I became convinced as minister that in a road safety bill we should incorporate a very specific provision relating to street racing, and it was. It was incorporated in a bill that I tabled in May 2003. That bill was interrupted, as you well know, by a provincial election. Following that election, I did not have the privilege of sitting in cabinet. I wrote a very nice note to the new Minister of Transportation and left it on my desk at the Ministry of Transportation to wish him well and also pointed out some unfinished business that I had left in my bottom right-hand drawer. This bill was part of that unfinished business, and I encouraged him to proceed with it.

The minister did reintroduce the road safety bill, but for some reason that I could not understand, the provision relating to street racing was left out of that bill.

It was in the following year that a very tragic event happened in my riding. Rob and Lisa Manchester were killed in an accident—

Interjection.

Mr. Klees: Speaker, I would ask that you deal with this, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Could the member come to order?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Whisper, then.

Mr. Klees: I would ask the member for his co-operation. Thank you.

I'm referring to the deaths of Rob and Lisa Manchester in my riding, who were the innocent victims of a street racing accident. They left their seven-year-old daughter as an orphan. That caused me to revisit this issue because I realized that as long as there is no signal from the government of this province to young people who may consider this a sport they can engage in and

aren't forced to consider the consequences and aren't told that there are going to be serious consequences, there may well be many more deaths.

So I drafted a private member's bill to incorporate the very precise provisions that were originally incorporated into the government bill and introduced it here. Unfortunately, we did not have the support of the Legislature at that time. I moved a unanimous motion to have that bill considered before we recessed for the summer. The urgency that I felt at that time was, I didn't want us to go into the summer without having something on the books that would send that signal to people that there's a serious danger in street racing. We did go through the summer and, as you know, there were a number of tragic deaths that ensued that summer as a result of street racing.

My colleague made reference to a tragic event in Hamilton. Adrienne Seggie—I participated with her in that press conference here in Queen's Park that I sponsored, welcomed her after she had made her walk from Hamilton to Toronto. From here, she went on to Ottawa to impress on legislators there the importance of dealing with this issue.

1630

Mr. John Hickey supported me as well in my efforts relating to the private member's bill. Mr. Hickey participated in a round table that was then hosted by the Minister of Transportation, to her credit, to solicit input from stakeholders as to what we should be doing relating to legislation around this issue. Mr. Hickey's daughter, Allison, is still not the person that she was. She suffers terribly from the results of the injuries that she incurred. Her fiancé, Mark Radman, as well continues to suffer as a result of the very serious injuries that he incurred as a result of the irresponsible actions of a street racer.

Twenty-one-year-old Matthew Power is no longer with us. His mother, Adrienne, expressed her agony and wanted to let us, as legislators in this building here, know that there is urgency to this.

It's unfortunate that those injuries and those additional deaths had to take place. We don't know, if we had had legislation earlier and if there had been a strong signal from government, whether or not any of these deaths or injuries could have been prevented. We don't know that. But I will say this in looking forward: I thank the government. I thank the Minister of Transportation for having brought this legislation forward. We now have legislation that sends a very clear signal to young people or anyone else who might engage in street racing that there will be serious consequences.

Consistent with my private member's bill, we are empowering, through this legislation, front-line officers. If they have any reason to believe that a car was involved in street racing, they are empowered, on the spot, to suspend licences and to impound the vehicles. That is so important, because what happens—and people say, "Why the impoundment? Why is that important?" It's very important, because we have the evidence then of the vehicle so that the proper inspection can be undertaken to deter-

mine whether or not, for example, there has been an alteration of that vehicle, if in fact there was nitrous oxide involved. We can determine the condition of the vehicle. I think it's important as well that individuals, on the spot, are forced to lose their licence. Especially for car enthusiasts, to lose their car sends a very clear signal. For many of these young people, their car is probably one of the most important possessions that they have, if not the most important. So to send a signal that they will be relieved of that possession I think simply puts in place the necessary consequences for individuals who would participate in that activity.

One of the areas that I am also concerned about, and I want to call on the government, because I see nothing in this legislation that addresses this and I heard nothing from the minister or the Premier when the announcement was made that would lead me to believe that there are plans for a broader education strategy: I think it's very important that, coupled with this legislation that puts in place consequences, we also have in place in this province a very strong education and information program that raises awareness of the consequences of street racing not only to the individual who might be found guilty of that, but to potential innocent victims. In the same way that the government has invested a great deal of resource in the issue of drinking and driving, and the minister responsible for health promotion is investing considerable government resources in advising people how important it is to look after their health—and I support that—I believe it's equally important that the Ministry of Transportation set aside resources so that we can, at a very early stage throughout our education system, begin to educate young people about the importance of road safety.

As Minister of Transportation, I was proud to invest \$50,000 in the Community Safety Village in York region. If you go there today, there is a Ministry of Transportation house there that allows young people to become familiar with the rules of the road. That investment was authorized when I was the minister. It was my privilege to do so, and every time I go to the Community Safety Village—and there are now literally thousands of students who go through that place every year, and they learn about road rules and road safety.

I believe it's important that some resources be dedicated specifically to this issue of street racing, particularly when we get to the years where a young person is about to get their licence. We all remember what that was like. The first time we get behind the wheel of a car, and especially the first time we get behind the wheel of a car without anyone else there, it's exciting. I look at the pages here and I see them smiling, because they're looking forward to that day. Right? Well, when you do that, you want to be very careful and understand that it's a responsibility that you have. Having a driver's licence is a privilege; it's not a right. To keep that privilege, you have to keep the rules of the road. You have to respect how important it is not only for your own safety, but for the safety of others on the road.

So, in closing, I want to address a plea to the Attorney General, and that is that while we now have the legislation in place that provides consequences, I would ask the Attorney General that he send a very clear signal to his crowns across the province that under no circumstances will we allow a plea bargaining away of the consequences that we have taken the time, as legislators, to put on the books. One of the problems that we have in this province and in this country is the revolving-door justice, that even though someone gets caught and gets convicted, the consequences are plea bargained away, so that there are really very little consequences. That's what encourages people to simply go out and do it again.

We have excellent legislation. It will be excellent when we get the amendment. I look forward to supporting it. I look forward to working with the government to put the final touches on this bill. We need the legislation in place, we need the education to ensure that individuals understand the importance and the consequences, and finally, we need a court system that is going to support the legislation that we have taken the time in this place to implement.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity. I thank members here for their support of this legislation. As the member for Northumberland said earlier, it's not often in this place that we find common ground on legislation. This is one of those. I believe we have reason to celebrate as a result of this legislation that we've all had a part in bringing to this place.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I just want to comment on some of the aspects made by the previous speaker.

I think one of the things that we need to keep in mind is that it's not just a question—I'm talking about the drinking and driving side of it—of drinking and driving. It's also a question that there's a whole whack of people—we were just talking about it earlier—out on the streets who basically have suspended licences and are still driving. It is a huge problem, the number of people who are driving while under suspension. And the other issue is the number of people who aren't insured.

So I just raise this in the context of this debate because it in itself is problematic. We have situations where the motoring public or pedestrians or whoever might be involved in some type of accident with somebody who's not insured, which I think is a huge problem. It seems to me that at one point we're going to have to put our heads around this whole issue of people who are not insured.

1640

On the issue of drinking and driving, it will be interesting to see what the courts do when this legislation gets finally passed, because it's skirting a fairly fine line when it comes to what you're able to do vis-à-vis these types of charges. I think we all agree on the principle of drinking and driving, that nobody should do it. Certainly, society has become a lot better over the years. I grew up at a time—and I think most of us around here did—when it was almost commonly accepted that people drink and

drive. I remember instances—and we probably all remember the same thing—where the police officer would pull over somebody who was drinking and driving and drive the person home and tell him not to do it again. Well, you're not going to see that in this day and age. So society has come a long way in saying that drinking and driving is not tolerable.

This particular legislation goes another step in order to send a very serious message to people who have the privilege of driving—I say “privilege” because that's what it is; it's not a right—“If you're going to do so, you have to do so with responsibility to not only yourselves and your passengers but to the motoring public.”

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Oak Ridges. I'd just like to say that his support and leadership earlier on this issue is helpful. We both attended a meeting that Donna Cansfield, the Minister of Transportation, set up on November 21, 2006, a round table on street racing.

I would just like to go through a list of the people who were there: MTO legal; the Ministry of the Attorney General; Transport Canada; the Ministry of Health Promotion; Mr. Bell from the Ontario Modified Vehicle Owners Council; John Bondar from the Canadian Automobile Sport Clubs; Stephen Grant of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police; Constable Kent Taylor from the Ontario Provincial Police, and the list goes on. We had the RCMP, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Driving School Association of Ontario, the Ontario Safety League, the CAA. The member of provincial Parliament for Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, John Hickey, a street racing collision victim's father, and Bill Brack and Bert Coates of Bill Brack Advanced Driving Academy were there. And the Minister of Transportation was there to open the session.

We went through that very carefully because it is such an important issue. For the member for Oak Ridges, the tragedy of Rob and Lisa Manchester was obviously a reason to move this forward. So I am very pleased to see that the three parties in this House want to get this legislation out there as quickly as possible and are going to work with us to do that. We'll make sure that we have a good bill. The street racing part did have the benefit of input from about 20 experts early on, so I think we have a good piece of legislation here, and thanks for the support from the other parties.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I certainly want to commend the member from Oak Ridges for his debate in this particular area. The bill is about road safety. We have major problems in this province with respect to road safety, I think in part due to the gridlock we find around the GTA in terms of people wanting to get from point A to point B. People are not patient, they drive carelessly, they drive in a manner that puts other people at risk, and there have to be consequences.

I spoke to the member for Timmins–James Bay in terms of dealing with people who drive out there without any insurance, people who drive with no licence or who

have had their licence suspended up to 12 times—there have been cases reported about that—the lack of respect in the situation in terms of being able to operate a vehicle, and the sense of entitlement that everybody can operate a vehicle even if they're not being responsible with respect to having a licence or insurance.

There's no doubt that street racing has been an area where there's just total irresponsibility: people looking for areas, for roads where they can basically speed and race their cars. They really don't have a lot of respect for the public, whether it's at a certain particular time of the day when they feel they can race their cars, whether it's in Toronto, Hamilton or other areas.

I think it's important that this has finally come forth. There's been a lot of urging for the bill to come forth, and it certainly deserves public hearings to make sure that this step goes forth properly.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's not only a privilege and a duty but also, I think, a heavy responsibility to speak about Bill 203, Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario.

I can recall, for example, in my days of training at the University of Toronto medical school, that one of our rotations was doing clinical neurosurgery at the trauma unit of Sunnybrook Hospital, and I remember that that was my first deep encounter with motor vehicle accidents. The number of individuals who had succumbed, who had been injured, who had lifelong brain injuries, incapacitations and disabilities—and of course, at the time, I myself was often in the same age bracket as these young men and women who had been injured in this manner. It was a very impactful and I would say resonant experience.

Now that I find myself here in the Legislature, 20 years later and counting, I think it is very apropos and really my responsibility, and almost a sense of closure, that we would bring forward legislation that is so tough on drunk driving, on street racing and on declaring the presence of our police forces.

I can recall, for example, getting close to the families of particular victims and realizing that all their ambitions and aspirations for them, for their young lives, had essentially been snuffed out.

Therefore, I would commend my colleague the Minister of Transportation, Donna Cansfield—who is of course immediately to the south of me, the proud representative of the riding of Etobicoke Centre—for this legislation, for these initiatives, for the tough, I would say, deterrent effect, and for the signals it sends to Ontarians about these issues.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Oak Ridges, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Klees: I want to thank my colleagues for their comments.

In closing, I want to finally express my appreciation to the many people who have encouraged me in my advocacy. I want to thank, of course, John Hickey, the father of Allison Hickey. I want to dedicate this to Allison, and to Mark Radman, her fiancé, as well as to Rob and Lisa

Manchester, in their memory, and to their surviving daughter, Katie.

To Adrienne Seggie, I want to thank her for her courage and determination in ensuring that the death of her son Matthew Power does not go unnoticed. I want to say to her that for all of her determination, through her walk from Hamilton to Queen's Park and on to Parliament Hill, she should take a great deal of encouragement knowing that she has been heard and that, in memory of her son Matt, action has been taken by this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. DiNovo: I look forward to speaking about this bill. Again, we in the New Democratic Party support anything that's going to keep drinking and driving from happening and anything that's going to take extreme driving off the roads. We're not talking about a great number of deaths—there have been about 35 since 1999—but every single one of those deaths represents a loss of a story for an individual and incredible grief for that family.

I know this. We also in my family have lost those in traffic accidents. I'm sure that, as I speak, many who are listening and many around Ontario have also lost family members in traffic accidents. Perhaps what I'd like to do is start off with mentioning one of them, because I hope this was part of the inspiration for this bill. That was Tahir Khan, who died in January 2006, a taxi cab driver just doing his job. It points out the real danger of extreme driving. Often those who do extreme driving or racing don't realize they're putting other lives at risk, not only those who are taking part in extreme driving but those who just happen to be innocent bystanders. Tahir Khan was one of those people.

1650

I remember Mayor David Miller said, "Being a cabbie in the city is a tough job. You do put your own personal safety at risk.... He came here, like so many Torontonians, to give a chance to his family." He also went on to talk about the dangers. At this point Mayor Miller said, "I hope this tragedy sends a very clear message: You race cars, people can die."

For the remaining members of Khan's family, who were bereft of a person who is irreplaceable to them, and to all those families who have lost someone irreplaceable, my condolences, my prayers go out to them.

In my two-minute hit the last time I stood up, I started talking about my own experience at Huron Perth as a country pastor, and certainly this is the experience of many of our rural pastors. One of the horrible duties of a rural pastor is to bury often teenagers, often young people, who were drinking and driving. Anything that's going to prevent that tragedy is certainly welcomed. This bill, we hope, will help in that regard.

My comments are really more about strengthening certain aspects of the bill, about perhaps putting forward some questions that government members might want to answer before going to committee. I would love to hear from stakeholders. First and foremost among them, Mothers Against Drunk Driving comes to mind, which, if

not solely responsible, certainly spearheaded the move way back when to begin talking about this as a crime and doing something about it.

Bill 203, just for those who are listening and perhaps don't know the details of this bill, increases authority to govern and impose fees for administration, impaired driving and road racing. In addition, there is authority to impose consequences when fees or penalties are not paid. There are, however—and here's a first flag—exemptions from payment for certain conditions and circumstances.

These are questions that I would love to have answers for from the government side: What are the consequences and how will they be enforced? What are the exemptions and what criteria will be used to determine the right to an exemption? An interesting question.

Bill 203 goes on to provide for increased roadside suspension of licences of impaired drivers. Police can stop vehicles and do a breath test with an approved and calibrated screening device or instrument. If a blood alcohol concentration, as we're used to it, of .05 or above is detected and indicated by a "warn" or "alert" diagnosis, the roadside officer can suspend his or her licence. The blood alcohol threshold for suspension has been reduced from .08 to .05, effectively, with this piece of legislation.

Also, previous suspensions will not be considered if they occurred five or more years previous. The officer may also impound the vehicle of an impaired driver at the expense of the owner of the vehicle. There is no guarantee of conviction even after the third suspension—so there's a question. There's no certainty that a repeat offender will lose driving privileges. So the question here is, how many repeat offences are necessary before harsher consequences are legislated into place?

Also, what if they disarm or override the ignition interlock that is talked about in this and get someone else to do the breath test, for example? Another question that is left as a question and not really answered by the legislation. Hopefully, in committee, these questions will be answered or at least dealt with.

Again, consequences for repeat offenders, increased penalties, enforcement, and a really critical one, which always plagues legislation of this kind, which has been seemingly hastily drafted: Where will the funding come from to implement the enforcement that this legislation calls for?

Finally, we have left to regulation by the Lieutenant Governor administrative fees for licence suspension, exemptions from payment, establishing conduct review programs, fee for conducting the review programs, exemptions for persons from those street racing or extreme driving requirements with "prescribing conditions," and the definition for what is a "race," "contest" and "stunt" with respect to street racing. So certainly some committee work needs to be done to fine-tune this legislation to answer those questions and to deal with them.

I did pick up this quote from the Toronto Sun. This is just this month from a parent who has a tragic story of her own. Her son, Matthew Power, 21, was run over

while crossing a Hamilton street last November. Adrienne Seggie says about this legislation that 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." Again, another red flag upon what is contained in this legislation and perhaps ways that we can strengthen it, we can give more meat to its bones.

I also want to look at enforcement. This is, I think, the critical aspect that I'll dwell a little bit on, the enforcement of this legislation. I had the privilege of doing a drive-around with 14 Division, one of the police divisions in my riding. Superintendent Ruth White, a wonderful superintendent of that particular division, allowed this to happen. It was incredibly eye-opening and tremendously frightening. As any member here knows who has done drive-arounds with police in their division, but perhaps particularly in the inner-city, downtown area, of which Parkdale-High Park, my riding, is part, again, it can be terrifying.

We drove around, and I was only in the car for a few hours. In the police car you will notice that there's a computer and that the computer flashes, certainly, red signals for those crimes in progress and then others. They're not crimes in progress but still situations that need a police officer at hand. I was driving around and seeing all of these red lights flashing. I said to the sergeant who was driving me, "When will you get to this one?" or, "When will you get to that one?" He said, "Well, we have 20 cars on the road tonight for 100,000 people, so maybe in an hour, maybe in four hours. Some of them may be tomorrow morning." To drive around with police in that situation, to see what they engage in day in and day out, to see what we ask them to do without a lot of support, as I say, can be very terrifying. My husband, as I mentioned before in this House, was a police officer for a brief period with Waterloo regional and certainly had his eyes opened by the experience.

That's the situation right now. I know that this government has talked about adding to the community police forces with another 1,000 police officers. I know that in my riding it's trickling down at a very slow level. We certainly haven't seen our complement of those police officers for community policing, and we certainly do need them.

Now, you can imagine that in the situation that we're already faced with, we're adding here with legislation like this a more onerous duty: yet more duties for our police officers to fill, yet more paperwork, yet more arrests that need to be made, and then, going down the road a little bit, yet more cases to an already overrun court system. You heard the member from Oak Ridges, and I was most interested in what he said to say. The last thing that we all want to see is plea bargaining happening and plea bargaining away some of these charges. Without funding, without an increased police presence, without some of the machinations that will put teeth into this bill, I fear that it won't be enforced with the rigour, really,

that we're asking for here. Certainly, that's the major comment that I have on this.

I notice that my colleague from Niagara Centre also brought this up. He said, "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." He goes on to say that it's almost impossible to apprehend those who engage often in extreme driving. They're taking off at huge speeds. The police are often left with those who are simply really witnesses to the crime rather than the criminals themselves. So this is putting, again, our police officers, particularly those who are on our highways, in both dangerous positions and positions, again, where they're already overworked and they don't have the backup necessary to chase after somebody in an extreme driving situation, and driving some of the incredibly high-powered cars. There's another instance where, again, this bill might be strengthened, in looking at exactly the kinds of cars and the kinds of motorcycles that we allow on our roads. Really, one might ask oneself, why is it necessary to go at the speeds that these vehicles can go? It certainly invites the misuse of them. Again, it's an onerous task to ask our police officers to engage in, a dangerous task, one for which more funding and more officers are needed.

1700

I'm going to leave some time on the clock for my colleague who is here this evening as well. Suffice to say that for any of us—and I certainly appreciated not only the comments from the members for Oak Ridges, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Northumberland, Brant and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but particularly those from the member for Etobicoke North, because I too know what it's like to walk with a family into an emergency room, a family that is about to lose a child or that has just lost a child. For all of those out there whose job takes them into those dark places, we hope this legislation brings a little bit of light.

It needs some work. It needs strengthening rather than anything else. It needs some input from stakeholders. The questions I've posed need to be answered. But by and all, we should be doing everything we can in this Legislature and in this province to end both extreme driving and drinking and driving. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to respond on our safe driving bill to the comments from the member for Parkdale–High Park, and I would like to add my recognition as well for the member for Oak Ridges—we don't often agree—for the work that he and Minister Cansfield did to bring this bill in to deal with the whole issue of street racing.

The member from Oak Ridges, in his remarks, mentioned Rob and Lisa Manchester, who lived in his riding and were tragically killed. They were innocent bystanders, driving down the street. There was an accident

and they were killed by street racers. It just happens that Lisa's parents actually live in my riding; they are long-time residents of the rural part of my riding. In fact, Jack Cote, her dad, was a teaching colleague of my husband's at the Ontario Veterinary College. So it's interesting how one tragic event can touch a number of us.

Clearly, the tragedy of losing a daughter, losing a family member, is not going to be fixed by legislation, but I think what this legislation does is offer a chance, insofar as provincial legislation is a possibility—because criminal penalties, of course, are a federal responsibility. What we can deal with here are Ontario Highway Traffic Act offences. But what we are doing in this bill is bringing in very serious consequences for people who participate in street races: heavy fines, impounding of the car and suspension of the licence. For somebody who's a car nut, those are all very serious consequences. I believe this legislation will get the message out: Street racing is not acceptable.

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member for Parkdale–High Park on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act. The member talked about her personal experiences of dealing with the tragedy of street racing and of drinking and driving in a very personal way.

This bill has all-party support. The bill would strengthen the rules to do with drinking and driving. It would bring in many changes that would affect street racing. As previously mentioned, the member from Oak Ridges' private member's bill was really the origin of a good part of the street racing part of it. As he mentioned in his comments a few minutes ago, he has some amendments that he would like to see to do with nitrous oxide and after-market modifications to vehicles that are used in street racing. And as the member for Guelph–Wellington said, the seizure of a vehicle is a very powerful tool to discourage or stop street racing from happening. But all the changes in this bill—I think the strengthening of the drinking-and-driving rules and the changes to street racing—will help to make roads in Ontario safer.

All three parties are supporting it, so I think we should get this bill off to committee and make the necessary amendments to improve it.

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): In this particular round of comments from myself on Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act, I want to pick up on the comments that many are making this afternoon about street racing, and the type of street racing that I'm somewhat unfamiliar with—I've learned more about it from the press and the discussion here—doesn't seem to be an overriding problem in my area in terms of this changing of the automobile to race. That's not to say that we don't have street racing problems in my riding, but this notion that someone actually goes out and enhances a car or a vehicle, whatever it might be, purposely to street race seems to me to be very premeditated.

Therefore, I'm pleased that we have a seven-day vehicle impoundment, should this bill pass, a seven-day

licence suspension, increasing the fines from \$2,000 to \$10,000 and court-ordered suspensions. That shows that this Legislature and all three sides of the House who are supporting this are adamant that street racing and, as I say, something that seems to be premeditated be met with stiff fines and stiff sanctions.

I also mentioned yesterday that this bill would allow police officers to use blue and red flashing lights. I find it amazing, the people who come to me and say, "Pat, I didn't see that police car. I didn't see that emergency vehicle." I had a bill here that would enhance bus safety, and people came to me and said, "We didn't see the school bus." My goodness, what are people thinking about? In terms of lighting on police cars, they're lit like a Christmas tree now. This will enhance that, I'm sure, and I look forward to the bill's passage so that we can make our roads even safer here in Ontario.

Hon. Michael Chan (Minister of Revenue): I'd like to comment on the two points brought up by the member from Oak Ridges. One concerns the enhanced speed equipment on a car and the second point he raised is about education and information.

I agree with the first one, but then let's understand that a car does not race. It is the people driving the cars that make cars race. I strongly support the member from Oak Ridges' proposal to have stronger education and information on this bill.

My former job was in the insurance business as an insurance broker for 31 years. I still remember those days when I was selling insurance and an existing customer called my office and tried to add a young driver to their policy. My requirement was that the parent had to bring in that particular young driver to talk to me and I will tell them how to drive a car, about safety out there, no drinking and no racing. My point is education, giving information to drivers, especially young drivers.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Parkdale–High Park, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. DiNovo: I listened with interest to the Minister of Revenue and the members from Guelph–Wellington, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Chatham–Kent Essex. Thank you all for your input.

My comments really focused on some flags that need to be looked at around this bill and some questions that need to be answered to strengthen it. I'd just like to reiterate that one of those is around enforcement, around supporting our police as they try to enforce this. You can imagine, if you're a highway police officer and the extreme driving—I'll use the term that's used by the safety community—that's happening in front of you, they speed away, and what you are faced with. Are you going to chase them? Often their car is a lot more powerful and faster than yours. What are you going to do? How are we going to support our police in enforcing this? Then how are we going to support our court system in terms of the numbers of cases that are coming through already, the backlog of cases? We're going to be presenting them with more cases. And again, I'm supportive of this bill, absolutely; I want to make it stronger. So how are we

going to make it stronger? By looking at the enforcement angle.

1710

Also, in the last minute left to me, what are we going to do about education? I didn't have a chance, really, to speak about that before. We want to look at it, here in the New Democratic Party of Ontario—all of the education that goes into correcting the behaviour that results in extreme driving, and also corrects the behaviour that goes into drinking and driving.

I speak, as I said, from personal experience of actually burying children who have died drinking and driving on rural roads, and would hope that nobody has to go through that experience, particularly, of course, their families. So let's strengthen everything that there is to do with this bill, as well as enact legislation. Let's make sure that the legislation can be enacted. Also, let's look at our educational systems—what we're telling children, what we're showing children, what children are exposed to—so that this doesn't happen to them.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Levac: One of the most difficult things in the world to do is to tell a parent why their child died. One of the most difficult things in the world to do is to even understand the position that that person takes when they ask why this happened to their child, when it shouldn't have happened. We're talking about those specific things today. That's why I'm very supportive of this piece of legislation.

I guess there are a couple of questions we need to start asking ourselves: Is this going to solve the problem of street racing? Is this going to solve the problem of drinking and driving? Is this going to solve the problem of people doing illegal things to their cars to make them faster? Those are the kinds of questions that have to float out there.

Almost every single member so far—I think, to a person, every single member so far—has talked about something that I call the cultural change. The fact is that drinking and driving was an absolute in this province in years gone by. It was an absolute. As a matter of fact, when people got caught drinking and driving through a serious accident or causing death, they chose juries when they went to court. Do you know why they chose juries? Because those 12 people sitting there were, on Saturday night, in the same condition that that person was in when they got caught. It was rare—and I did some research—that they would get convicted, because the 12 people would say, "That was me, so I'm not going to convict them. I feel badly about what happened, but I'm not going to convict them." Then what happened? We went through a cultural change. Do you know who did that? Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Mr. Bisson: Among some.

Mr. Levac: Among those who decided that that was enough of this happening, they went to Legislature after Legislature, committee after committee, Senate hearing after Senate hearing in North America. They went all over and they held up pictures of their dead children, and

they said, "A drunk driver used a 2,000-pound car, got themselves so inebriated they didn't even know who they were, and killed my child." Lo and behold, it stuck. People began to realize that the culture was no longer going to be tolerant of this situation. So Mothers Against Drunk Driving and other organizations began to say, "It's time for us to change the norm," because in fact that was the norm: You packed away alcohol, you got into the car and you drove. So society collectively said, "It's changing." They changed the culture.

We need to change a culture here. We're starting to do the same thing. Why? Because we do have mothers who lose children. The 21-year-old son of one of my constituents was killed in Hamilton, walking across the street, by somebody getting into a fast car and deciding to race another person. Guess what? They didn't even stop; they just kept going. So mom said, "No more. I'm walking to Queen's Park. I'm walking to Ottawa. We need to change the culture."

We're hearing that, story after story, we need to change the culture. So we as legislators hear the stories. We do the research. We make the modifications. Collectively—as we're doing today, which is really refreshing—all parties are sitting back saying, "It's time for us to help to change that culture. We're hearing you nice and loud and clear. You're telling us that we don't want this to happen anymore." So we need to start changing some of the legislation.

What is in the proposal for drinking and driving and street racing? Street racing: Section 172 prohibits street racing. That already exists. The current penalty for street racing is a \$200 minimum and a \$1,000 maximum fine or six months imprisonment, or both—a fine and imprisonment—and a maximum driver's licence suspension of two years. That's what's on the books right now.

Society is telling us to help with that cultural change, so here's what we're going to do. The fine is increased to \$2,000 minimum and \$10,000 maximum, and the driver's licence suspension is increased to a maximum of two years for the 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 a vehicle impoundment. Do you want to get somebody right where it hurts? Get them with their toy. Take their toy away and then they'll second-guess whether or not they want to street race. That's one of the ways in which we want to help them understand that the culture's going to change: You suspend them and impound their vehicle. And the driver's licence suspension will apply not only to people with Ontario drivers' licences, but to drivers' licences of other jurisdictions as well.

I know that that's one part of the street racing improvements that have been made in the bill, and it's another step to help us change the culture. But where do we change the culture? Do we change it with a law that says that we're going to hit you with a fine or that we're going to impound your car? No, that doesn't do it. Do you know where the culture changes? Let's peel this back. Do the parents know that these kids have got these

cars? Do the parents know that they're using these vehicles as torpedoes in the middle of a street? Let's ask them to start paying attention. So we need to start doing an educational program, which the minister has committed to.

The other thing the minister has committed to is to talk to the organizations and the hobbyists that want to soup up their cars, because guess what? Since the car's been invented, it's been souped up. There have been people using cars forever because of the speed and the luxury and the excitement of driving fast. What are they doing? Well, the minister is now talking to those organizations to find out if there's a safe place and a safe haven for them to go practise their hobby. What we're now talking about is cultural change: "What's your excuse now that we've provided you with a venue to do the racing?" It's the thrill of not getting caught. It's the thrill of racing down the middle of the street, zipping in and out of traffic. That's what the thrill is.

We then start to give our police enforcement the tools to immediately deal with that, and that's the other reason why I think the legislation is moving in the right direction: seven-day vehicle impoundment, seven-day licence suspension versus 48 hours presently; increasing the maximum fine from \$2,000 to \$10,000, where it's now \$200 and \$1,000. Court-ordered suspensions: Courts could impose a driver's licence suspension of up to 10 years for a second conviction. So it's trying to make it very unsexy to get caught.

The previous speaker talked about the police officers not having enough tools to do that. You know what? I disagree, and here's why. I disagree because we already have so many laws on the book that OPP officers are charged with fulfilling on the highways and municipal police officers are empowered to enforce on the streets. They know what to do. Collectively, they have these programs where they do, for instance, the seat belt blitzes. They say, "All of a sudden, we're going to focus on this and we're going to find out."

We talked earlier about the cultural change. We've changed the culture slightly by wearing seat belts. When it first came out, there was a hue and cry about liberty, saying, "You're taking away my right not to have a seat belt on. I don't want to wear a seat belt. It wrinkles my jacket," or, "I don't want to wear a seat belt because you're telling me I have to wear it." And there was another one that came out shortly after they were introduced on a regular basis: "I don't want to wear a seat belt. I'll die if I get in an accident."

Mr. Bisson: Remember the motorcycle helmet debate?

Mr. Levac: My friend from Timmins—James Bay reminds me of the motorcycle helmet debate as well. Quite frankly, those are cultural changes in terms of what we have to understand. And guess what the compliance rate is for seat belts in Ontario. Is it 50%? Is it 60%? Is it 75%? It's 98% compliance, because people understand that it's the right thing to do and we changed the culture and expectation. And guess what? The death rate of the

98% who use their seat belts—the 2% who don't, the death rate is 60%. That's amazing. For those 2% who still don't get it and don't wear their seat belt, it's a 60% death rate.

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Mr. Bisson: The amount is 60% of the death rate?

Mr. Levac: Of death. It's unfortunate. It really is unfortunate that people miss that. But quite frankly, we are talking about cultural changes. That's the reason why I think we have to take this bill for what it is: another step and another tool for all of us to use and the signal to the rest of the culture inside of Ontario that we've got to stop doing this. The drinking and driving issue is the one that we're all agreeing on as something that we need to continue to fight and continue to work on.

I want to add a personal note here. I have been blessed with three wonderful children. They're now young adults. In their own way, their own cultures—each of them had their own group of friends, and not one of them has ever had the problem of not knowing where they were going to be and how they were going to get there in dealing with drinking and driving. Every single one of them, throughout the times—

Mr. Bisson: At least that you know.

Mr. Levac: The member challenges me again. He says, "At least the ones" that I know of. But you know what? I believe them. I had very, very strong faith in this group that they hung around with. They always designated a driver. They always had cab fare or they always knew they could call one of us as parents to say, "Can you come and pick me up?" There was not ever, in their group as they were growing up, from around 14 to 25, an incident where we had a phone call saying that somebody was drinking and driving.

I think this group of young adults gets it. I honestly believe that they have the culture change in their hearts already—far better than what we were in our younger ages. I confess that some of my friends listening tonight will laugh like crazy, because I'm an abstainer and I don't drink alcohol. I was the designated driver. I ensured that in any group that I hung around with, I always had the keys. As a matter of fact, if they used me as the designated driver, I felt privileged to be used, not to see somebody get killed in a car.

The cultural change we're talking about is in drinking and driving. We're talking about street racing.

Mr. Bisson: Can you come to the next reception with me?

Mr. Levac: I'll take care of you, Gilles. I'll take care of you.

Let me talk to you quickly about a couple of points that I've been hearing about members in this place offering private members' bills. I've got a list of them: Oak Ridges, Simcoe North, Chatham-Kent Essex, Prince Edward-Hastings, Niagara Centre, and myself; I offered three or four different private members' bills. And you know what? That's a good-news story. The good-news story is that the private members' hour does create some ideas and some concepts that need to be incorporated,

and they have been incorporated by many governments of the past and will continue to be where good ideas come through, no matter whether they're from the opposition or even from the backbenches of a government. Those ideas get infiltrated. They come to life, they bubble up and they end up in legislation, and that's a good thing. I think that's another piece that we beat ourselves up over as to whether or not we're giving credit or getting credit or taking credit or whatever. You know what? If it gets in legislation and it helps somebody, it's a good thing.

I say, to all the members who have offered some kind of traffic safety issues in their private members' bills, congratulations, and thank you very much for that.

Last but not least, I'll leave you with a couple of thoughts about the blue flashing lights. I remember being in the opposition. The member from Niagara Centre and I were both the critics at the time of the Solicitor General, and we talked about the flashing lights. I did a research project and shared it with the member from Niagara Centre. We found out that there were so many jurisdictions that understood what the blue light was all about, but unfortunately at the time the blue light was not accepted as an amendment in some of the bills that we were dealing with with the previous government. But now we're doing it, and I'm glad to see that we're doing it, because there are many other lights being used. We're looking at the green light now; we're looking at the blue light, the blue/red light, the blue/white light, the white light. All of the lights that are used in the safety of the highway are a good thing. It's a good thing.

Interjection.

Mr. Levac: No more red light sections from over there. I don't want to hear that kind of talk.

I want to end my comments by simply responding to some of the concern that's out there that this particular piece of legislation has to be the be-all and end-all. Quite frankly, that's just not the way it works in this place, from all governments, from successive governments. One piece of legislation is not the most successful piece of legislation on the planet. It will continue to grow and it will continue to need some tweaking and it will continue to need some amending.

I'm looking forward to getting this to committee so that we can all get together and say, "Are we producing the best piece of legislation for highway safety?" Quite frankly, I think we're headed there, and I look forward to the rest of that debate. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: I actually enjoyed the presentation made by my good friend the government whip. I thought his arguments were well put and well understood, and I think he speaks from the perspective of some experience he has had over the years both personally and as an MPP.

I just want to say this. I can't help it, when we're in these kinds of debates, when we're talking about increasing fines as a deterrent, we all know at the end of the day it's not really the fine that's going to do it; it's the fear of getting caught is what it comes down to. If the fine for

street racing goes from \$1,000 to \$10,000, I guess there's some minimal impact on the person who's about to race their car or whatever it might be, thinking, "I can't afford the 10,000 bucks; whoops, maybe I won't do it." The reality is the fear of getting caught. That's where we're having a problem.

I guess this is where I disagree with him. I think that we in this Legislature are asking our police officers to do more and more every day, that we bring forward legislation asking police officers to do more and more. As social services start to diminish, police officers are having to do more and more. They are, quite frankly, doing the work of some social workers in many of our communities. What we see is an inability on the part of the police to do what we're asking them to do, because we're asking them to do more and they don't necessarily have more to do it with.

So I think at one point we're going to have to have a debate in this Legislature about a couple of things. One of those is, if we really want to have an effect in stopping people from drinking and driving more than we are today, or street racing, we need to find some way of elevating the possibility that they will actually get caught. That, at the end of the day, is what's going to stop people. We've all seen it. If somebody's out on the road and you're out at your camper, or whatever it is, and somebody comes in and says the police are patrolling, nobody gets in their car and drives down that highway if they think the cops are on the road. But if they think the cops aren't there, they might take a chance. At some point we need to figure out a way to give the police the resources they need to better do their jobs.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I listened very carefully to the comments of the member from Brant. It actually was, as the previous speaker indicated, very interesting to listen to some of the personal experiences that he put into his comments. I want to tell him, his comments, both in his speech and prior to that, in comments he has made in this debate, really are touching. They touch on what we're all here for. That's to make life better for others and to ensure that as we move forward, we bring in legislation that will help ensure that things that happened in the past that have negatively impacted people, families—tragedies—somehow or other, some of them can be avoided in the future.

I think we'd be unrealistic to suggest that we'll never see another tragedy due to drinking and driving. I think we'd be unrealistic to suggest that we'll never see another street race tragedy. But this legislation helps. It strengthens the drinking and driving provisions, to discourage drinking and driving, in particular for the repeat offenders. I think that's one of the things that really gets in the craw of all of us when we hear these stories—I don't know how true they all are, but some of them must be, where somebody is drinking and driving, they get caught, they get punished and then they're out, and within a matter of weeks they're out doing it again and again. Whether in fact they get away with it to that extent, I don't know, but this legislation will ensure that

when their vehicle is seized—you can't drive if you don't have a vehicle. When their vehicle is seized and forfeited once and for all, that driver could be off the road, should be off the road. That's not to say he's not going to jump into somebody else's vehicle one day, but I'll tell you, it's another positive step forward to ensure that these tragedies, spoken about very well by the member from Brant, do not happen again in the future.

Mr. McNeely: I'd just like to deal with some of the issues about the suspensions and the ignition interlock. The new opportunities to learn more about drinking and driving and to get back into the vehicle as a driver are very important. There were concerns that we're getting softer on drunk drivers, but we're not. We're going to deal with the education and with the changes that must be accepted by these drivers.

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Rather than having them out there as unlicensed drivers and driving again with their problems, this legislation will put that incentive there for them to get the ignition interlock and to take the treatment. That is so important. We cannot have unlicensed drivers driving out there, not dealing with their bad habits. This will get some of them to where they can drive again, but where they will have that ignition interlock it will prevent them driving if they have any alcohol in their blood. This is important. It's not making it softer on driving under the influence. It's going to make it an incentive to get out there, to deal with their problem; to protect other people on the roads, they will not be out there any longer.

I just wanted to again emphasize that we're trying to offer solutions of education and treatment that are going to make our roads safer.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Questions or comments?

Then the member for—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I can sit here patiently.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services, you have two minutes to comment.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): No, I would just simply recognize that it seems as if the debate has ended for this session.

Mr. Levac: You can have two minutes.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: No, I thought we would refer the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: He does get two minutes to respond. That's what we're getting to. The member for Brant.

Mr. Levac: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity.

Thank you to the member from Timmins—James Bay, as always, for sharing his concerns about enforcement. I don't disagree that the fines are not the panacea, but I also would strongly suggest to you that there is going to be some sober second thought about getting caught, about losing your car, about having a possible \$10,000 fine and going to prison. If we've made the decision to

make that cultural change, everybody is going to be expecting that these cases are going to be done and they're going to be dealt with harshly. I think the community at large will get the message out that this is one of the ways in which you'd better start thinking before you start doing this again. That's the first one.

The second one is, I trust very emphatically in the creativity of the OPP and the police officers we have. They've got wonderful programs that are designed specifically within their own communities on how to catch these people and how to deal with them. They're going to be getting some equipment and they're going to be doing some things within their own municipalities and through the OPP of, "How do we now take this piece of legislation and turn it into something that we want, which is the tools to send the message out that we're not going to be accepting this kind of behaviour?" I guess we're going to end up agreeing to disagree, because I do think that in terms of what the OPP is capable of doing, they're going to be a partner in helping us change that culture by knocking these guys down and putting them in the place where they belong.

I don't want the hobby to die. I want the hobby to be enforced somewhere else, where they're not going to kill people. I think that's the idea, the message I'm getting. The argument about whether or not we should be stopping this altogether will become moot because we'll change the direction of where it's happening.

The RIDE programs we've got and the comments about "Where's a cop when you need one?"—those things are going to be forever. There are times when I don't see people signalling and they're driving whacky on the road, and your question is, "Where's a cop when we need him?" Anyway, I think we're moving in the right direction.

Thank you to the member for Scarborough Centre and the parliamentary assistant from Ottawa—Orléans for the work that they're doing.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I'm surprised that I got my turn so quickly.

I want to put a couple of things on the record because I think they need to be said in regard to this particular debate.

We find ourselves yet again in the Legislature, as an assembly, putting forward legislation that's going to mandate our police officers to do something else. That in itself is not a bad thing. There is nobody in this Legislature, in any political party or as an independent member, who sits in this House today and says they're not in favour of clamping down on drunk drivers and they're not in favour of clamping down on people who race their vehicles on our streets or back roads somewhere in Ontario—not one of us. But the problem we have is that, as a Legislature, we keep on passing legislation further telling our police officers to do more, and we're not necessarily giving them the resources to do it. That was the point that I was trying to make earlier.

This morning I was at the Sudbury Cambrian College at—I forget; I think they call it the eDome, where the

Environmental Commissioner was giving his report, and that was exactly the point that he was making: Over the years, we here in the Legislature have told the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment, just as we are in this bill today telling the law enforcement community, "Here are more things you've got to do. Here are your legislative requirements that we're giving you as a Legislature to make sure that certain laws are followed in this land." What the commissioner said this morning is what I'm saying here today, that we're not giving the resources to the ministries to properly do their jobs.

To this bill, I'm just going to propose a couple of really outrageous things, and I'm not going to pretend for a second that I'm in favour of them, but I think it's a debate that we have to start having. If we are serious about trying to curb these issues, we need to find some way of elevating the possibility in somebody's mind that they're going to get caught. The whip from across the way—I don't know your riding; I'm sorry.

Mr. Levac: Brant.

Mr. Bisson: The member from Brant makes the very good point that over the years we have changed the culture, for example, with drinking and driving to where 40 years ago, when I was a child—my God, it goes fast—it was quite acceptable for dad to drive you home when he was under the influence. And I don't say that with pride, but that was the reality of the late 1950s, early 1960s. My father did it when we were kids. Was it smart? No, it was absolutely stupid, but that was sort of the norm of these guys who came in after the war and were working class and had their issues in regard to the demons they were dealing with that stemmed from the Second World War, and many of them took to the bottle. It was just part of the norm.

But you're right; society changed the culture. What made it change is that people started to fear being caught and, if they were caught, to what degree they would be ostracized by society and their neighbours—not just what they were going to pay as a fine, not just that they were going to maybe lose their driver's licence, but the stigma that would be attached to them as being people who were driving under the influence. How did we do that? We went to the police departments across this province, both municipal and the provincial police, and we gave them the resources to do the RIDE program. You remember them all. The RIDE program could pop up anywhere, at any time, 365 days a year. You could be driving on Highway 400 or you could be on a dirt road out behind Kapuskasing and you'd find the RIDE program sometimes. So drivers who had the habit of being under the influence from time to time started worrying about possibly getting caught. The police officers had the resources to put the officers in the field in order to set up RIDE programs and to do spot checks of different types so that we were elevating the possibility that the person who was breaking the law was going to get caught, and that's what made the difference.

I agree with the member: MADD had a huge part to do with this in changing the culture. I don't want to

diminish for a second the tragedy of those people who have lost their kids and eventually became involved in MADD and the great work that MADD did, but what happened was that MADD created the condition by which this Legislature appropriated the money for the police forces across this province and said, "You shall set up RIDE programs." That was, I believe, the watershed, because I remember well also, where I come from—and it was probably the same thing for the member from Brant, where he comes from in southwestern Ontario, and probably the same in Ottawa or Toronto—people started worrying about being caught. When they worried about being caught, that's when the habits changed; that's when people said, "I'm not taking that chance, because not only am I going to get fined and not only may I lose my licence, the possibility is that now I will get caught." There was a time when the odds of being caught were very much less.

So I say, if we're going to do these types of legislative initiatives, we need to find some way to give police officers the ability to enforce the law, so that if it's either street racing or it's drinking and driving, we have an opportunity to give the police officers the capacity they need—and I'm not going to use the words "give them the tools"; somebody did that before, and I didn't like that, so I'm going to talk about capacity—to catch them.

Now, let me give you some radical ideas, something that I'm sure that people in this Legislature, as well as people in this province, might disagree with me.

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If we know, for example, that there are areas where there's street racing happening on a fairly regular basis, why not put up surveillance cameras? You've got the video evidence of the car, you've got the licence number if you're lucky, and you may even have a picture of the individual. If somebody knows that they may get caught by way of that type of technology, at the very least they're not going to be racing there. But hopefully you'll do it in a passive way so that originally nobody knows, so that you can start catching people. It's just an idea.

I understand there are privacy issues and all of that comes into play. I'm not a big one for putting cameras on every street corner in our cities; that's not really the point I'm making. But if there's some way that we can utilize technology in order to increase the ability of police officers to catch somebody in the act, I think that would be a deterrent.

So if the person who likes to race their car and soup up a street car into a modified street racer of some type, using the kinds of fuels that were talked about here today—if we knew a way of being able to catch them by giving resources to the police department so that they have adequate staff to monitor those areas where they know street racing is happening, either by physical or electronic presence, and the possibility that these people will actually get caught in the act, I can tell you that you'd see a decrease in the amount of street racing.

In our cities we know, for example, that there are certain avenues and streets where there's high-speed,

maybe I wouldn't call it racing per se, but where people like to do excessive speeds. Just the fact that you've got a sign out that says there's a camera here might be enough to scare somebody into not doing it. Again, I'm going to say up front that this is not a position of my party. I don't even know, at the end of the day, if I'm totally supportive, but my point is that we need to find some way of giving police officers the capacity to catch people. Until people are fearful of being caught, it will be, "Forget it."

I was just talking earlier to the member from Scarborough Centre. We were having a bit of a discussion about the whole issue of drinking and driving, and I made the comment—and I think he kind of agrees with me; I'll let him speak to that later—that, for example, in cottage country across Ontario, and I don't care if it's around Orillia or if it's up in northwestern or northeastern Ontario or wherever it might be, you can almost see it on the weekend. If people know the police officers are out there patrolling either the waterways or the roads, they don't go on the waterways and roads while they're drinking; period.

We've all seen it. Somebody says, "Oh, don't get in your car. The OPP are out this weekend." The word goes across the lake and nobody gets in their car on the weekend if they're drinking, which is a good thing, because the police officers are out there doing their job. They're showing the flag. They're showing their presence. They're making it known that they're there. They're saying, "If you do something stupid and break the law, we're here to catch you." That's the point. We need to find some way to resource police officers to do their job. I say on that point that it's very important that we give police officers the resources they need to be able to catch people in the act.

The other thing I want to say on this particular point is about the whole issue of education and what that has to do with it, because I think it's the other one. There's a really successful program. One of the members might remember the name.

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: The DARE program. The DARE program goes into our schools and we resource our police officers—municipalities mostly resource their police officers—to go into the schools and to discourage kids from taking drugs.

I remember that, when that program first came out, the little people who were in schools back then, in grade 4, grade 5 and grade 6, were at the age of sort of looking around the world and wondering what's going on and trying to figure out who they're going to be in later days.

The police officers would go in; I remember Constable Charbonneau—C-h-a-r-b-o-n-, something like that—would go into the schools across the city of Timmins, under the responsibility of the Timmins Police Service, and challenge these kids, through an educational program, to stay away from drugs. It is a bit of a scared-straight program. You know, years later I'm running across kids I saw at those initial DARE presentations, and they're no longer kids. They're young adults, 19 to

22 years old, and they come to me and say, "Mr. Bisson, I remember you were in my grade 5 class. You know what? I haven't done drugs because of that, because of what that police officer said."

So we know that education at an early age makes a difference. What we did was that we resourced our police officers. We said, "Go into the schools and talk to kids about the use of drugs, how bad an idea that is and what could happen when you do drugs." As a result, I would argue, there are many kids who grew up to become adults who never touched drugs because of that experience. I would argue that in legislation like this we need to think about that as well. We have to say to kids, we have to say to the general public in whatever way we can, "Here's what we want to do by way of legislation when it comes to street racing. Here's what we want to do around drinking and driving," and put our money where our mouth is to engage the public in some sort of dialogue, through advertising and a combination of whatever else, to be able to engage the citizenry in understanding that these things are bad. I don't know if it's snitch lines. I don't know what it is. There have got to be different ways of engaging the public so that they become part of understanding that there's a problem but they also become part of the system and recognizing these behaviours themselves and saying, "That's not right."

The member for Brant made a point earlier. I'm just going to come back to it because I think it's an important one. He talked about being the designated driver. I've been to many events, as have all members in this House, on Friday and Saturday nights. I was in Kapuskasing at the chamber of commerce event on Saturday. My point is that most of these events have alcohol being served, and how many times have I seen that somebody goes up and physically grabs someone's keys? I've seen it at some events. It's not widespread, but I've seen where, as you're having a chat with somebody, some man or woman walks up and grabs the keys of the person and says, "By the way, you're not driving. I'm driving you home." The person says, "Why? I've only had two beers." "Yes. You're over the limit." I've seen that a number of times. Why is that? It's because we've engaged the citizenry in being part of the solution. We've said to them, "Here's something you can do to prevent the tragic death of somebody as a result of drunk driving"—or maybe even the person who's the driver. We've said, "You can do something really simple: Take the keys." All I'm saying is that it's not good enough to say in legislation, "Here are the penalties," that we're going to increase the penalties as far as fines. I would argue that we need to find a way to do two things. One is to raise the possibility of the person being caught. The second thing that I think we really need to do is to find some way of engaging the citizenry in being part of the solution. I believe we cannot have an impact and an effect on this issue as profoundly as we want unless we're able to do that in some meaningful way.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): I'm delighted to be able to speak on this very

important bill. The bill really has two very important key components on drinking and driving in section 48. It states that the current 12-hour suspension for drivers will be increased to three days for the first incident and seven days for the second incident.

But the other part is street racing, section 172. We know that this is a major problem all over Ontario, in the rest of Canada and in other countries. But I've gone through rural areas many times where I see kids at noontime coming out of high school and going to the side roads and starting to speed and race. I have to say that one day I was very surprised. I had to call the police because they were racing and they didn't realize the effect if an accident would occur. They come from good families most of the time. It was a real heartbreaker for me too. I looked at them afterwards and said, "Did you realize that if you ever get into an accident, the cost to get insurance later, or that you'll need a car to follow up your education at university, and when you want to go on to the labour market, or that you might lose your car?" But those people do not realize the effects when they proceed with racing on the road. It's very important. I would say we might have to go a little further and ask school boards to organize education sessions to tell them what is implicated in that bill for the safety of Ontarians.

1750

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Timmins–James Bay. Certainly, he related some real-world experiences that he's come into throughout his life and explained how the attitudes in society have changed, particularly as they relate to drinking and driving, and this bill will really help to change those attitudes still further, to make it so that eventually probably there will be zero tolerance for drinking and driving.

He also mentioned the DARE program, which I believe stands for drug awareness resistance education. Certainly, in my area of Parry Sound–Muskoka we've had an excellent DARE program. I had an opportunity to go up to Parry Sound to participate in the graduation ceremony a couple of years ago. It was run for a number of years by Constable Christine Dawson, and she did an excellent job, which was obvious from her interaction with the school-aged children she was teaching. I believe the program had some great benefits in the Parry Sound area and actually I look forward to going to the ceremony once again this year.

All three parties support Bill 203, and we look forward to the bill going to committee. I know the member from Oak Ridges has some amendments to do with the street racing part of the bill; otherwise, we look forward to the bill wrapping up second reading and heading to committee, where it will be further improved.

Mr. Levac: Very quickly, yes, it's going to go to committee. We want to have hearings. We want to make sure that we can improve the bill, so there will probably be some amendments to it.

The minister indicated to me that they're going to do an education program. The minister indicated to me they're going to work with many ministries to try to

make sure that the OPP has the tools and the vehicles and the wherewithal to comply with getting this dealt with.

The member from Timmins–James Bay has offered us some good challenges, and quite frankly they will be reached. We're going to do the education program. We're going to be doing the outreach to help us hobbyists get somewhere else, get it off the street so that we can stop the carnage on the road. Quite frankly, I think we're all headed in the right direction, and I look forward to getting this bill to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Timmins–James Bay, you have the opportunity for two minutes.

Mr. Bisson: Let's see if I can skate for four minutes.

I thank the members for their comments. I hope they take my comments as friendly advice in regard to what can be done. I just want to say again very quickly, there's nobody in this House who doesn't support the idea of having legislation that goes further towards trying to stop the practice of street racing and drinking and driving. Nobody in this House disapproves. Nobody is on the negative side of that. However, we need to find some way to give police officers the ability to do the job we're asking them to do.

All I was saying here in this debate today was two things: One is that we need to raise the possibility of people being caught by people knowing that if they go out and street race or drink and drive, there's a big chance they'll get caught. I spoke about the RIDE program as a good example of how that deterred drinking and driving. When people knew that police officers could be on any highway in Ontario at any particular time looking for drunk drivers, they stopped drinking and driving to the degree they did before. We need to find some way—and it's not necessarily a RIDE program—of giving police officers the ability to plan and then finance

whatever they want to do when it comes to increasing their presence so we're able to curb the issue of drinking and driving and street racing.

I talked about the possibility of giving them the ability to use new technologies. Maybe there is a time to have a debate around the use of cameras to see if that would be an appropriate way of dealing with problem areas when it comes to street racing and others.

But again, the bigger thing—and I think this is really what I want to end on—is the issue giving the citizenry the ability to be part of the solution, because if we don't have the citizens involved, it ain't going to work. We all know now that it is accepted that if you see somebody drinking and driving, you grab their keys. It's a real simple thing. You do what you have to do to stop them from getting into a 2,000-pound vehicle that can kill somebody and themselves, and you do that by taking the keys. We need some way to empower citizens.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mrs. Cansfield has moved second reading of Bill 203. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'd move that the bill be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

The Deputy Speaker: The bill shall therefore be referred to the standing committee on finance.

It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned and will resume at 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
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Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
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Bramalea–Gore–Malton– Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Boutrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
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Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
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Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
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Eglinton–Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration	London–Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
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Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
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Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
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Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
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Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
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Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Toronto–Danforth	Tabuns, Peter (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
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Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		

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

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